

# STUDENT'S BOOK



Cambridge International  
AS Level

## English General Paper

Rachel Alexander  
Nicola Daniel  
Jennifer Johnson  
Savneet Kaur  
**Series Editor:** Mark Whitby

Sample

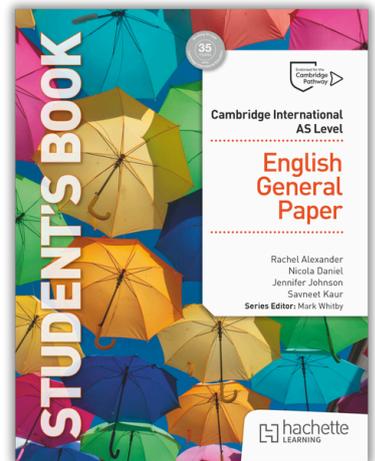
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# Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper

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AS Level



# English General Paper



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# Introduction

## For the teacher

This book is intended for use by students studying the Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper (8021) syllabus for examination from 2028.

The aim of the book is to present comprehensive coverage of the syllabus in a readable and engaging style that will appeal to the full range of abilities. It provides knowledge and practice exercises to help students develop skills in reading and writing. It also gives opportunities for students to explore issues within three broad topic areas:

- Economic, historical, moral, political and social issues
- Science (including its history, philosophy, ethics, general principles and applications), environmental issues, technology and mathematics
- Literature, language, the arts, crafts and the media.

We remind teachers that they are at liberty to amend and modify the material in this book to best suit the ability and interests of their students. We also encourage teachers to produce their own answers to exercises to ensure that the questions are best suited to the focus of their specific lessons. Some exercises, for example, may be more suitable as extension work for students – the decision to use them as such is that of the teacher alone.

## Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper (8021) syllabus and assessment overview

The information in this section is taken from the Cambridge International Education syllabus. You should always refer to the appropriate syllabus document for the year of examination to confirm the details and for more information. The syllabus document is available on the website: [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org).

### Syllabus overview

The Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper syllabus enables learners to:

- develop understanding and build a confident working knowledge of English in the context of contemporary topics
- consider and explore a broad range of topics in local, national and international contexts
- develop a wider awareness of contemporary issues through reading sources from different perspectives
- develop skills of independent thinking and reasoning
- develop the skills of interpretation, analysis, evaluation and persuasion
- develop skills in writing structured arguments, presenting reasoned explanations and selecting appropriate information to provide evidence
- develop the ability to present a point of view clearly, and to consider and reflect upon the views of others.

Learners are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of global topics and communication using English.

## Assessment overview

All candidates take two components, Paper 1 and Paper 2.

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Paper 1</b>  | Essay   |
| <b>Duration</b> | 1 hr 15 min   |
| <b>Marks</b>    | 40 marks  |
| <b>Features</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One formal essay from a choice of ten questions</li><li>• Questions from three broad topics</li><li>• Externally assessed</li></ul> |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Paper 2</b>  | Comprehension   |
| <b>Duration</b> | 1 hr 45 min   |
| <b>Marks</b>    | 50 marks  |
| <b>Features</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short answer, structured, and extended writing questions</li><li>• Based on unseen material</li><li>• Externally assessed</li></ul> |

9

Develop arguments

Language focus

In this unit you will look at understanding arguments, and how to develop, analyse and evaluate arguments, make supported judgements and draw conclusions. A key tool that writers often use in this area is tone. Another main area of arguments, judgements and conclusions is facts and opinions. A further important facet of this topic is emotive language. The following section looks at each of these areas in turn.

Tone

Tone is the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject, and it is most often conveyed through word choice, sentence structure and style. It can range from formal to informal, serious to humorous, and the tone of a text helps to shape how the audience interprets the message.

How can you identify tone?

The following tips might help when you are trying to identify the tone of a text:

- Read the text aloud in your head. How does it *sound*?
- Look for emotional or descriptive words (for example ‘shaking’, ‘softly’).
- Notice punctuation and sentence rhythm. Short, sharp sentences often sound tense or angry; long, smooth ones feel calm.
- Ask yourself: How does the writer feel? How does this make the reader feel?

In the exercise below, practise identifying tone and explain how you did so.

EXERCISE 1

1 Read the following short texts carefully. Match each text to the correct tone, and list any words or phrases that help you establish each writer’s attitude or emotion.

I can’t believe I lost my keys again. Just perfect. That’s exactly what I needed today!

Thank you so much for helping me with my presentation. I honestly couldn’t have done it without you.

Wow, another meeting that could’ve been an email. Great use of everyone’s time.

The trees swayed gently as the sun dipped below the hills. A soft breeze carried the scent of lavender through the air.

I was shaking as I walked on to the stage. My heart pounded like a drum in my chest, and I couldn’t feel my hands.

Use the sentence frame:

The tone of this text is \_\_\_ because the writer uses \_\_\_ and \_\_\_.

Angry (irritated)

Grateful (showing thanks)

Calm (relaxed, peaceful)

Sarcastic (saying the opposite of what they mean to be funny or critical)

Nervous (anxious, worried)

2 Imagine that you have been invited to a friend’s birthday party, but you can’t go. Write three replies to your friend, using a different tone each time:

a Apologetic tone: Which words or phrases soften your message?

b Casual tone: Which shortcuts or slang make your message sound natural?

c Sarcastic tone: What clues or exaggerations show sarcasm?

**KEY TERMS**

**Fact** A piece of information that is known to be true. Facts tend to be verifiable, meaning you can corroborate them by checking them elsewhere. Facts help make writing more credible.

**Opinion** The writer's own belief or judgement. Opinions are not necessarily true for everyone, as they reflect the writer's preferences and inclinations.

**Facts and opinions**

It helps you to be a better reader and writer if you are able to distinguish between **facts** and **opinions**, and think about the impact that each of them has on a piece of writing.

