



PAPER 1 – HOMEWORK

The following two passages focus on homework.

In the first passage Richard Morrison, writing in *The Times* newspaper, questions the value of homework, after a leading school announced it was going to reduce the amount of homework its pupils had to do.

Passage 1

Some poems strike a chord. Others ring a bell. But Philip Larkin's 'Toads' bongs like Big Ben inside my head. In the poem he says work is a like a toad and asks 'Why should I let the toad work squat on my life?'

5 The toad work has certainly squatted on my life. It has controlled, constrained and coloured (or discoloured) it. There aren't many waking hours when I'm not thinking about it. And of the 12,000-odd days that I've notched up as a theoretically free-willed adult, far too few have passed without me bowing to it. Unlike Larkin, however, I don't think that it is fear – of losing my pension, upsetting the boss, or whatever – that keeps me in this work-addicted state. It's guilt. And I know exactly where and when that guilt originated. At 10 school, 40 years ago.

The school was, and is, a fine institution. But as with most aspirational schools, competing fiercely for status and places at 'top' universities, it tended to instil a feeling that nothing could be achieved in life without hard slog – hours and hours of it, after school, every evening. At 14 I was doing two hours of homework a night; by 17 it was more like five. 15 Consequently my exam results were sparkling. But my social life was the opposite. Even at parties, the memory of quadratic equations still to be solved and irregular French verbs left unconjugated hung over me like a cloud. As for any interest in the world outside, how could I develop that? There weren't enough hours in the day.

20 What's worse, the nagging sense of guilt if I wasn't working persisted through university and into my adult life. It lingers even now, this feeling that time not spent doing the job is time wasted.

Homework has a lot to answer for. It doesn't mess up every child. But the mental oppression of leaving school for the day, and then facing hours of slog, alienates many. And there's another sizeable minority in whom it triggers a cosmic conscientiousness, out of all 25 proportion to the task at hand, that will blight the rest of their lives, impinging not just on social activities but on their responsibilities as parents too. This is tragic, because those are the very people whose work ethic and intellectual capability could be so vital for society, if properly balanced by a healthy attitude to recreation and family life.



30 In the 40 years since I last wore a blazer, the culture of excessive homework, especially in 'high-flying' schools, has become far worse. There is one obvious reason for that. Education is now controlled by a generation of politicians who, on the whole, have no cultural hinterlands themselves – no interests outside politics. So they find it almost impossible to understand the value of giving children the time and opportunities to discover the infinite richness and possibilities of life. The narrowing of the educational curriculum in this country over the past 30 years – pushing art, music, sport and drama to the margins or beyond – has been shocking.

At the same time the fetish with league tables has forced teachers to turn schools into fact-cramming, rote-learning factories in which narrowly focused lessons are reinforced by stacks of homework. Our education system is now as blinkered, as grindingly utilitarian, as in the era mocked by Dickens in *Hard Times*. Is it any wonder that so many school-leavers have no pastimes except shopping, watching telly and binge-drinking?

So the news that a leading state school has announced a huge reduction in its homework requirements, releasing five or more hours each week for a broader exploration of the world, brought joy to my heart. Especially as the initiative seems to be part of a wider move among free-thinking schools to recognise – or rather, to recognise again, after decades of denial – the importance of non-curricular activities in the nurturing of a rounded individual.

The question is whether this trend can be turned into a sea-change. Don't underestimate the difficulties of doing that. Thousands of playing fields have been sold. There are far fewer after-school groups, such as Scouts or youth clubs, around. Lots of parents are only too grateful if their kids get sacks of homework, because then they don't feel any obligation to devise activities themselves to stimulate their offspring's minds. And teachers have become so conditioned to following a narrow curriculum to the letter that many would feel terrified if asked to run 'enrichment activities'.

But change the system we must. Piling mountains of homework on children is the surest way to turn education into drudgery. And once that happens, curiosity dies and a soulless, sullen, mechanistic compliance takes over. The lucky ones escape the system as soon as they can and start exploring the world properly. The unlucky ones never escape. Larkin's toad has got them in his clutches for life.

I know. I'm still there.

In the second passage, Eleanor Mills, writing in *The Sunday Times* newspaper in October 2012, comments on an announcement by the President of France that he planned to abolish homework in France.

Passage 2

It is every working parent's nightmare. You stagger through the door, knackered, longing for a drink – or just a chance to stare at the wall for a few minutes – and instead find yourself supervising what seems an unrelenting flow of homework. While I loathe it, I also believe the whole rigmarole is essential. Last week the President of France announced that he wanted to abolish homework, his argument being that homework increases social inequality because wealthier children are more likely than their poorer peers to have parents who will help them do it. In this, as in so much else, he is wrong.

I am in favour of homework because I believe it consolidates in a child's mind what they have been taught at school and, more importantly, reinforces that holy grail of character development: delayed gratification.

