

# Mr B's 'C-to-B' English Revision Fun Pack

The fact that you are reading this may be a very good sign.

It may show that you believe yourself capable of a grade C in English but are hungry to do better. It could suggest someone who finds English a bit of a slog, a chore, but who nevertheless is determined to gain higher than a C. It may be an indication of your ambition, your aspiration.

On the other hand, it may be that you're reading this because someone told you to read it, and that you're not really any of those things listed above. You could be reading this because you have to, or because you *feel* you have to.

If your target grade is a C it is a sign that your reading is pretty accurate when it comes to understanding facts and events in a text. But you may struggle to notice some of the implications lurking beneath the surface. You'll especially struggle when asked to compare texts and to comment on the language. You won't always know what to say, which words to comment on, how to 'develop your ideas' (which is what your teacher will keep saying you need to do).

Your writing is probably mostly accurate but rather – how shall I put this? – boring. If I set you a topic of describing, say, your favourite meal, I'll be able to predict your first sentence (probably 'My favourite meal is ...'). You choose words that are a bit predictable, write in sentences that are a little long, and create texts which when read aloud have a rather monotonous rhythm.

That's you if you're a target grade C.

This pack is designed to make your reading more precise and your writing more interesting. The more you can do these two things, the higher your grade will go ... up to B and beyond, and ready to be an accomplished reader and writer in the real world beyond school.

Welcome to my C-to-B Fun Pack\*

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\*Warning: it doesn't contain fun

# READING

## Barriers to learning:

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- You probably read more than you realise, but you don't read enough variety of texts to be confident with different types of articles and other non-fiction texts
- You find comparing texts difficult to manage
- You are insecure when asked to comment on the writer's language and effects
- Time-management in the exam is also an issue for you. You don't leave sufficient time for the Q4 'compare language' question

## Next steps:

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- Read stuff, especially articles – for example:  
Weekly Reading – a collection of articles that you could get into the habit of reading each week:  
[http://blog.geoffbarton.co.uk/site/Blog/Entries/2014/4/30\\_Weekly\\_Reading.html](http://blog.geoffbarton.co.uk/site/Blog/Entries/2014/4/30_Weekly_Reading.html)
- Read more critically, noticing how writers write, how they grab our attention, the words they use

## QUESTION 1: Retrieval and inference (8 marks)

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- Sample: *'What do you understand about the Amazon tribe and the issues it faces?'*
- Look for questions split by 'and': answer both elements
- Start with a topic sentence ('The first point we learn about the tribe is that it ...'). Try to avoid using the word 'thing'
- Use short embedded quotations (five words max at a time, preferably one or two)
- Choose a point from start, middle and end of the text
- Use power words: *suggests, implies, demonstrates, shows, indicates, highlights*
- Avoid making your writing personal with the word 'I' (eg 'I think that the writer shows us that'). Instead say 'The writer shows that ...'

Read **Source 1**, the online newspaper article called *Britain's big problem with water* by Geoffrey Lean.

- 1      What do you learn from Geoffrey Lean's article about the issues of rainfall and flooding in Britain? (8 marks)

**QUESTION 2: Presentational Features (8 marks)**

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- Sample: ‘Explain how the headline and picture are effective and how they link to the text’
- **Write a paragraph about the headline:** look for words that stand out. These may be especially dramatic, emotive, powerful. There may be contrasting words. They may be patterned through alliteration or the juxtaposition of contrasting words (‘the silent storm’). Don’t just say that the word you chose is effective; say why or how it is effective – how it grabs our attention or how it makes us feel or what words or ideas it reminds us of
- **Write a paragraph on the picture or image.** Describe what you see. How is the image organised overall? What is in the foreground and the background? What is the expression on people’s faces? What colours are used? Describe any features and try to explain why/how this interests us, grabs our attention, surprises us. A sentence might start ‘The woman is looking in the opposite direction from the son in her arms. This surprises us at first. It may suggest that she is more concerned about the damage to her house than having her photograph taken. It shows her priorities.’
- **Comment on how the headline and image link to the text.** Look for how the words/picture are **SIMILAR** to the main ideas in the text (‘The words in the headline support the main idea in the text because ...’). Then look for any **CONTRASTS** (‘The picture surprises us because it shows that the damage to the house is less severe than the word ‘wrecked’ in the headline suggests. This shows us how the headline is designed to grab the reader’s interest by being more dramatic than the text itself’)

Now read **Source 2**, the article and the picture which goes with it called *Four amputations, 13 hours – one extraordinary swim* by John Lichfield.