The exercise below will encourage you to identify facts and opinions and, crucially, to explain how you arrived at your decision.

**EXERCISE 2**

Read each sentence below and decide if it is a fact or an opinion. For each one, explain your choice: how did you know if it was fact or opinion?

- 1 'The Earth revolves around the Sun.'
- 2 'Chocolate is the best flavour of ice cream.'
- 3 'Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at sea level.'
- 4 'Summer is more enjoyable than winter.'
- 5 'Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.'

**Emotive language**

Emotive language can be a persuasive technique for a writer to use, particularly because of the emotional connection that it creates between writer and reader.

The following exercises will help you understand how to identify emotive language, and how to think about the effect that it has.

**EXERCISE 3**

1 For each sentence below, underline the emotive words or phrases and explain what emotion the words are trying to evoke. Explain why the author might want the reader to feel this way.

- a 'The poor, starving children begged for food on the cold, unforgiving streets.'
- b 'The heroic firefighter rushed into the burning building without hesitation.'
- c 'She was heartbroken when she heard the terrible news.'
- d 'The disgusting smell made everyone leave the room immediately.'
- e 'Millions of innocent animals suffer every year due to cruelty.'

2 To make a sentence more powerful, you can include:

- Adjectives/adverbs to describe intensity or feelings (such as 'devastated', 'freezing', 'terrified', 'heroic')

- Strong verbs to make action more vivid (for example 'struggled', 'begged', 'shattered', 'slammed')
- Figurative language or imagery, such as comparisons, similes, metaphors
- Scale or numbers to emphasise impact (such as 'millions', 'countless', 'entire').

Using these methods, rewrite the sentences below to add emotive language to make them more powerful or emotional.

- a 'The man lost his job last week.'
- b 'The town was damaged by the storm.'
- c 'She failed her exam.'
- e 'People protested against the change in the law.'

# Unit 9 Develop arguments

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## Learning objectives

In this unit, you will:

- demonstrate the ability to interpret meaning, language and information in context
- analyse and evaluate arguments and make supported judgements.

This unit will focus on the following skills:

- Making supported judgements by developing reasoned arguments using information and examples.
- Analysing different aspects of an argument by breaking it down into distinct parts.
- Discussing different viewpoints and perspectives, such as different social or political groups or historical or ethical dimensions.
- Evaluating the relative importance of different parts of the argument.
- Structuring an essay to logically connect different elements of the argument and lead to a judgement.
- Forming a conclusion that brings together different threads of an argument.
- Analysing the meaning of words and language features used in context.
- Making a judgement on what is most relevant to a question.
- Developing explanations or justifications.
- Summarising pieces of information.
- Developing persuasive arguments using information from the text or your own ideas.

## 9.1 Understanding argumentative texts

### INTRODUCTION TO SUB-UNIT

Every day, we encounter arguments, whether they be in articles, speeches, on social media or elsewhere. Understanding how these arguments are structured helps us become more thoughtful readers and more effective writers. This is because understanding argumentative texts involves skills like learning how to identify claims, evaluate evidence and recognise the persuasive techniques used. Developing these skills will help improve: your reading and writing through developing your comprehension; your critical thinking skills when reading and writing; and your use of persuasion in your own writing and your awareness of persuasive techniques in others' writing. In short, understanding argumentative texts will enable you to think more deeply, read more actively, and write in a more convincing fashion, all essential skills for academic success and real-world communication.

This sub-unit will take you through the following areas:

- Identifying features of effective arguments
- Recognising how viewpoints are presented and developed.

### KEY TERM

#### Counter-argument

A viewpoint that opposes the writer's viewpoint. For example, if a text had the thesis that school uniform was a very positive thing, then a counter-argument would be an argument against school uniform.

### Remember!

You learned about counter-arguments in Sub-unit 6.1. Revisit this information to help you effectively structure argumentative writing.

### Identifying features of effective arguments

There are several features common to argumentative texts. By learning what these features are and how to identify them, you will be in a good position to understand argumentative texts.

- **Hook:** An argumentative text may begin with an interesting anecdote, quotation, rhetorical question, or some other means to draw in the reader's attention and get them invested in the topic at hand.
- **Thesis:** This is the name given to the central argument of the text, the viewpoint or perspective that the writer is sharing.
- **Key points or claims:** There will be several of these in any argumentative text and they will all support the thesis. It is typical for each paragraph of the main body of the essay to cover one key point or claim.
- **Supporting evidence:** Evidence to support the points being made might take the form of facts, statistics, opinions, quotations from subject specialists, and more. It is most likely that your evidence will take the form of relevant information. The key thing is that the evidence will reinforce the key point being made.
- **Counter-arguments and rebuttal:** Argumentative texts often acknowledge a key counter-argument and then undermine, dismiss, or otherwise rebut it. This is an effective way to strengthen the key argument or thesis.
- **Tone:** Tone should be measured, rational and objective, avoiding emotional bias.

Effective arguments are constructed by writers, and so they can also be deconstructed to see how they work. This is how identifying features of effective arguments helps you become better at reading argumentative texts, and at creating your own.

### EXEMPLIFICATION

The following argumentative text has been annotated to show you what the key features of counterpoints or counter-arguments can look like in context.



## Redefining superheroes

Who's your favourite superhero? Iron Man? Spiderman? Superman? Have you ever stopped to wonder where all the female superheroes are? There have been efforts to redress the gender balance in comics, films and TV depictions of superheroes, but it's too little and happening far too slowly. The *Wonder Woman* film came out in 2017, and 2019 brought *Captain Marvel*. How many male-centred superhero films were released in the 15 years before them, though? It's time for change: we desperately need more depictions of female superheroes in popular culture.

This hooks the reader by asking them to think about their favourite superhero, involving them in the key issue in this text.