The value of homework is in the transaction around it, the age-old bargain of: do your homework and then you can watch television/go out and kick a football/play on the computer. My grandmother had a maxim that was drummed into me: business before pleasure. Accepting deferred gratification is one of the life skills parents must teach their children, and homework plays a key role in nurturing the ability to delay instant pleasure in return for a bigger long-term reward. Setting up a culture in the home that effort will be rewarded has huge long-term benefits. If you make your offspring do their homework and then reward them, you are setting them up with a valuable blueprint for life.

Homework, of course, is not just about developing character; it also works on an academic level – homework, particularly in secondary schools, has been shown by numerous research projects to improve educational attainment, particularly when it is done with a motivated and engaged adult. That is not shorthand for 'middle class': many immigrant groups who do well educationally (Chinese, Indians and Nigerians in particular) have below-average incomes but motivated and engaged parents who set great store by learning. When such a parent helps a child with their homework, they transmit those values. For children from chaotic families, school homework clubs can serve a similar role: pupils stay behind after school to complete their homework with help from teachers. This helps them overcome the lack of support at home.

Being pro-homework is not a popular stance, however. The President's plans have been greeted with gleeful joy by all manner of pontificators, some of whom have been waging an anti-homework crusade for years, and in the past few days the media have been awash with lazy parents falling over themselves to agree with the French President.

Of course, I don't endorse the phenomenon of hyper-parenting or the kind of tiger mothering on display in a recent television documentary that showed pre-school children being forced to do hours of homework every night, their heads drooping on to their books with exhaustion. Such relentless drilling of little ones risks putting them off learning for life.

From the age of seven or so, however, when children have to start learning their tables and mastering spelling, half an hour of homework to reinforce that day's lesson or practising for a test, or reading aloud, has to be beneficial.

Many parents complain that homework has become a battleground, souring the precious time in the evenings they have as a family. But being a parent isn't about being your child's best mate; it's about making sure they have the tools to succeed in life. Learning to buckle down and get on with it, even if it's the last thing you feel like, is the cornerstone of success.

Questions

Passage 1 Questions

1. By referring to lines 1–10, explain in your own words why the writer agrees so strongly with the poem 'Toads'. 3
2. Re-read lines 11–21. 2
 - a) Identify **two** key problems the writer suffered as a result of working hard at school. 4
 - b) By referring to at least two features of language in these lines, analyse how the writer's use of language conveys the unpleasantness he associates with schoolwork. In your answer you should refer to features such as word choice, sentence structure, imagery ... 4
3. Identify **four** negative effects of homework the writer gives in lines 22–36. 4
4. The writer's tone when he is describing the effects of school league tables in lines 37–41 is one of contempt. By referring closely to these lines, analyse how his use of language creates this tone. In your answer you should refer to such features as word choice, imagery, sentence structure ... 4
5. Re-read lines 42–53. 4

Explain what advantages the writer thinks would come from a reduction in homework, but why it might be difficult to achieve.
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of the last two paragraphs (lines 54–59) as a conclusion to the passage as a whole. You should refer in your answer to ideas and language. 4

Passage 2 Question

7. Both writers express their views about homework. Identify key areas on which they disagree. In your answer, you should refer in detail to both passages. 5

You may answer this question in continuous prose or in a series of developed bullet points.



These marking guidelines have been written to replicate the style of Marking Instructions used by SQA. This should help teachers/lecturers advise their students about the best way to answer and how marks will be allocated.

These detailed instructions can, and should, however, be used for more than simply marking students' responses – the additional points (especially in the questions calling for analysis) should be seen as a useful teaching tool. Exploring *all* the possible answers on word choice, sentence structure, and so on, is a very worthwhile classroom exercise for teachers and students alike.

NB: For ease of reference, the exact wording of each question is given, in bold, at the start of the relevant 'Expected response' column. This differs from SQA practice.

Answers to questions on imagery: Please note that the 'Just as ... so ...' approach used here is a suggestion only and is **not** required by SQA, who do not ask that candidates identify the literal root of an image before progressing to analysing it. However, it is an approach that the authors feel is helpful to both students and teachers as a way to learn about analysing imagery.

