



Summarize Written Text Question Bank

Official Guide

(Lauren Kennedy, 2012)

1.

A dowry – the money or property a bride brings to her husband at marriage – was common throughout much of the ancient world, and also flourished in medieval Europe.

In many places around the world, weddings were formal occasions, accompanied by gift giving and rituals. The practice of dowries apparently originated when a bride's parents gave her presents. As time went on, the dowry developed various functions. A dowry of household good often helped the newly weds set up their own home. A dowry of property or jewelry would help the wife support herself if her husband died. Generally, the husband returned the dowry to his in-laws if he and his wife divorced or if his wife died childless.

Sometimes the groom's family paid for the bride, often to compensate her family for the money spent raising her. If the bride had been a valuable worker, her family was sometimes compensated for the loss of her economic support.

Today, traditional wedding observances are losing ground all over the world. However, some traditional cultures, including gypsies, many Hindus, and certain African societies, continue to see dowries as a usual part of marriage.

In the African nation of Sudan, traditionally, the family of the groom has offered cattle, often as many as 100 animals, to the family of the bride. A groom of the Roma people, or gypsies, pays the bride's family for the loss of their daughter. The bride price also ensures that the bride will be well-treated by her new family. Negotiations between the families of the bride and groom can become quite extensive, with the bride's father calculation how much his daughter has cost him since her birth, and how much she could be expected to earn during her lifetime.

During and after the Middle Ages, young girls in rural areas typically received a dowry bed when she turned 12, followed by a wardrobe the next year. Furniture was often painted with designs representing family history and specific regions. Brides often entered marriage with enough goods to set up a household. Grooms received livestock and tools, so they could begin farming.

2.

Public figures include politicians and other public officials such as judges and civil servants as well as celebrities such as film stars, musicians and sports stars. The very nature of these roles opens these people to scrutiny by the press. The extent to which the media are legally free to investigate and publish details of public figures' private lives varies from country to country. Countries like France are much stricter on protection personal privacy than, for example, Britain.

People have a right to know about those in power. Whether through taxes, in the case of politicians and civil servants, or by revenue generated by films, TV, sports appearances or concerts in the case of celebrities – these people's income is dependant on the general public.

People have the right to make informed judgements about the kind of leaders they have. Attempts to restrict what may be reported about public figures in the press could easily become a conspiracy to keep voters in the dark and to manipulate them. All elections are to a greater or lesser extent about the character of the leading politicians involved. Unless the voters are allowed insights into their private lives they will lack the information needed to make a fair decision at the polling booth. For example, some people believe that a politician who betrayed his wife in an affair was equally capable of breaking his promises and lying to his country.

Exposing corruption and dishonesty on the part of public officials and businesses is a critical part of the function of a free press, and it is essential to the functioning of a free-market economy. If investigative journalists are prevented from scrutinising the private lives of public figures, then corruption and crime will be much easier to hide.

Public figures know that with fame comes a price and that price is constant scrutiny. In fact, many celebrities actively seek media exposure in order to advance their careers, revealing to the median many aspects of their personal lives. Once success has been bought in such a fashion it is then somewhat hypocritical to complain of "press intrusion" into those few aspects the star would prefer to remain hidden.

3.

As we have already seen, the American economy is increasingly global and effects of a downturn in one area of the world can immediately affect the value of American stocks at home. Throughout the first half of the year, it was widely speculated that Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan would choose to raise interest rates in the US to cool down the economy a bit and prevent inflation from creeping in. By late September, though, he was coming under increasing pressure to lower interest rates to fend off deflationary pressure. What happened?

As economic troubles stop flare up around the globe, the earning estimates of American firms who do business abroad begin to flatten. Without these international consumers to buy their products, there are fewer sales, which means that inventories pile up. When there is more supply than demand, prices go down. Lower prices would normally cause demand to pick up, but in an uncertain economy people tend to postpone purchases. We see this tendency in the American economy with computer products where consumers believe that the prices will go down if they wait another six

months, so they decide to hold off. This tendency causes further gluts in the market, which eventually leads manufacturers to slow production. They lay off workers, causing domestic consumption to fall further since there is less money to buy goods. These effects ripple throughout the economy and create a deflationary spiral that can lead to a recession or even a depression.

4.