Clear statement of the writer's thesis

Main point or claim

Women and girls deserve to see themselves in superhero stories. The well-known phrase 'If you can see it, you can be it' is a reminder of the power of representation and how everyone deserves to see themselves in stories. In 2016, the announcement and release of an all-female reboot of the *Ghostbusters* film (the original, from 1984, features all-male Ghostbusters) met with a **misogynistic** backlash. And, yet, even at the premiere of the film, there were very moving photographs taken of young girls dressed as Ghostbusters, interacting with one of the actors, Kristen Wiig. The power of representation is seen clearly from this situation.

Supporting evidence

### GLOSSARY

**Misogynistic** Strong prejudice against women.

**Patriarchal** A system or government controlled by, and to the benefit of, men.

**Titular** The character who is named in the title.

**Norm** A thing that is standard, typical or usual. For example, 'gender norms' refers to what is considered normal or typical in the realm of gender.

More stories featuring female superheroes are also a better reflection of today's society. By featuring strong, independent female heroes, stories can move away from traditional, **patriarchal** depictions of women as innocent or helpless. In today's society, we are happily moving away from women being seen as victims or in need of protection, and this needs to be shown in our media. *Captain Marvel* (2019) was an excellent example of this, where Brie Larson's **titular** figure was not relegated to the position of sidekick or damsel in distress, but drove the narrative. This challenge to outdated gender **norms** did not impede the success of the film, as it made more than \$1.1 billion worldwide. There is clearly an audience for stories about female superheroes.

Main point or claim

Supporting evidence

Counter-argument introduced.

There are those who argue that there have historically been more male superheroes and that means more source material for film, television and book adaptations. However, I'd suggest that it's lazy at best, and irresponsible at worst, to just accept things the way they have always been. Historically, women didn't have the vote in many countries, but there has

Rebuttal

been widespread agreement globally that the democratic right to vote should be extended to everyone, male or female. Why should popular culture be any different?

To conclude, there is no valid reason for continuing to perpetuate the lack of gender balance in superhero films, books and comics. We all deserve better than this, especially young girls who deserve to see themselves depicted as heroes.

### EXERCISE 1

Match each of the following terms related to argumentative texts to the correct definition.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Claim             | A technique used to persuade, such as a rhetorical question, emotive language, and more |
| Purpose           | The writer's attitude, probably as conveyed through word choice                         |
| Audience          | Sometimes known as a thesis, a point or assertion the writer is trying to prove         |
| Tone              | An evidence-based viewpoint on an issue   |
| Rhetorical device | The intended reader or listener of the text   |

An effective argumentative text will contain many of the features that were annotated in the text above and, by being able to identify them, you will be able to understand and analyse how the text works to have an impact.

### Structure of argumentative texts

Effective argumentative texts follow a clear structure, guiding readers through a logical progression of ideas. This section will help you understand these structures.

Read the text below and then complete the exercise that follows.

Why there should be an age limit for mobile phone ownership

**In today's digital world, mobile phones have become almost ubiquitous among children and teenagers. While smartphones offer countless benefits, they also come with serious risks, especially for younger users. For this reason, there should be a minimum age requirement for owning a mobile phone.**

**First, young children are not emotionally or mentally prepared for the responsibilities that come with phone ownership. Social media, messaging apps and online games can expose them to cyberbullying, harmful content, and unhealthy comparisons at a stage in life when their fragile self-esteem is still in development. Without the maturity to set boundaries or cope with online pressure, children may suffer long-term psychological effects.**

**Second, excessive phone use can negatively impact learning and focus. Studies have shown that too much screen time can affect attention span, sleep quality and academic performance. Younger users may not yet have the self-discipline to manage their screen time wisely. Can parents and schools really stand by while young people are distracted and lack healthy study habits?**

**GLOSSARY**

**Exploit** To take unfair advantage of someone or something, typically by using their vulnerability for your own gain.

Additionally, mobile phones can expose young users to privacy risks and online dangers. Children may unintentionally share personal information or download unsafe apps without understanding the consequences. Older teenagers are more likely to recognise these dangers and take steps to protect themselves. An age limit would give children more time to develop critical thinking and digital safety skills before being given full access to the internet in their pocket.

Of course, some may argue that phones are useful for staying in touch with family or in case of emergencies. This is certainly an angle that my own children have tried to **exploit**. While this may be true, there are safer alternatives that can be used for communication without the added risks of a smartphone, for instance basic phones without internet access.

Setting an age limit for mobile phone ownership is not about taking technology away from young people. It's about making sure they are ready to use it responsibly. Just as we set age restrictions for driving or voting, it makes sense to do the same for mobile phones. A thoughtful approach now could protect young minds and build healthier digital habits for the future.

**EXERCISE 2**

- 1 What is the writer's main claim or argument? Write down the thesis statement that outlines it.

**HINT**

You will find it in the first paragraph.

- 2 Write down **one** example of each of the following features:
  - Emotive language
  - Rhetorical question
  - Anecdote.
- 3 Find at least **three** pieces of evidence that the writer uses in support of their argument.
- 4 What counter-argument does the writer acknowledge (if any)?
- 5 Identify the writer's final persuasive appeal.

The text that you just read had a simple but effective structure:

- Paragraph 1: Introduction: Hook and thesis
- Paragraph 2: Supporting point and evidence
- Paragraph 3: Supporting point and evidence
- Paragraph 4: Supporting point and evidence
- Paragraph 5: Address counter-argument(s) and rebut them
- Paragraph 6: Conclusion: Restate your viewpoint and consider impact.

**EXERCISE 3**

Use the structure outlined above to create an argumentative text of your own. Choose one of the topics below. They all give you scope for arguing a point or perspective.

- Voting should be mandatory.
- Fast fashion should be banned.
- Everyone should be vegan.