PAPER 1 – HOMEWORK

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH QUESTION

Question	Expected response	Max mark	Additional guidance
1.	<p>By referring to lines 1–10, explain in your own words why the writer agrees so strongly with the poem 'Toads'.</p> <p>Candidates should explain in their own words why the writer agrees so strongly with the poem 'Toads'.</p> <p>Candidates must use their own words. No marks are awarded for verbatim quotations from the passage.</p> <p><i>1 mark for each point from the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>	3	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he agrees with Larkin that work is an unpleasant, disagreeable influence in life (explanation of 'squat') • because work has inhibited his behaviour in many ways (explanation of 'controlled'/'constrained') • he feels that work has influenced his life (explanation of 'coloured') • he feels that work has controlled/ dominated his life (explanation of 'bowing to it') <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>
2. a)	<p>Re-read lines 11–21. Identify two key problems the writer suffered as a result of working hard at school.</p> <p>Candidates should identify two key problems the writer suffered as a result of working hard at school.</p>	2	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he had no time to enjoy himself/relax (explanation of 'social life was the opposite [of sparkling]') • his life was focused exclusively on schoolwork (explanation of 'As for any interest in the world outside')

		<p>Candidates must use their own words. No marks are awarded for verbatim quotations from the passage.</p> <p><i>1 mark for each point from the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> this left him with a sense that he was doing something wrong any time he wasn't working (explanation of 'guilt ... persisted into university and adult life') <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>
2.	b)	<p>Re-read lines 11–21. By referring to at least two features of language in these lines, analyse how the writer's use of language conveys the unpleasantness he associates with schoolwork. In your answer you should refer to features such as word choice, sentence structure, imagery ...</p> <p>Candidates should analyse how the writer's use of language conveys the unpleasantness he associates with schoolwork.</p> <p>Marks will depend on the quality of comment on appropriate language feature(s). For full marks there must be comment on at least two features.</p> <p>2 marks may be awarded for reference plus detailed/insightful comment; 1 mark for reference plus more basic comment; 0 marks for reference alone. Thus 4 marks could be gained as 2 + 2 or 2 + 1 + 1 or 1 + 1 + 1 + 1.</p> <p><i>Possible answers are shown in the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>	4	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <p>Word choice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'competing' suggests it was all about being better than someone or something else 'fiercely' suggests it was aggressive, brutal 'slog' suggests laborious, unpleasant, unrewarding 'nagging' suggests something that lingers, can't be got rid of <p>Sentence structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dash introduces an expansion of 'slog' that emphasises the relentless nature of the work repetition – 'hours and hours' gives the impression of endless amounts of time list-like structure of 'hours and hours of it, after school, every evening' suggests a gruelling, unrelenting process semicolon to balance 'At 14 ...'/'By 17 ...' highlights the inexorable progression question ('...how could I') creates a despairing, defeated tone <p>Imagery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'hung over me like a cloud' – just as a dark cloud contains a threat of imminent downpour, so his schoolwork was always in his mind, gloomy, menacing <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>
3.		<p>Identify four negative effects of homework the writer gives in lines 22–36.</p> <p>Candidates should identify four negative effects of homework the writer gives.</p> <p>Candidates must use their own words. No marks are awarded for verbatim quotations from the passage.</p> <p><i>1 mark for each point from the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>	4	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it becomes a form of emotional, psychological torture (explanation of 'mental oppression') it turns a lot of people away from learning (explanation of 'alienates many') it makes some people abnormally dedicated to work (explanation of 'cosmic conscientiousness') such that it damages them for ever (explanation of 'blight the rest of their lives') ... and destroys their potential to benefit the community (explanation of 'could be so vital for society') it prevents children from being exposed to other worthwhile activities/pastimes (explanation of 'giving children the time and opportunities to discover the infinite richness and possibilities of life') <p>or any other acceptable answer. →</p>