By 1984, the internet had grown to include 1,000 host computers. The National Science Foundation was one of the first outside institutions hoping to connect to this body of information. Other government, non-profit, and educational institutions followed. Initial attempts to catalogue this rapidly expanding system of networks were simple. Among the first was Archie, a list of FTP information created by Peter Deutsch at McGill University in Montreal. However, the greatest innovation in the Internet was still to come, brewing in an MIT laboratory in Cambridge, Mass.

The World Wide Web, or the Web, is often confused with the Internet. In fact, it is just one part of the Internet. In fact, it is just one part of the Internet, along with email, video conferencing, and streaming audio channels.

In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee, now a scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, introduced a new system of communication on the Internet which used hyperlinks and a user-friendly graphical interface. His slice of the Internet pie came to be known as the World Wide Web.

Berners-Lee says, "The Web is an abstract (imaginary) space of information. On the Net, you find computers – on the Web, you find documents, sounds, videos, ...information. On the Net, the connections are cables between computers; on the web, connections are hypertext links. The Web exists because of programs which communicate between computers on the Net. The Web could not be without the Net. The Web made the Net useful because people are really interested in information (not to mention knowledge and wisdom!) and don't really want to know about computers and cables."

5.

Until the early 1960s, newspapers published separate job listing for men and women. It wasn't until the passage of the Equal Pay Act on June 10, 1963 that it became illegal to pay women lower rates for the same job strictly on the basis of their sex.

The wage gap is a statistical indicator often used as an index of the status of women's earnings relative to men's. It is expressed as a percentage (e.g., in 2005, women earned 81% as much as men) and is calculated by dividing the median annual earnings for women by median annual earnings for men. Since 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed, the closing of the wage gap between men and women has been at a rate of about half a penny a year.

6.

The workplace has changed radically in the decades since the passage of the Equal Pay Act.

But what has not changed radically, however, is women's pay. The wage gap has narrowed, but it is still significant. Women earned 59% of the wages men earned in 1963; in 2005, they earned 81% of men's wages – an improvement of about half a penny per dollar earned every year. Why is there still such a disparity?

A variety of explanations for the persistent wage gap have been offered. One is that older women are factored into the wage gap equation, and many of these women form an older generation work in jobs still subject to the attitudes and conditions of the past.

7.

By a miraculous process which we still do not fully understand, children know all about the correct order of the various parts of speech in a sentence. They have never heard of nouns, verbs, adjectives and articles, but they instinctively know what follows what. They learn the rules for ordering the words without one lesson. They know that "was" is not likely to follow "the".

They also know that the sentence doesn't make sense. You are much more likely to get an 'error' of "wall" substituted for "waterfall" because it is a possible (and more likely) alternative. In this case the child has also chosen a word that starts with the same letter.

8.

Usually, the child is not guessing when they read a word incorrectly. They are using a large number of clues to figure out the most likely alternative. They are making approximations. The child who read "was" for "waterfall" was using the strategy of the sound of the first letter, but was not making use of either meaning or grammatical cues.

This is useful information for the adult who is listening. This child was not reading for meaning. So they were not reading at all. Reading is not pronouncing words. I could probably pronounce most words in an instruction book for servicing a phantom jet. But I wouldn't have the faintest idea what it was all about.

No matter what age – if your child is not understanding what they are reading, they are not reading. So abandon ship. Find something that they can understand and start with easier or more interesting material.

9.

The exhibition is a very personal distillation of the events of Bryan Palmer's expeditions. Much of Bryan's work manages to record a history of the attempts on the summit of K-2 with a large dose of nostalgia thrown in for good measure. The photographs reflect the power of human survival being pushed beyond natural limits. Take for example, his collection of Mike Groom on the summit of Mt Cho Oyu. The agony captured in the facial shots tells so much. There is nothing serene about Palmer's work although the beauty of the mountains is always gloriously magnified.

“Contemplating the Summit” is certainly tinged with a surreal quality. The apparent incongruity of this picture gives it a great appeal. The truth behind this photo was that Palmer lost the top of his left index finger to frostbite. He was in danger of losing nine fingers (unimaginable for a photographer). But the intervention of a skilled Australian acupuncturist, remarkably, meant he only lost the one finger top.

10.

The birth of the 20th century was like a flaming sunrise. More was expected of the century than any other. So much had been achieved in the previous one that it seemed sensible to expect that henceforth the world’s triumphs would far outweigh the disasters.