**KEY TERM**

**Viewpoint** The writer's opinion or stance on a particular issue.

**Recognising how viewpoints are presented and developed**

**Viewpoints** are key to argumentative writing, as different types of argumentative texts present and develop viewpoints in different ways. In an argumentative essay, the writer considers both sides of an issue, giving them both equal weight and consideration. In contrast, a persuasive essay takes a more one-sided approach to a topic, where the writer seeks to persuade the reader to agree with them.

In order to recognise the writer's viewpoint, you should first work out if the writer is considering both sides of the issue (argumentative), or taking a more one-sided approach (persuasive). The two sentences below illustrate the difference between these approaches:

- 'There are advantages and disadvantages to cloning.' (Argumentative)
- 'Cloning is utterly inhumane and unethical.' (Persuasive)

Once you have established the writer's approach, you will find it easier to identify their viewpoint. As you can see from the two example sentences, the writer of a persuasive text will usually come right out and tell you what their opinion or perspective is. That's what their thesis statement is for, and this is a vital part of the essay for helping you recognise the writer's viewpoint.

As argumentative texts can be balanced, however, you need to be alert to other ways in which the writer might reveal or develop their viewpoint:

- Be aware of the writer's tone. Are they dismissive of a certain idea or perspective? Are they admiring of another way of looking at it or a particular stance?
- Look at the sources of evidence the writer has used to support their points. Do they support a particular view of the issue?
- The conclusion of a text often offers a summation of what the writer believes to be true, or how they see the issue they have been discussing.

Read the text below and then complete the exercise and answer the practice questions that follow.

Should we all go vegetarian or vegan to reduce our carbon footprint?

*Anuradha Varanasi*

*26 September 2019*

When it comes to vegetarianism or going vegan, this is a decision that would definitely help the environment and climate. CO<sub>2</sub> and methane emissions would decrease, and fertiliser and water usage would decrease. However, you can achieve most of these benefits by just reducing your beef consumption. I appreciate that food choice is a personal and cultural decision. The point I want to make is that cutting your beef consumption by half, by 90%, or even completely, are all thoughtful, scientifically informed, good-for-the-planet decisions that an individual can make.

Our diet-related environmental burdens are in no way **minuscule**. These burdens include using almost half of the land that spans the United States, while emitting more than 70% of the nitrogen **runoff** that can choke rivers and streams. To produce all the food we buy regularly, 40% of the country's fresh water is continuously extracted from underground stores. All in all, agriculture produces 20% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions.

Numerous studies have found that beef production contributes to about 90% of the above-mentioned environmental problems. This is because vast areas of land have to be taken over and converted into grazing grounds. Also, beef production uses the most irrigation water and emits far higher greenhouse gases (41%) than other types of meat.

**GLOSSARY**

**Minuscule** Extremely small, tiny.

**Runoff** The draining away of water (or substances carried in it) from the surface of an area of land or similar.

The average American eats around 460 grams of beef every week. We have found that cutting that down to 200 grams instead could make the US beef industry much more environmentally sustainable and friendly.

While vegetarian diets are seen as far more sustainable, recent studies are finding that a diet that includes small portions of meat can have a lower carbon footprint. In 2016, we launched the website [HoldtheBeef.org](http://HoldtheBeef.org), which includes facts and figures from a 2016 study carried out by graduate students of the Columbia School of International and Public Affairs. This is another great resource to gain a better understanding of the impacts of different types of meat, vegetables and dairy products as well.

To answer the question on whether going vegan helps in terms of reducing carbon footprint, the short answer is: yes. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, after beef production, cattle milk is responsible for the most emissions (20%). The two major greenhouse gases that are being emitted due to animal agriculture are methane and nitrous oxide, because of manure storage and the use of fertilisers, respectively.

So, while going vegan would certainly help the environment, it is also unrealistic for most people to follow a dairy-free and meat-free diet. Almost as good is to consume meat and other animal products in moderation. And most especially, hold the beef!

(Source: <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2019/09/26/vegetarian-vegan-diets-climate-change>)

#### EXERCISE 4

- 1 Is the text argumentative or persuasive?
- 2 How do you know? What features or elements of the text helped you decide?
- 3 What is the writer's viewpoint when it comes to vegetarianism?

#### PRACTICE QUESTION

- 1 Identify a word or phrase from the text that suggests the same idea as each of the following:

- a Using up a resource, particularly in regard to eating. [1]

##### HINT

Look at the paragraph that starts 'When it comes to vegetarianism or going vegan...' (paragraph 1).

- b Released or produced. [1]

##### HINT

Look at the paragraph that starts 'To answer the question on whether...' (paragraph 6).

#### Sustainability focus

Do you agree that 'it is ... unrealistic for most people to follow a dairy-free and meat-free diet'? In pairs or groups, consider ways in which you might be able to reduce the environmental impact of your own diet.

That text above had a very clear viewpoint. To build on your understanding of viewpoint in argumentative texts, we will now look at a slightly more complex text.

## GLOSSARY

**Fundamental** Basic or essential. Something fundamental often forms the foundation upon which other things are built.

**Addendum** Something additional, for example an addition to a finished document.

**Endeavour** Earnest, prolonged and industrious effort to achieve a goal.

## Sustainability focus



Some people believe that spending money and time on space travel isn't sensible or ethical when there is so much on Earth that needs investment. In pairs or groups, discuss how you feel about the ethics of spending on space exploration. From your own knowledge, or through research, identify why many people believe that humanity should focus more on Earth, rather than explore space.

### HINT

Consider risks, costs, priorities, etc.

Read the text below and then complete the exercise and answer the practice questions that follow.

Why go to space?