4.	<p>The writer's tone when he is describing the effects of school league tables in lines 37–41 is one of contempt. By referring closely to these lines, analyse how his use of language creates this tone. In your answer you should refer to such features as word choice, imagery, sentence structure ...</p> <p>Candidates should analyse how the writer's use of language creates a contemptuous tone.</p> <p>Marks will depend on the quality of comment on appropriate language features. For full marks there must be comment on at least two features.</p> <p>2 marks may be awarded for reference plus detailed/insightful comment; 1 mark for reference plus more basic comment; 0 marks for reference alone.</p> <p><i>Possible answers are shown in the 'Additional Guidance' column.</i></p>	4	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <p>Word choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'fetish' suggests obsession, fixating, with a hint of something a little unwholesome• 'forced' suggests pressure, compulsion, teachers are given no choice• 'factories' suggests schools have become industrialised, dehumanised, merely churning out a product• 'stacks of homework' suggests the homework is just a series of bundles, lacking in intellectual value• 'blinkered' suggests the system is narrow-minded, inflexible• 'grindingly utilitarian' suggests something relentlessly and damagingly driven by easily measurable, functional outcomes <p>Imagery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'fetish' – just as a fetish is, in primitive society, an object with magical powers, so league tables are looked on as all important in measuring the quality of education• 'factories' – just as a factory carries out an industrial process to produce manufactured objects, so schools have become dehumanised, focused on measurable output• 'blinkered' – just as blinkers are designed to narrow a horse's vision (to increase its chances of winning a race), so league tables are depriving students of a wider outlook on life by focusing on exam results only <p>Sentence structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the hyphenated structure of 'fact-cramming, rote-learning factories' suggests compression, pressure; imitates the repetitive sound of a relentless operation• the repetitive structure of 'as blinkered, as grindingly utilitarian' suggests the relentless, grinding down nature of the process• the rhetorical question 'Is it any wonder ...?' suggests it's all too predictable• the list of exaggerated details in 'shopping, watching telly and binge-drinking' sounds like a deliberate attempt to parody the standard criticisms of teenagers <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>
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5.	<p>Re-read lines 42–53. Explain what advantages the writer thinks would come from a reduction in homework, but why it might be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Candidates should explain what advantages the writer thinks would come from a reduction in homework, but why it might be difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Candidates must use their own words. No marks are awarded for verbatim quotations from the passage.</p> <p><i>1 mark for each point from the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>	4	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it would allow pupils to widen the scope of their studies (explanation of 'broader exploration of the world') it would add to the fostering, cultivation of students as a whole (explanation of 'nurturing of a rounded individual') <p>Why difficult to achieve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> because opportunities for various activities have been reduced recently (explanation of 'playing fields ... after-school groups') because parents like homework as it allows them to abdicate their own responsibilities (explanation of 'only too grateful ... don't feel any obligation to devise activities themselves') because teachers have become habituated to the limited, exam-focused approach to teaching (explanation of 'conditioned to following a narrow curriculum') <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>
6.	<p>Evaluate the effectiveness of the last two paragraphs (lines 54–59) as a conclusion to the passage as a whole. You should refer in your answer to ideas and language.</p> <p>Candidates should evaluate the effectiveness of the last two paragraphs as a conclusion to the passage as a whole.</p> <p>Marks will depend on the quality of comment on the effectiveness of the last two paragraphs. For full marks there must be comment on ideas and language.</p> <p>2 marks may be awarded for detailed/insightful comment; 1 mark for more basic comment; 0 marks for reference alone. Thus 4 marks could be gained as 2 + 2 or 2 + 1 + 1 or 1 + 1 + 1 + 1.</p> <p><i>Possible answers are shown in the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p>	4	<p>Possible answers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> negative descriptions of homework ('piling ... mountains ... drudgery') are similar to the language and ideas elsewhere in the passage negative descriptions of the effects of homework ('curiosity dies and a soulless, sullen, mechanistic compliance takes over') are similar to the language and ideas elsewhere in the passage reference to Larkin picks up the opening of the passage, which began the idea of work as overpowering, restrictive 'got them in his clutches for life' is a depressing, rather unsettling idea, reflecting the writer's admission near the start of the passage the final paragraph is a brutally simple recognition of his own feelings <p>or any other acceptable answer.</p>



7.	<p>Both writers express their views about homework. Identify key areas on which they disagree.</p> <p>Candidates should identify key areas of disagreement in the two passages.</p> <p>There may be some overlap among the areas of disagreement. Markers will have to judge the extent to which a candidate has covered two points or one.</p> <p>Candidates can use bullet points in this final question, or write a number of linked statements.</p> <p>Evidence from the passage may include quotations, but these should be supported by explanations.</p> <p><i>Approach to marking is shown in the 'Additional guidance' column.</i></p> <p><i>Key areas of disagreement are shown in the grid overleaf. Other answers are possible.</i></p>	5	<p>The mark for this question should reflect the quality of response in two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of the key areas of disagreement in attitude/ideas • level of detail given in support <p>The following guidelines should be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 marks – identification of three key areas of disagreement with insightful use of supporting evidence • 4 marks – identification of three key areas of disagreement with appropriate use of supporting evidence • 3 marks – identification of three key areas of disagreement • 2 marks – identification of two key areas of disagreement • 1 mark – identification of one key area of disagreement • 0 marks – failure to identify one key area of disagreement and/or misunderstanding of task
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	Area of disagreement	Richard Morrison	Eleanor Mills
1.	General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework is a bad thing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homework is a good thing
2.	Plans to reduce/abolish homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • welcomes this enthusiastically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinks this is wrong/misguided
3.	Educational benefits/short-term effects of homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none, more likely to cause students to switch off from education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforces what's been taught at school that day
4.	Attitude to homework's effect on attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (probably) leads to good grades, but at enormous social and psychological cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seems to imply that achieving good grades through homework is unquestionably a good thing
5.	Long-term effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disastrous – can make people damagingly obsessed with work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is character-building; reinforces concept of 'deferred gratification'; shows that effort will be rewarded – an important lesson for life
6.	Effect on families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourages/allows parents to abdicate responsibility for inspiring children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can create a sense of bonding between parent and child; can provide support, structure and purpose to disorganised families