This infant century promised most to the European people, whether they lived at home or in the far-off lands they had colonised. Their children had higher hopes of an education than ever before, and the day-long labour of 10-year-olds in farms and workshops was no longer normal. The standard of living was improving, famines were becoming fewer and people were living longer. Warfare between the major European nations seemed to be on the wane, though very large armies and navies were paraded at national celebrations. Democracy was spreading, and liberty too. But most of these advantages belonged to only one quarter of the world’s people, and did not yet seem likely to spread to Africa, Asia, and the remote Pacific Islands.

There was peril as well as promise in the approaching century. The sunrise of 1901 was dazzling, but a bank of dark, slowly shifting clouds hovered above the light.

Europe ruled much of the world. Most of the ocean liners and large warships flew British, German or French flags. Most of the big cities, and their famous palaces, museums, art galleries and universities were in Europe. Most of the world’s railways and telegraph lines were built or financed by Europeans. Most of the major islands of the world were provinces and colonies of Britain, Holland, France, Portugal, Spain or Germany. Nearly all of Africa and nearly all of the Pacific Islands were ruled from Europe. In Asia, the only major countries that stood outside the European empires were China and Japan.

Practice Test Plus

(Kate Chandler, 2013)

1. By far the most popular and most consumed drink in the world is water, but it may come as no surprise that the second most popular beverage is tea. Although tea was originally grown only in certain parts of Asia – in countries such as China, Burma and India - it is now a key export product in more than 50 countries around the globe. Countries that grow tea, however, need to have the right tropical climate, which includes up to 200 centimetres of rainfall per year to encourage fast growth, and temperatures that range from ten to 35 degrees centigrade. They also need to have quite specific geographical features, such as high altitudes to promote the flavour and taste of the tea, and land that can offer plenty of shade in the form of other trees

and vegetation to keep the plants cool and fresh. Together these conditions contribute to the production of the wide range of high-quality teas that are in such huge demand among the world's consumers. There is green tea, jasmine tea, earl grey tea, peppermint tea, tea to help you sleep, tea to promote healing and tea to relieve stress; but above all, tea is a social drink that seems to suit the palates and consumption habits of human beings in general.

2. With all the discussions about protecting the earth and saving the planet, it is easy to forget that we also need to preserve the many species of fish that live in the oceans. In developed countries, much larger quantities of fish are consumed than was the case a century ago when fish only featured on the menu once a week. These days, fish has become a popular healthy alternative to meat and this has created a demand for species such as cod, mackerel and tuna that far outstrips the demands of the previous generation. Throughout the world too, increasing consumption during the past 30 years has meant that the shallow parts of the ocean have been overfished in an effort to supply homes, shops and restaurants with the quantities of fish that they require. Yet despite the sophisticated fishing techniques of today, catches are smaller than they were a century or more ago. What is more, boats are having to drop their nets much deeper into the oceans and the fish they are coming up with are smaller and weigh less than they used to. While government controls have had some effect on fish stocks, the future does not offer a promising picture. Experts predict large-scale extinctions and an irreversibly damaging effect on entire ecosystems, unless greater efforts are made to conserve fish stocks and prevent overfishing in the world's waters.
3. Most sea creatures, from whales and dolphins to fish, sharks, shrimps and possibly even anemones respond to sound, and many can produce it. They use it to hunt and to hide, find mates and food, form and guide shoals, navigate 'blind', send messages and transmit warnings, establish territories, warn off competitors, stun prey, deceive predators, and sense changes in water and conditions.

Marine animals click bones and grind teeth; use drum-tight bladders and special sonic organs to chirp, grunt, and boom: belch gases; and vibrate special organs. Far from the 'silent deep', the oceans are a raucous babel.

Into this age-long tumult, in the blink of an evolutionary eye, has entered a new thunder: the throb of mighty engines as 46,220 large vessels plough the world's shipping lanes. Scientists say that background noise in the ocean has increased roughly by 15 decibels in the past 50 years. It may not sound like much in overall terms; but it is enough, according to many marine biologists, to mask the normal sounds of ocean life going about its business. At its most intense, some even say noise causes whales to become disoriented, dolphins to develop 'the bends', fish to go deaf, flee their breeding grounds or fail to form shoals - enough to disrupt the basic biology of two thirds of the planet.

