Your notes

GCSE English Language: revision notes

Edexcel IGCSE anthology: non-fiction texts

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Start here: Paper 1 and the anthology

- Paper 1 (Non-fiction texts and transactional writing) has a reading section on one text from Part 1 of the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English **Anthology** and one unseen text, then a piece of transactional writing (such as a letter, article or speech).
- The **anthology** text is printed in the exam, so you don't need quotations by heart. You do need to know what each text is about, its **purpose** and the methods its writer uses, so you can find evidence fast.
- One question asks how the writer presents something or makes it interesting, and another asks you to compare the **anthology** text with the unseen one.

Speeches, articles and memoirs (texts 1 to 5)

- The Danger of a Single Story (Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie): a talk arguing that hearing only one story about a people or place creates stereotypes. She uses personal **anecdotes** from her childhood in Nigeria and her time in America, humour and the repeated phrase "single story".
- A Passage to Africa (George Alagiah): a BBC reporter remembers covering the famine and war in Somalia. He describes suffering vividly and reflects on one man's embarrassed smile, which makes him question how reporters see the people they film.
- The Explorer's Daughter (Kari Herbert): the writer watches Inuit hunters in Greenland hunt narwhals. She admires the beauty of the animals but understands that the hunt is vital to the community's survival and traditions, so her feelings are mixed.
- Explorers, or boys messing about? (Steven Morris): a newspaper report on two British adventurers who had to be rescued in Antarctica, with a mocking **tone** that questions their judgement and who pays for the rescue.

- 127 Hours: Between a Rock and a Hard Place (Aron Ralston): a climber's own account of being trapped when a boulder pins his arm in a remote canyon. Precise, technical detail and short sentences build tension.

Articles and travel writing (texts 6 to 10)

- Young and dyslexic? You've got it going on (Benjamin Zephaniah): the poet writes about his dyslexia and how he succeeded. He addresses young readers directly, in a warm, informal and encouraging **tone**.
- A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat (Emma Levine): **travel writing** about a chaotic donkey race in Karachi, Pakistan, full of fast-paced, humorous description.
- Beyond the Sky and the Earth (Jamie Zeppa): a young Canadian arrives in Bhutan to teach. She describes the mountains in vivid imagery, and her feelings of wonder mixed with fear and loneliness.
- H is for Hawk (Helen Macdonald): grieving her father, the writer collects a young goshawk. The moment the hawk appears is described in close, sensory detail.
- Chinese Cinderella (Adeline Yen Mah): a **memoir** of a childhood in China in which she is unloved by her stepmother and father, and longs for her father's approval, which school success finally begins to win.

How to answer on the anthology text

- Identify the writer's **purpose** (to argue, inform, describe, entertain or reflect) and the audience.
- Pick out methods: **anecdote**, direct address, contrast, imagery, structure (how the text begins, turns and ends), sentence lengths, **tone**, facts and statistics.
- For each point: method, short quotation, its effect on the reader, and how it fits the writer's **purpose**.
- When comparing with the unseen text, compare ideas and perspectives as well as methods, using words such as "whereas" and "similarly".

Key terms

Anthology	A collection of texts, here the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology.
Memoir	A writer's true account of their own experiences.
Travel writing	Non-fiction describing a journey or a place, often with the writer's feelings.
Anecdote	A short personal story used to make a point.
Tone	The attitude or feeling a writer's words create, such as humorous or angry.
Purpose	Why a text was written, such as to argue, inform or entertain.

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Which anthology text is a talk arguing against stereotypes?
2. Who wrote A Passage to Africa?
3. In which country is A Passage to Africa set?
4. What do the hunters chase in The Explorer's Daughter?
5. What traps Aron Ralston in 127 Hours?
6. Which writer addresses young dyslexic readers directly?
7. What does Emma Levine describe in A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat?
8. Where does Jamie Zeppa go to teach?

Answers

1. The Danger of a Single Story
2. George Alagiah
3. Somalia
4. Narwhals
5. A boulder pinning his arm
6. Benjamin Zephaniah
7. A donkey race in Karachi
8. Bhutan

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

Free revision for GCSE and KS3 at lycolearn.co.uk. Some notes are for one exam board only, and say so in brackets.

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