**2** Explain how the headline, sub-headline and picture are effective and how they link to the text. (8 marks)

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**QUESTION 3: Focus on the writer's thoughts and feelings (8 marks)**

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- Sample: 'Explain the thoughts and feelings the writer has during his encounter with the bear'
- Choose examples from the start, middle and end of the text
- Focus on the thoughts, attitudes, feelings, fears, hopes that are expressed. Remember you are being asked about his or her emotions, not yours. Your job is to spot them and explain what you notice
- Pick out the key words or phrases that show the thoughts and feelings, but don't quote more than one or two words at a time
- When you quote a word or phrase, follow it with an explanation (showing us why or how it is significant). That means you will frequently have tiny quotations followed by sentences that begin 'This show us that / This implies that / This indicates that the writer is feeling ...'
- Give your personal response – but say 'we' rather than 'I': eg 'We can tell that the writer is nervous because he uses the word ...'
- Use power words: *positive, nervous, agitated, apprehensive, proud, arrogant, negative, pleased, worried, anxious, develops, ironic, sarcastic*
- Be tentative: say 'This *may* suggest / it *might* be the case / the writer *perhaps* feels'
- Try to spot the development in a text – how the ideas/feelings at the end are different from earlier on

Now read **Source 3**, *Ferry across the lake*, which is an extract from a non-fiction book.

**3** Explain some of the thoughts and feelings Christopher Ondaatje has about his experience of Lake Victoria. (8 marks)

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**QUESTION 4: Compare two texts commenting on language (16 marks)**

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- Sample: ‘Compare the ways in which language is used for effect in the two texts’
- Work fast
- Look for similarities and contrasts in texts
- Aim for 3 or 4 paragraphs which refer to both texts.
- Start each paragraph with a topic sentence: ‘The writer’s language in text A is very visual. He uses colour and details to help us to visualise the scene’
- Focus on vivid words or phrases and explain why they are effective (not just ‘this word is effective’) – eg ‘He uses the word ‘darkening’ which suggests that he is losing confidence. This is a powerful word because it suggests that light, which is what we need for life, is disappearing. His hope is running out and the visual word conveys this ...’
- In your writing, use power words: *emotional, vivid, memorable, echoes, suggests, emotive, harsh, comic, formal, impersonal, sensuous*
- Constantly ask yourself whether you are answering the questions ‘why?’ and ‘how?’ in what you are saying. This kind of analysis is what gains higher grades

Now refer to **Source 3**, *Ferry across the lake* and **either Source 1 or Source 2**.  
You are going to compare the **two** texts, one of which you have chosen.

**4** Compare the ways in which language is used for effect in the **two** texts.  
Give some examples and analyse the effects. (16 marks)

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# WRITING

## Barriers to learning:

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- You probably don't write much for pleasure. Not a lot of people do.
- When you read stuff, you perhaps don't notice *how* writers write, so you haven't yet developed a range of strategies for your own writing
- You may struggle to think how to get started, to know what to say
- Your writing is therefore a bit ordinary, a bit mundane

## Next Steps:

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- Good writing is linked to reading. You won't write with sophistication if you don't read a lot – because that's what helps us to gain ideas and to develop our style
- Here's a starting-point:
- My blog called 'How to Write': this collects articles which (in my opinion) show exceptionally interesting style:  
[http://blog.geoffbarton.co.uk/site/Blog/Entries/2014/5/29\\_How\\_to\\_Write.html](http://blog.geoffbarton.co.uk/site/Blog/Entries/2014/5/29_How_to_Write.html)

**QUESTION 5: Writing to explain or describe (16 marks)**

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- You might be required to write a letter or an article or a blog
- Think what you want to say and group it into paragraphs
- Aim for clarity – a blend of short and long sentences, and words that are precise and interesting
- Use a range of connectives – *as, if, however, although*
- Aim to write up to two sides

5 Write a letter which you hope will be published in your local newspaper. Inform readers what leisure facilities are available for young people and families in your area and explain how you think they could be improved. (16 marks)

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**QUESTION 6: Writing to persuade or advise**

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- You might be required to write an article (most likely) or blog or speech
- You aren't giving a balanced view – you are expressing your opinion
- Structure your ideas in paragraphs. If you are writing an article, these paragraphs are likely to be very short
- But avoid the word 'I' to give your argument more power ('school uniform is an appallingly outdated idea' is stronger than 'I think school uniform is an appallingly outdated idea')
- Use this writing to grab the reader's interest – use emotive vocabulary. Use short and long sentences. Use the power-of-three. Use adjectives and adverbs that surprise the reader
- Use anecdote ('A friend of mine once revealed that he hated all tinned food')
- Use questions ('So why in the UK do we still think that wearing a blazer will make us do better in exams?')
- Use a range of connectives – *as, if, however, although*
- Be bold and confident and original

6 'Life is too easy for young people today. They lack challenges and don't have to fight for anything.'