'Undersea noise pollution is like the death of a thousand cuts', says Sylvia Earle, chief scientist of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 'Each sound in itself may not be a matter of critical concern, but taken all together, the noise from shipping, seismic surveys, and

military activity is creating a totally different environment than existed even 50 years ago. That high level of noise is bound to have a hard, sweeping impact on life in the sea.'

4. Humans have been cultivating chillies as food for 6,000 years, but we are still learning new things about the science behind their heat and how it reacts with our body. In the late 1990s, scientists identified the pain nerves that detect capsaicin: the chemical in chillies responsible for most of the burning sensation in our mouth. But it's only during the last few years that scientists have also learnt why chillies evolved to be spicy in the first place, and they have managed to cultivate new varieties that are up to 300 times hotter than the common Jalapeno.

The hottest part of a chilli is not the seeds, as many people think, but the white flesh that houses the seeds, known as the placenta. But why did chillies evolve to be hot in the first place? Most scientists believe capsaicin acts mainly as a deterrent against would-be mammal predators such as rodents. But recent research suggests this may not be the whole story. US scientists working in Bolivia have studied how hot and mild chillies differ in their susceptibility to a certain harmful fungus. It turns out that the hotter the chilli, the better its defences against the fungus, leading the researchers to propose that heat may have evolved to help chillies deal with harmful microbes, as well as hungry mammals.

5. Inequality between world citizens used to be determined in equal measures by class and location. New research, however, reveals that people's fortunes are being dictated primarily by where they live. As a result, economic migration has become the key way for individuals from developing countries to improve their economic standing, and governments will not be able to alleviate the pressure of migration on their societies until global inequality is reduced.

In *Global Inequality: from class to location, from proletarians to migrants*, Branko Milanovic, of the University of Maryland, examines the differences in income between countries and concludes that a key priority for policy makers should be aid and support for developing countries.

'Not only is the overall inequality between world citizens greater in the early 21st century than it was more than a century and a half ago, but its composition has entirely changed; from being an inequality determined in equal measures by class and location, it has become preponderantly an inequality determined by location only,' finds the report. 'Analysis of incomes across countries for different members of the population reveals a wide gap between the underprivileged in wealthy societies and in less wealthy countries. This fact is of great political and economic significance. Individuals can now make large gains from migrating to wealthier countries.'

6. English is the world's lingua franca, the language of science, technology, business, diplomacy and popular culture. That probably explains why it is the world's most widely spoken language. It probably also explains why native English speakers are so reluctant to learn a second language. It's not worth the effort.

In 2005, the European Commission carried out a survey of the European Union's 25 member states. The two with the lowest rates of bilingualism - defined as being able to hold a

conversation in more than one language - were the UK and Ireland. About two-thirds of people in these countries speak only English. It's a similar story wherever English is spoken as the mother tongue. Only about 25 per cent of US citizens can converse in another language. In Australia, the rates are even lower.

Compare that with continental Europe, where multilingualism is the rule rather than the exception. More than half of EU citizens are bilingual, and not just because they live in countries like Luxembourg with multiple official languages. Even in France, which has only one official language and is immensely proud of its linguistic heritage, most people speak a second language.

Again, that is largely down to the dominance of English. Across Europe, English is by far the most commonly learned language. High levels of bilingualism are not driven by a general desire to learn languages but a specific need to learn English.

7. Times are fraught, and overstretched executives are constantly on the lookout for a way to clear their minds so they can work in a calmer, more effective, and more responsive way. Cultivating a special state of consciousness called 'mindfulness' - an intense awareness of the here and now - is proving attractive to a growing number of senior managers, both in the US and elsewhere.

Mindfulness is achieved by meditation techniques, often involving sitting on a cushion, eyes closed, concentrating on the inflow and outflow of your breath. Or you might spend 10 minutes studying, sniffing, tasting and finally eating a piece of fruit. That might make it sound like a remnant of the navel-gazing of the 1960s and 1970s, but the evidence for mindfulness's effectiveness is good enough to have impressed hard-nosed companies such as Google (which has invited mindfulness gurus to speak at the Googleplex), General Mills, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deutsche Bank, Procter & Gamble, AstraZeneca, Apple, Credit Suisse, KPMG, Innocent, Reuters and many more.