**At NASA, we explore the secrets of the universe for the benefit of all, creating new opportunities and inspiring the world through discovery.**

**NASA's exploration vision is anchored in providing value for humanity by answering some of the most fundamental questions: Why are we here? How did it all begin? Are we all alone? What comes next? And, as an addendum to that: How can we make our lives better?**

**NASA was created more than half a century ago to begin answering some of these questions. Since then, space exploration has been one of the most unifying, borderless human endeavours to date. An international partnership of five space agencies from 15 countries operates the International Space Station, and two dozen countries have signed the Artemis Accords, signalling their commitment to shared values for long-term human exploration and research at the Moon. Through space exploration, we gain a new perspective to study Earth and the solar system. We advance new technologies that improve our daily lives, and we inspire a new generation of artists, thinkers, tinkerers, engineers and scientists.**

*(Source: Adapted from [www.nasa.gov/humans-in-space/why-go-to-space](http://www.nasa.gov/humans-in-space/why-go-to-space))*

## EXERCISE 5

- 1 Identify all the reasons that NASA gives for exploring space. There are at least six.
- 2 What is the writer's viewpoint about the value of space exploration? How do you know?

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 2 State the meaning of the following words as they are used in the material:
  - a 'anchored' (paragraph 2) [1]
  - b 'unifying' (paragraph 3) [1]
- 3 Write a report to an elected government official, arguing that humanity should be investing in space exploration.
 

Use your own words to write your report, based on what you have read in the text and also include your own ideas.

In your report you should:

  - outline the issue of space exploration
  - provide evidence to support the perspective that we should explore space.

Write about 120–150 words.

[12]

## 9.2 Analysing sources for argumentative texts

### INTRODUCTION TO SUB-UNIT

In any well-crafted argumentative text, the strength of the argument depends on the quality of the sources used to support it. It is not enough to simply include evidence; it needs to be relevant, trustworthy and persuasive. In this sub-unit, you will learn how to critically evaluate sources, identify bias and assess credibility. These skills are not only essential for your own reading and writing, but also for forming well-informed opinions in everyday life. By learning how to effectively analyse sources, you will be better equipped to construct stronger persuasive arguments and engage thoughtfully with other people's ideas.

The sub-unit will cover this in two sections:

- Source credibility and bias
- Identifying facts, opinions and assumptions.

### KEY TERM

**Source** A text that provides information or viewpoints. A source is usually used to support an argument.

### Source credibility and bias

When considering the credibility and potential bias of **sources** used in a text, you should ask yourself some key questions:

- Who wrote or produced the source? What might their agenda be?
- Is the language used emotive or neutral? Is it persuasive, or perhaps even manipulative?
- What forms of evidence are used, for example statistics, anecdotes, expert opinion? Are any of them verifiable?

The answers to these questions will help you assess the credibility and bias of any source that you are using.

Credible sources will be accurate, written by people with authority (and probably relevant credentials), relevant and informed. Non-credible sources are usually unreliable, and may lack factual accuracy, a sense of objectivity or authority.

### EXERCISE 6

Organise the following sources into two lists: credible sources and non-credible sources. You may want to work on this yourself or discuss with a group but, either way, you should consider your reasons for deciding whether or not each of these sources is credible.

- Unverified social media posts
- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Tabloid newspapers and magazines
- Government reports
- Established news sources with a strong history of journalistic integrity
- Comments made underneath web articles
- Personal blogs
- Websites with no clear author or citations
- Encyclopaedias

Read the two sources below, which are going to be used in an argumentative text about why chicken and mushroom is the best flavour pizza. Then complete the exercise that follows.



#### Text A

**Chicken and mushroom pizza isn't just a supremely tasty option, it's a surprisingly smart one. Mushrooms are rich in antioxidants and fibre, making them one of nature's most underrated health foods. When paired with delicious chicken and a crisp dough base, it transforms pizza from a guilty pleasure into a more balanced, satisfying meal. Critics may scoff at mushroom on pizza, but why shouldn't something delicious also be good for**

## GLOSSARY

**Scoff** An expression of scornful derision or mocking.

**Iconic** Very famous or popular. It can also mean something or someone who captures the essence of a particular time or movement.

you? In a world full of heavy, greasy pizzas, chicken and mushroom stands out as lighter, brighter and better for you. Chicken and mushroom isn't just acceptable: it's **iconic**. Next time you're ordering pizza, ask for chicken and mushroom with pride and confidence.

*Source: Mushroom Marketing Board*

### Text B

Chicken and mushroom pizza stands out for its unique flavour combination. While traditional pizzas often rely on rich cheeses and processed meats, chicken and mushroom is a lighter, fresher alternative. This not only enhances the taste but also creates a more balanced eating experience. Mushrooms are a good source of fibre and antioxidants, while chicken provides protein without the heaviness of some other meat toppings, such as salty and fatty processed meats. Although chicken and mushroom on pizza can be divisive, its widespread popularity over decades suggests that it is more than a passing trend. For those seeking a pizza that's both satisfying and a little lighter, chicken and mushroom remains a thoughtful, flavourful choice.

*Source: Pizza review blog*

## EXERCISE 7

Which of the two sources is more credible, and why? Write a paragraph to explain your reasoning. Use the following questions to plan your analysis:

- Who wrote the source? Do they appear to have an agenda?
- Is the language used emotive or neutral, persuasive or manipulative?
- What forms of evidence are used? Are they verifiable?

## KEY TERM

**Interrogate** The process of examining and questioning a source.

The process of examining and questioning a source can be referred to as **interrogating** a source. Interrogating sources for bias is an important step in your analysis of potential sources. As a reminder, you will not only want to quote from sources that support your own viewpoint, but also sources that are in opposition to your perspective, so that you can rebut them and, in doing so, strengthen your own argument. The exercise below will help you practise identifying bias.

## EXERCISE 8

There are various strategies that will help you identify bias in writing. Match each question below to the correct explanation of how it will give you information about bias.

Who is the author? What organisation or company are they affiliated with (if any)?

Is there any particularly emotive or persuasive language used?

Is anything missing? Are there perspectives or viewpoints that are not acknowledged in the text?