Write an article for a magazine of your choice which persuades your readers that this statement is **either right or wrong**. (24 marks)

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**Intermediate spelling: 65 words you should be able to spell accurately  
(GCSE grade B or higher)**

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| 1. accidentally  | 34. maintenance                        |
| 2. accommodation                                       | 35. miniature                          |
| 3. a lot (not 'a lot')                                 | 36. mischievous                        |
| 4. all sorts (not 'alsorts')                           |  |
| 5. argument  | 37. necessary                          |
|  | 38. noticeable                         |
| 6. beautiful   |  |
| 7. believe   | 39. occasionally                       |
|  | 40. occurrence                         |
| 8. calendar  |  |
| 9. category  | 41. perseverance                       |
| 10. changeable   | 42. possession                         |
| 11. committed  | 43. principal (headteacher/main idea)  |
| 12. conscience   | 44. principle (belief)                 |
|  | 45. privilege                          |
| 13. definitely   | 46. pronunciation                      |
| 14. discipline   | 47. publicly                           |
| 15. embarrassment                                      |  |
| 16. equipment  |  |
| 17. existence  | 48. queue                              |
| 18. experience   | 49. questionnaire                      |
|  |  |
| 19. February   | 50. receive                            |
| 20. foreign  | 51. recommend                          |
|  | 52. referred                           |
| 21. grateful   | 53. relevant                           |
| 22. guarantee  | 54. rhyme                              |
|  | 55. rhythm                             |
| 23. height   |  |
| 24. humorous   | 56. sentence                           |
|  | 57. separate                           |
| 25. immediately  |  |
| 26. independent  | 58. their (possessive)                 |
| 27. indispensable                                      | 59. there (place)                      |
| 28. its (possession: the cat licked its tail)          | 60. they're (contraction of "they are) |
| 29. it's (compression: it's beginning to rain (=it is) |  |
|  | 61. until                              |
| 30. judgement  | 62. vacuum                             |
|  |  |
| 31. leisure  | 63. weather                            |
| 32. liaison  | 64. whether                            |
| 33. library  | 65. weird                              |



## 30 ESSENTIAL TIPS ON ENGLISH USAGE FOR GCSE GRADE C OR HIGHER

*A quick guide to the words people often use incorrectly*

1. A lot, not 'alot'
2. All right, not 'alright'
3. All sorts, not 'alsorts'
4. Basically: this word is unnecessary in most contexts
5. Continuous/continual – a continuous noise never stops; a continual noise is frequent but with interruptions
6. Comprise or consists of (but not 'comprises of')
7. Different from, not 'different than'
8. Disinterested = neutral/objective; uninterested = not interested
9. Due to = say 'because of'
10. Formally – being formal; formerly – in the past
11. Imply/infer – I imply that you are mad; you infer that I am being rude
12. It's (=it is/it has); its (= 'the work was completed ahead of its deadline')
13. Like – use 'as if' – 'it looks as if he will be late'
14. Led – past tense of to lead; lead – rope for a dog and heavy element
15. Less / fewer: less for quantities (I'll have less water); fewer than for items that can be individually counted (fewer than 10 bottles)
16. Meet – not 'meet with'
17. Momentarily – 'he stopped momentarily', not the Americanism 'I'll be there momentarily'
18. More than – better than 'over' (it cost more than £27)
19. No one, not 'no-one'
20. Practice – noun ('I have football practice'); practise – verb ('I need to practise'). If in doubt, test it out with 'advice' and 'advise' ('I must advise', not 'I must advice' = 'I must practise', not 'I must practice')
21. Principal – head of a school; principle/principles = beliefs
22. Program – runs on a computer; programme – something we watch on television or buy at a theatre
23. Theirs (no apostrophe)
24. Try to, not 'try and'
25. Under way, not 'underway'
26. Until, not 'up until'
27. Upcoming – avoid using this word
28. While, not 'whilst'
29. Yours (no apostrophe)
30. Outside, not 'outside of'