According to Don McCormick, assistant professor of management at California State University and a dedicated meditator, it 'can help individuals to manage workplace stress, perform tasks more effectively, enhance self-awareness and self-regulation, experience work as more meaningful, improve workplace relationships, increase ethical behaviour, and make perception more accurate'. It is said to pay dividends for leaders and managers, by improving the quality of their listening and communicating.

8. One of the many critiques of academic research that one runs across is that a lot of research done by a faculty at universities across America doesn't 'do' anything: it doesn't lead to some new product that can be marketed; it doesn't create jobs; it doesn't have an obvious social value. After all, people argue, do we really need studies that chart the maturation of catfish? Or that explore the nuances of a minor poet? What is all this for?

As a consequence of attitudes like these, many people - particularly politicians and business persons - argue that the research function should be stripped from academia, or at least those parts of academia that aren't the major research institutions. Then universities wouldn't need so many faculties, and costs could be contained.

Academics like me offer lots of standard objections to this line of thinking: that research keeps one fresh and up-to-date in the discipline; that the faculty often works with students on their research, thus providing students with invaluable training for their future careers and so on.

All of this is true, but I want to add a different point: the power of chance. In 1990, I took an appointment at the University of Alabama-Huntsville. I had a police officer student who invited me for a ride along. I went – ultimately many times. The book that emerged from the research project I established from that first ride was later included on a list of 'must read' books on public administration by the Government of Canada.

I have no problem with accountability. But if you had asked me what my purpose was when I took my first ride along, and you had demanded to know what use the research could be put to, I would have told you, 'I have no idea'.

9. Current research into the nature of the relationship between participation in physical activity/sport and educational performance has produced mixed, inconsistent and often non-comparable results. For example, some cross-sectional studies illustrate a positive correlation between participation in sport and physical activity and academic success (e.g. maths, reading, acuity, reaction times). However, critics point to a general failure to solve the issue of direction of cause - whether intelligence leads to success in sport, whether involvement in sport enhances academic performance, or whether a third factor (e.g. personality traits) explains both.

Longitudinal studies also generally support the suggestion that academic performance is enhanced, or at least maintained, by increased habitual physical activity. Yet such studies are criticized for not being definitive because some do not use randomised allocation of pupils to experimental and control groups (to control for pre-existing differences), others tend to use (subjective) teacher-assigned grades to assess academic achievement, rather than standardised and comparable tests; and some programmes include parallel interventions, making it difficult to isolate specific effects.

More generically, one key piece of research illustrates that both acute exercise and chronic training programmes have small, but beneficial, positive impacts on cognitive performance. However, this study concludes that as experimental rigour decreased, effect size increased. Further, generalisation is limited because effect size is influenced by the nature and type of exercise, the type of participants, the nature of the cognitive tests and the methodological quality of the study.

Test Builder

(Taylor, 2012)

1. How do we measure efficiency? To economists - or to a certain type of economist - it is simply a question of profitability, even when it concerns what most people consider a social provision such as public transport. What is lost when railway lines and bus routes to small, out-of-the-way communities are cut in the name of efficiency? After all, if a line or a route is only used

occasionally by a few people, it would be much cheaper to rip up the lines and let everyone use their cars.

For many governments, the way to turn inefficient national services into profitable businesses has been to sell off these services - and their responsibilities - to private enterprises. Cost, in terms of profit and loss, is of course an important factor, but other factors need to be considered when dealing with the livelihoods of whole communities, however small. Among these are the social, environmental, human and cultural costs incurred by cutting off more remote communities from greater opportunities, including economic activities that benefit society as a whole.

Taking away such links - the usual result of privatization - may well lead to economic benefits in the short term, but, as the last twenty to thirty years have shown, also leads to long-term social and cultural damage. Of course, no business with its eye on profits is going to "waste" money supporting underused services. Only large collective bodies such as national and local governments can do that. These services are, after all, a social provision, not businesses.

2. Is the purpose of history to promote a strong national identity and support national myths? Certainly, it has been used in this way for centuries, and this is often reflected in the history curriculum. We can all remember history at school as being a matter of learning lots of facts and dates, and long lists of kings and queens - a grand narrative of how we got from a-not so civilized past to the great nation we are today. Putting aside the fact that national identity is a complex and divisive question - especially in countries like the UK, which is comprised of several nationalities - this approach to history emphasizes a broad understanding, rather than a detailed understanding.