Consider the purpose of the writing: is it trying to inform, persuade, entertain, explain or persuade?

How does the text compare to others on the same topic?

Biased writing often uses particularly strong or persuasive language to convince the reader.

If the writing is trying to persuade (particularly if it is trying to sell something), it is more likely to be biased.

Comparing texts helps you to spot bias, as you notice differences in how the same topic is reported.

Sometimes bias arises from the agendas of particular groups, such as political parties or campaign groups.

A biased text can often ignore evidence that doesn't support its argument.

**KEY TERM**

**Synthesis** To combine information from two or more sources into your own writing.

**MEDIA INSPECTOR**

In pairs or groups, discuss what the benefits are of examining sources for bias. Why might this be important to do?

There is skill in bringing together different sources in support of a point or claim: this is referred to as **synthesising** sources. Synthesising sources, rather than summarising sources individually, demonstrates that you can bring together information from different places to create new, cohesive arguments or conclusions. This demonstrates your ability to think critically and to make connections across different texts and other sources, strengthening the writing that you produce.

Now put what you have learned about bias into practice by completing the exercise below.

**EXERCISE 9**

Find two different sources on the same topic of your choice, and use the questions and answers you matched in Exercise 8 to interrogate the sources for bias. Which of the sources is less biased? How do you know? Is that what you expected?

Use the sentence starters below to write a paragraph synthesising both your sources:

- 'Source A argues that...'
- 'In contrast, Source B points out...'
- 'While both writers care about..., they disagree on...'

**Identifying facts, opinions and assumptions**

Perhaps the best way to evaluate the accuracy of a source is to independently verify any evidence it has used or claims it has made. Be prepared to check multiple sources and be wary of texts that try to disguise opinions as facts. If you can find the same facts or information elsewhere, then there is a much higher chance that the information is accurate. This is especially true for sources that you have interrogated and found to be credible.

It is a common persuasive rhetorical device to present opinions as if they are facts. It is usually a good indicator that a writer is sharing an opinion rather than a fact if you examine it closely and find that it is impossible to verify or prove. The following two examples illustrate the difference:

- 'The best fruit is a banana.' – This is one person's opinion.
- 'All the major supermarkets report selling more bananas than any other item of fruit.' – This is potentially a fact and verifying it elsewhere will confirm this or not.

The final thing to cover before looking at some example texts is the idea of assumptions. Assumptions are problematic in argumentative texts because they make claims without proof and so they cannot be counted as factual. Writers can include assumptions in argumentative texts as part of the rhetorical devices used to persuade the reader to agree with them. For example, 'I'm sure you're as surprised as I am to learn that...'

Read the following passage and then complete the exercise and answer the practice questions that follow.

**IMPORTANT**

Please note that this text contains some sensitive topics.

What does the UK public really think about aid? From someone who knows.

*Duncan Green*

23 June 2025

*David Hudson, an academic with years of research on public opinion on aid, responds to a UK Government Minister's recent comments about public support (or in the minister's view, the lack of it).*

I couldn't agree more with Douglas Alexander's recent comments on the government's spending on international development. And I suspect, quietly, most international development professionals would too. Indeed, they should.

I'm also glad Alexander said this, because it needed saying: 'I think we have lost the argument at various points [and] public consent has been withdrawn. And truthfully on aid, it's not just fiscally challenged, it's culturally challenged as well.'

Culture is the new politics, after all.

But, has the public really withdrawn its consent and confidence? Our research suggests the answer is 'Yes, but not recently, and it fluctuates'.

The key point being – and thank goodness we have this tracking data – that the argument with the public was not lost in the past few years, it was lost somewhere around 2012–13. Yes, the political cross-party **consensus** on development held right the way through to 2021, before the first aid cuts came. But that was elite opinion. In terms of public opinion, 2005 was a high point, and thereafter it was downhill, followed by a bumpy plateau.

What were the bumps? When did people care more? Well, in one sense people always care. The public are compassionate and thoughtful. They always have been and always will be. Have a chat with a random stranger about whether they think that getting a girl into school in Bangladesh or securing **antiretroviral** therapy for people in South Africa who would otherwise die is the right thing to do. I suspect you will find them supportive.

But – until you speak with them – they won't care. Not because they don't, but because they are worried about everything else in their lives: the prices in the supermarket; potholes; bin collection; their children. And this is the point: whenever the issue comes on to people's **radar**, they are moved. In 2015, when Alan Kurdi, a two-year-old Syrian boy, was pictured dead on the beach in Turkey, support for aid and refugees jumped. In 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine, support went up.

The point being, when the public hears about injustice and the difference that their support could or does make, they fully invest in international aid and **solidarity**. But when it's not on their radar, those jumps fade away again; it's not that people don't care, they are just otherwise engaged.

*(Source: Adapted from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/activism-influence-change/2025/06/23/what-does-the-uk-public-really-think-about-aid-from-someone-who-knows>)*

## GLOSSARY

**Consensus** General agreement.

**Antiretroviral** A drug or therapy that acts against retroviruses, such as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), by inhibiting their ability to multiply in the body.

**Radar** Someone's attention or awareness.

**Solidarity** Mutual support. It often refers to unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest.

## EXERCISE 10

- 1 Write down two facts shared by the writer of the passage.
- 2 Write down two examples of where the writer is sharing opinion, rather than fact.
- 3 Is the writer making any assumptions? Where? How do you know?

## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

- 4 Identify **two** reasons why the writer of the text believes that the public is not disinterested in giving aid.

Look at the two paragraphs that start 'But – until you speak with them – they won't care...' and 'The point being, when the public hears...' (paragraphs 8 and 9). [2]

- 5 Use the text to:

- a identify **two** pieces of evidence that illustrate that the public is in support of giving aid. [2]
- b identify **two** ways in which people are most easily persuaded that aid is necessary. [2]

- 6 Use the text to summarise the reasons why the writer believes that the time is right for Britain to increase the aid it gives.

