

## Reading non-fiction and media: 1. Typical questions and types of text

This audio bite is about typical questions and types of text.

- ALIX: This part of the exam is all about reading – you’re given some texts to read, usually just two texts, and some questions to answer about them. So the first thing to do is ... well, I wouldn’t start by reading the texts!
- ELIOT: Yes, it seems odd, but Alix is exactly right. You have to answer the questions, so start by reading these. They usually tell you what the texts are about anyway. So if you had a question like this:
- ALIX: Sharon is writing a letter to her friend, Hanifa. Read lines 3 to 9 closely. List three opinions from these lines that Sharon has about animals and animal rights.
- ELIOT: We haven’t read the actual text yet, but we know who these two people are, that one wrote a letter, and what the letter seems to be about. We also know that lines 3 to 9 are the important ones.
- ALIX: Now it could be that on line 2 in the passage there’s a really difficult phrase, like ‘expressions of self pity’. You don’t quite understand it. And it would be easy to panic and feel you really don’t know what to do next. But it’s not part of the question. In fact, you’d only see it when you’re skimming through looking for the answer to the first question. And so you can ignore it, because it’s not what you’re supposed to write about.
- ELIOT: So even if it seems is bit weird, try to go for the questions first, and ignore things which you don’t need. The questions tend to be similar each year – they start by asking you to find things in the text. Like finding three opinions in the letter, or finding some facts in a leaflet.
- ALIX: Then there’s usually a question asking you to explain something that’s in the text. For instance, you might be asked what examples a writer has chosen, and why they chose these.
- ELIOT: This means you’re not just copying from the text, but understanding why it was written like this. The last two questions usually focus on particular bits of the passages. You might have to write about the purposes of a text, its audience and its presentation – such as its use of pictures. Or you may have to say how the writers use language.
- ALIX: And you won’t know what the passages will be on. You might get all sorts of subjects, from scuba diving to pop music, from collecting stamps to growing plants. You aren’t expected to

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know the subject, because all the information you need is in the passages.

ELIOT: But you are expected to know how texts work, how they are put together. There will be a media text, such as a newspaper report, a magazine article or a leaflet. So you need to know about things like purpose, audience and presentation.

ALIX: So when you start, concentrate on the questions and don't be put off by difficult words in the passages.

You normally have a number of questions. At first you just have to pick out information. Later on you must explain why something is used. There are lots of different subjects you could be asked about, but all the information you need is in the passages.

There are longer questions on audience, purpose and presentation, so listen to the audio clips which deal with these. If you've got time, you could also go on the internet, maybe visit GCSE Bitesize online to get some more ideas.