Yet history is, or should be, a critical, sceptical discipline: some historians see their work as disproving myths, demolishing orthodoxies and exposing politically-motivated narratives which claim to be objective. What students need to develop are more critical and analytical skills; in other words, to think for themselves. They can do this by studying certain historical problems in depth. This involves being critical of the narratives presented by historians and sceptical of the myths preserved in the national memory.

3. Tradition and commerce often clash in many cultures. In Trinidad, it is the Carnival that is the cause of current friction. The complaint, as you would expect, is that traditional skills and creativity are being lost in the rush to make profits. And the profits are large: the two-day festival, which attracts up to 40,000 tourists each year, is estimated to generate somewhere between \$27 million and \$100 million.

A particular problem for the traditionalists is that the extravagant colourful costumes people wear in the bands or processions are now largely being imported, especially from China. These costumes are cheaper and more revealing (another cause of complaint) than those made locally. Critics say these imports are a threat to traditional creations and, worse, mean sending work elsewhere. Others see turning the Carnival into a profitable and exportable industry as a progressive move, benefiting the country as a whole.

A large number of people are in two minds. On the one hand, the changes are a reflection of what people - mainly tourists - want, and bring in money. On the other, there is a desire to

preserve traditions. The transformation of the bands and processions into businesses has disrupted the social order, which used to be made up of friends getting together to relax, eat and drink, and make costumes. Both sides agree, though, that the country needs to make better use of the skills of the people in the Carnival business and that the country's resources must appeal to a wider market.

4. It wasn't until the 19th century that Britain had a police force as we know it today. In medieval times, the maintenance of law and order was in the hands of local nobles and lords who were expected to keep the peace in their own land, and they would often appoint "constables" to police it. For a long time policing remained an unpaid activity or was paid for privately, either by individuals or organizations. There were also people who made a living as "thief takers". They were not paid wages, but were rewarded by a proportion of the value of the stolen possessions they recovered. Later, in London, where the population was rapidly increasing and crime was rising, night-watchmen - the first paid law enforcement body - were created and worked alongside the unpaid, part-time constables.

Britain, then, was slower to create and develop a police force than the rest of Europe: France had one long before - indeed, the word police is taken from the French. This fact was not unimportant, as the very idea of a police force was seen as foreign - that is, French - and particularly undesirable, and was generally regarded as a form of oppression.

It was not until Robert Peel set up his "new police" as a separate force in 1829 that policemen began to replace the old part-time constables. Sir Robert "Bobby" Peel's own name provided two common nicknames for the new force: "Peelers" or "Bobbies". These names seem mild, if not affectionate, and are possibly an interesting gauge of how the police were viewed by people at the time, in contrast with the kind of names they get called these days.

5. Many people have problems with irony, both in their everyday lives and as it is used or deployed in literature. We learn early on at school about "dramatic irony", that is, we are told, when the audience of a play is aware of some situation or circumstance, or has information that one or more characters in the play do not. If you like, you are sharing a secret with the writer - you are in the know. Perhaps, as you go about your daily business, irony is not so clear-cut.

Here's an example: your neighbour draws your attention to how lovely the dandelions and daisies growing in your lawn are. Now, to someone not familiar with the care and attention many English people give to their gardens, this might need a bit of explanation. Lawns are grass, and are cut and rolled regularly so that a professional golfer could practice his putting on it. Daisies and dandelions are weeds. For a moment - but just for a moment - you wonder how serious your neighbour is being. Does he really think the weeds are lovely or is he telling you - in a rather superior way - that you're a lousy gardener?

Irony, however, usually needs an audience; and not only does it need some people to get the point, it also very much needs there to be people who don't. There is, it has to be said, a rather undemocratic air of superiority about it.

Irony is slippery, sometimes difficult to get a firm hold on, and can easily backfire, like a joke that falls flat. Those who don't like irony - usually those who don't get the point - argue that, in a world that is already difficult enough to deal with, why should we want to complicate things further? Why throw everything you say into doubt? Besides, there's an unpleasant air of intellectual snobbery about it, and that sort of thing doesn't go down well any more.