Answer in about 40 words using continuous prose. [4]

- 7 Write an email to your local government representative, persuading them that your community should increase the amount it is giving in aid.

Use your own words to write your email, based on what you have read in the text and also include your own ideas.

In your email you should:

- outline the importance for individuals and society of increasing aid
- explain and justify why it would be a good decision for your community.

Write about 120–150 words. [12]

## 9.3 Structuring argumentative texts

### INTRODUCTION TO SUB-UNIT

High-quality argumentative texts are well-structured. In this sub-unit you will learn about different ways to structure your argumentative writing, depending on how you want your reader to feel. One thing that most argumentative texts include is an acknowledgement, or rebuttal, of counter-arguments. This is a key way to strengthen the force of your argument, whether you are writing a balanced piece or something more persuasive.

This sub-unit will take you through the following areas:

- Planning and structuring a coherent argumentative text
- Using clear topic sentences
- Effectively introducing and rebutting counter-arguments.

### Planning and structuring a coherent argumentative text

The best place to start work on argumentative texts is to establish knowledge and understanding of some key terminology. The exercise below will take you through this.

### EXERCISE 11

The four terms below are all related to the topic of structuring argumentative texts. Correctly match each term to its definition.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Thesis statement | The first sentence of a paragraph, which introduces the main idea the paragraph will explore |
| Topic sentence   | A response that challenges, disproves or denies the counter-argument                         |
| Counter-argument | A clear sentence outlining the writer's main argument  |
| Rebuttal         | A viewpoint that opposes the writer's viewpoint  |

## EXEMPLIFICATION

The example of a high-quality argumentative text below has been annotated to show the different elements of its structure. Look at it carefully to see how it has been put together.

- Introduction of the issue and a good example of an effective topic sentence. — **We know too much about healthcare and medicine now to allow children to die of preventable childhood diseases. We have wasted too much time engaging in debate: we must make childhood vaccines compulsory and as soon as possible.**
- Thesis statement —
- Main point 1 — **The main benefit of vaccination is that it protects the recipient from many serious, even potentially deadly, diseases. Further than this though, it helps protect other people in communities by also helping to protect people who cannot have vaccines, such as those who aren't well enough to be vaccinated.**
- Main point 2 — **Secondly, vaccines undergo rigorous safety checks before they are approved for administration. Although side effects are not uncommon, they're usually mild and last only for a couple of days. Surely this is a reasonable price to pay for protection against a range of harmful diseases?**
- Counter-argument and rebuttal — **Those who believe that vaccines bring their own risks and dangers must look at the figures and weigh up their concerns against the overwhelming evidence that vaccines have helped save countless lives. Smallpox, for example, killed millions throughout history but has now been completely eradicated thanks to vaccinations.**
- Conclusion — **In conclusion, it is abundantly clear that vaccines are an essential way for us to protect ourselves, our communities, and our societies against a variety of dangerous diseases.**

### KEY TERM

#### Thesis statement

A clear statement outlining the writer's main argument.

As shown in the example, the structure you should use to construct a good-quality argumentative text that addresses counter-arguments is:

- Paragraph 1: Introduce the issue and your **thesis statement**
- Paragraph 2: Main point 1
- Paragraph 3: Main point 2
- Paragraph 4: Counter-argument and rebuttal
- Paragraph 5: Conclusion

For a longer or shorter text, you could simply add or remove main point or counter-argument paragraphs.

### Sustainability focus



Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic led to a huge amount of single-use plastic production and distribution, such as the wide usage of PPE and vaccination, to give two examples. In pairs or groups, discuss how we could navigate this tension.

## EXERCISE 12

Use the structure outlined above to plan an argumentative essay. You can choose one of the following topics, or another topic of your own choice. For your chosen topic, write notes on what you would include in each paragraph.

- Is homework beneficial for students?
- Is technology damaging to the environment?
- Should more money be devoted to the arts?

### Using clear topic sentences

As you recapped in Exercise 11, a topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph, which introduces the main idea the paragraph will explore. Someone should be able to follow your argument simply by reading your topic sentences.

### Sustainability focus

Research water scarcity as an issue in your community or country. In pairs or groups, discuss whether it is a problem. Why or why not? If it is, what is being done to tackle it?

## EXEMPLIFICATION

Read the following extract from a longer text about water scarcity. The writer has begun each paragraph with a strong and clear topic sentence – these are highlighted.

Water scarcity

**Water scarcity is an increasing problem on every continent, with poorer communities most badly affected.** To build resilience against climate change and to serve a growing population, an integrated and inclusive approach must be taken to managing this finite resource.

**Water scarcity is a relative concept.** The amount of water that can be physically accessed varies as supply and demand changes. Water scarcity intensifies as demand increases and/or as water supply is affected by decreasing quantity or quality.

**Water is a finite resource in growing demand.** As the global population increases, and resource-intensive economic development continues, many countries' water resources and infrastructure are failing to meet accelerating demand.

**Climate change is making water scarcity worse.** The impacts of a changing climate are making water more unpredictable. Terrestrial water storage – the water held in soil, snow and ice – is diminishing. This results in increased water scarcity, which disrupts societal activity.

**Women and girls are among the hardest hit.** Poor and marginalised groups are on the frontline of any water scarcity crisis, impacting their ability to maintain good health, protect their families and earn a living. For many women and girls, water scarcity means more laborious, time-consuming water collection, putting them at increased risk of attack and often precluding them from education or work.

(Source: [www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-scarcity](http://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-scarcity))

Hopefully you have noticed how, as well as indicating what the paragraph will be about, the topic sentence also acts as a summary of the key ideas of a paragraph.

Read the paragraph below and then complete the exercise that follows.

\_\_\_\_\_ They are a huge contributor to the sugar highs and crashes that students experience, particularly after break or lunch. High-sugar beverages are often also high in caffeine, flavourings and colourings, making them the very antithesis of the kind of refreshing, perhaps even nutritious, drink that school students should be enjoying during the school day.

## EXERCISE 13

The paragraph above is missing its topic sentence. Identify which of the following three topic sentences is the correct one that fits the content of the paragraph.

- 'Sugary drinks should be taxed at a higher rate.'
- 'Sugary drinks are harmful for young children.'
- 'Sugary drinks should be banned in schools.'

## Effectively introducing and rebutting counter-arguments

Complete the following true-or-false exercise to help you consider the reasons why your argumentative writing is strengthened by acknowledging, and addressing, counter-arguments.

### EXERCISE 14

State whether each of the following is true or false. Justify your answers.

Rebutting counter-arguments makes your writing better by:

- anticipating and addressing any concerns or objections your reader may have; this makes your writing more convincing
- proving that you are cleverer than your opponents
- improving your credibility by demonstrating how informed and fair you are, and that you have considered all sides of the issue
- demonstrating your ability to think critically and examine an issue from all sides and angles
- increasing the emotional intensity of your writing and making the reader experience strong emotions.

When introducing a counter-argument, you can signal your disagreement from the start by using a sentence starter that undermines the point.

### EXAMPLES

- While opponents of ... might try to argue that...
- Although some people could argue / have argued...
- A commonly misunderstood objection is that...

In this way, your attitude towards the counter-argument is clear, which means that your own stance is clearly evident.

There may be times when you want to be more balanced in your treatment of a topic or issue, such as when you are writing an argumentative piece that considers both sides of an issue equally. If so, you would use more neutral ways to introduce counter-arguments.

### EXAMPLES

- Many others believe...
- Supporters of ... argue that...
- It could be argued that...
- Another perspective is...

Once you have introduced a counter-argument, you should rebut it. This is also known as refuting or simply disagreeing. There are steps to follow to ensure that you structure this in the most effective way:

- 1 Introduce the counter-argument. This is best done factually and respectfully.
- 2 Draw attention to its flaws or weaknesses. You may want to highlight any evidence you have to disprove or dismiss it as a concern. You may want to explain what this position has overlooked.
- 3 Make sure that you have made it clear in what way(s) your position is the stronger or more valid one.

## EXAMPLES

Some sentence starters to introduce a rebuttal are:

- However, this view fails to consider...
- Yet this argument is weakened by...
- While some might believe..., this view ignores the fact that...

## EXERCISE 15

Write a short paragraph that introduces – and rebuts – a counter-argument. You can choose a topic of your own, or use one of the following:

- Should private air travel be banned?
- Should voting be compulsory?

You should include a topic sentence, a counter-argument and a rebuttal with an explanation. You may want to use some of the example sentence starters given above.

Read through the following extract from a longer argumentative essay and then complete the exercise that follows, to bring together what you have learned about counter-arguments and how to rebut them.

Should boxing be banned as a sport?

*Faras Ghani*

*27 December 2024*

**While other sports are working hard towards increased protection for participants, especially from concussion-related injuries, boxing promotes the very opposite: cause as much harm to your opponent as possible, leading to submission or knockout as a possible outcome – all of it intentional, celebrated and lauded with fame and financial rewards.**

According to the Manuel Velazquez Collection, which documents deaths in boxing, an average of 13 boxers are killed in the ring annually. Separate research conducted by the Association of Ringside Physicians said there were at least 339 deaths from 1950 to 2007, with a 'higher percentage at lower weight classes'.

**The surreal sight of a 58-year-old Tyson back in the ring delighted millions of his fans. But should the popularity, fame and revenue the sport brings absolve it of the risks and threats? And which outweighs the other?**

'People may come into boxing to vent anger and frustration, but they quickly learn that these things have little or no place in the training gym or the ring,' Philip O'Connor, a sports journalist, said.

Studies show that up to 20% of boxers will suffer a concussion in their careers, though many are not reported, especially in amateur boxing.

At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, where boxing is classified as an amateur sport, it had the highest number of injuries, according to the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* (BJSM). At the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics, it was second to BMX. Overall, it sits fifth in the list of Olympic sports with the highest injury rates.

The American Association of Neurological Surgeons says 90% of boxers sustain a traumatic brain injury during their career. *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy* reported that former boxers remain more vulnerable to the natural ageing of the brain and diseases of the brain.

A World Boxing Federation (WBF) spokesperson had earlier stated that 'boxing does so much good for young people – keeps them off the streets, away from drugs, teaches them discipline, self-confidence – that the good by far outweighs the bad'.

In the United States alone, the number of people participating in boxing reached about 6.7 million in 2021, according to market research company Statista, which added that the market size of the global boxing equipment industry amounted to over \$1.6bn in the same year.

(Source: Adapted from [www.aljazeera.com/sports/2024/12/27/should-boxing-be-banned-as-a-sport](http://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2024/12/27/should-boxing-be-banned-as-a-sport))

### EXERCISE 16

- 1 In the extract above, identify an example of each of the following features of a well-structured argumentative text:
  - Main point
  - Supporting evidence
  - Topic sentence
  - Counter-argument.

#### NOTE

This extract does not include the introduction or the conclusion.

- 2 Complete the extract by writing an appropriate introduction, a rebuttal to one of the counter-arguments, and a conclusion.

### PRACTICE QUESTION

- 8 Choose **one** of the following questions. You are advised to write an essay of 600–700 words and to use examples to support your arguments.
  - a 'We must do more to tackle the climate crisis.' To what extent do you agree with this opinion? [40]
  - b Electric cars are the future of transport. Discuss this statement. [40]

### MEDIA INSPECTOR

In pairs or groups, discuss whether broadcasters should show what audiences want to watch, no matter the ethical implications. What kind of responsibility should broadcasters have towards the people they film and/or feature?

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