6. A country's standard of living generally depends on the size of its national income. Standards of living are measured by such things as the number of cars, televisions, telephones, computers, washing machines, and so on, for every one thousand people. There is, however, no standard international index, which is why national income figures are used as a substitute. But the use of these figures to compare the standard of living between countries needs to be done carefully, because they are, at best, only a rough guide which can be misleading. The main problem here is that it is necessary to have a common unit of measurement if any sort of comparison is to be made at all. It has become the custom to use the dollar, and each country's currency is converted at its official exchange rate into a national income figure in dollars. Now, since the exchange rate is often set at an artificial level in relation to dollars, you are likely to end up with a figure that is useless for your purposes.
7. The saying "The camera never lies." has been with us almost since the beginning of photography – yet we all now know that it can, and does lie, and very convincingly. Yet most of us still seem to trust the truth of a photographic image - especially in our newspapers or on TV news reports - even though we may question its message. We think of photographs as an accurate reflection of unaltered reality. We're convinced of this when we take unposed snaps on our family holidays or of colleagues the worse for wear at the office party. It is this property of photography that makes it hard to question the evidence before our eyes.

Our holiday snaps, though, like photographs showing life ten, fifty, a hundred years ago, tend only to bring about at most a feeling of nostalgia - not always a negative emotion. Many people keep albums to relive the better moments of their lives - and their impact is reduced by the fact that what they show is over, part of history. News photos, on the other hand, in presenting moments of an event that is probably still going on somewhere, must provoke a more vivid, emotional response.

8. We know that Shakespeare took whole chunks of Plutarch word for word to use in his Roman plays -though, of course, in doing so he turned them into great poetry. Does this make Shakespeare a plagiarist? Was he a word thief?

In its legal definition, plagiarism includes "both the theft or misrepresentation of intellectual property and the substantial textual copying of another's work". But it is also considered to be a

factor of a particular culture or time - that is, in some cultures and in some periods the idea was undefined - which makes it harder to identify precisely. However, the main problem these days is plagiarism in academic writing, which is becoming increasingly common, due to the vast amount of material that has been published which can be accessed via the Internet. This easy access, coupled with the increasing pressure put on students, has led to a rapid rise in incidents of plagiarism. It comes down to who owns the intellectual property in question, and with the advent of the Internet this has become less clearly defined.

9. For those political analysts whose main interest remains class divisions in society the biggest split these days is that between those who control and work with informational technology (IT) and those we might still call blue-collar workers. The old divisions of class have become a lot more difficult to apply, if not completely outdated. There's no escaping the enormous impact of information technology in the late 20th and, even more, the early 21st centuries, both economically and socially.

During the scientific revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries, the spirit of experiment was in the air, and those involved were practical people working to practical ends - often on their own or with a small group of trusted friends. Secrecy was important as there was money to be made in new inventions. What interested them were results, not theories. Most modern technological advances, however, were developed as theories first, and then made reality by large teams of scientists and experts in the field. What we have now is that more and more of this type of expertise is being used to analyse and find solutions to all kinds of business and social problems, thus creating - in the eyes of the political analysts mentioned above - a whole large new economic and social class.

10. The English have the reputation of being a nation of tea drinkers, but this wasn't always the case. By the end of the 17th century, the English were the biggest coffee drinkers in the Western world, and coffee houses became the places to be seen. As well as gossip, you could pick up talk of the latest intellectual developments in science, politics, and so on, in this age of scientific discovery and progress. At first coffee houses were very basic; a room with a bar at one end and a few plain tables and chairs. Customers paid a penny for a bowl - not a cup - of coffee. A polite young woman was usually in charge of the bar because it was thought her presence would ensure that the customers didn't use bad language or cause any trouble. An added attraction was that coffee houses provided free newspapers and journals.

But people didn't go to the coffee houses just to drink coffee. They went to talk. They soon developed from simple cafes, where anyone with a penny could go for a drink and a chat, into clubs. People started to go to coffee houses where they would find other people who had the same jobs or who shared their interests and ideas, to talk and conduct business.

The great popularity of coffee houses lasted about a hundred years. In the later 18th century, increased trade with other countries made such luxuries as coffee cheaper and more easily available to the ordinary person. As a result people started to drink it at home. Also at this time

more tea was imported from abroad, and the century of the coffee house was replaced by the domestic tea-party as the typical English social occasion.

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