

Unit 10. Directed writing

Writing a speech



Introduction

Some IGCSE First Language English Directed Writing tasks require a response to two texts included in the question paper. In this unit we will look at ways of approaching these tasks.

A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a desk. In the foreground, a black pen lies on an open notebook with lined pages. To the right, a smartphone is partially visible. In the background, a stack of cash is blurred. The overall scene suggests a financial or business context. The text 'Directed writing' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Directed writing

Directed writing

Directed writing is an exercise which requires you to choose relevant details from a stimulus passage and focus your response on a specified audience and to write in a suggested format or genre.



The directed writing tasks for the Cambridge IGCSE examination will require responses written either as:



A SPEECH OR
INTERVIEW



A REPORT OR ARTICLE



A LETTER OR JOURNAL
ENTRY

Writing a speech

Key term

Speech: A spoken address delivered to an audience.



When you are writing a speech, whether it is for directed writing or for coursework, there are two very important things to remember:

- A speech is a means of communicating with an audience- possibly quite a large audience- and you want to be sure that they all understand what you are saying. To help with this, think of more than one way of making the same point and build these into your speech. This is key feature of a successful speech- listen out for it next time you hear someone speaking to an audience.
- Whatever you are talking about in a speech, you want to make sure that your audience is agreeing with you as you go along. Rhetorical questions- questions that have an obvious, expected answer that supports the point you want to make- can help to get the audience 'on your side'. For example: 'Do we really want to see a rise in crime in our village?' or 'Is it right that children should have to work in these conditions?'



Example of a speech- writing question

Imagine that you are taking part in an inter-school debating competition on the motion *School uniform is an out-dated concept; it should be abolished*. You are opposing the motion and, as main speaker, are replying to a speech made by Suzanne Moore. Write what you would say. Remember that your aim is to persuade your audience that wearing school uniform is a good idea. You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage.

This task poses several problems.

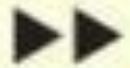
- You are being put in a specific situation and what you write should show some understanding both of the situation and the role you have to play in it.
- You are asked to write the words of a *speech* which is intended to *persuade* your audience. You must, therefore, make what you write sound like a speech, while ensuring that you write in acceptable Standard English (see page 67). You must also concentrate on sounding persuasive.
- You must show that you have understood the ideas and content of the original passage and reply effectively to them.
- As well as keeping the main ideas of the passage in mind, you are also expected to add relevant and appropriate ideas of your own in order to present a positive argument opposing the motion.

Careful thought and planning are necessary. You must keep the task clearly focused in your mind at all times. Try to do this as you read the passage.

School uniforms: turning our kids into soulless conformists

It would seem that nowadays, every educationalist is a fan of the dreaded blazer/tie school uniform combo. The journalist, Suzanne Moore, questions exactly how do they really think they're helping prepare schoolchildren for the 'real world'?

Unsurprisingly, I was never a fan of my own school uniform, which was bottle-green in colour. We were constantly lectured about the activities we were not allowed to be seen doing in it. In



In the opening paragraphs, the writer refers to her own school days. This technique creates a link with her readers and then, by stating that she was and still is a non-conformist in her views, and providing a humorous example of this, she begins to establish a personality with whom the readers will sympathise. The use of a colloquial tone and rhetorical questions in the third paragraph are also techniques by which she gets the readers on her side.

Having set out her position in a mainly light-

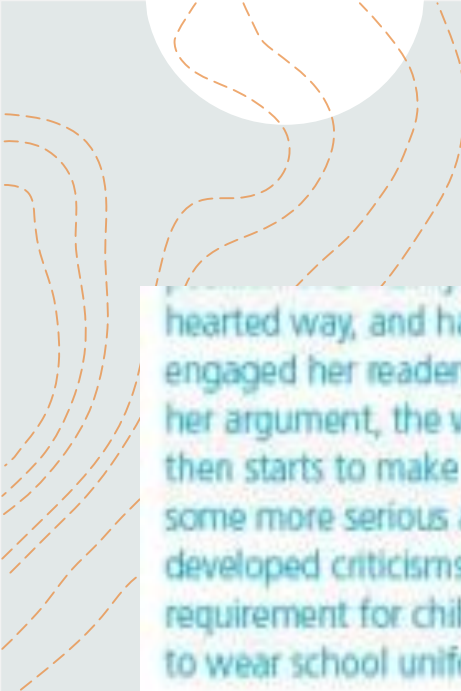
a hazy way, I remember them as basically eating chips and talking to boys. 'I'll just take it off then, Miss,' I used to say, for I was annoying then as I am now.

The price of the uniform itself was an issue. The wear and tear of it was an issue. We couldn't afford it. Once I had a Saturday job that helped, but naturally I bought myself some lime-green plastic platform shoes. Weirdly they were not acceptable as school shoes unless my mum wrote a note. What medical condition required the wearing of these beauties I can only guess, but my mum's notes I now look on with awe, the end line nearly always being: 'She is in a phase.'

Did this uniform instil in me a sense of oneness with my school? Did it resolve the class issue? Er ... not exactly. In those days we didn't have stupid fashion words like 'vintage' and 'pre-loved', we had hand-me-downs, and really, I don't know a modern child who wants a second-hand uniform.

The myth of uniform is that it is a social leveller, an equaliser. And pushes up results? Then show me how. Many European countries with good schools don't have uniforms. Bill Clinton thought back in the 90s that it might be the answer to gang-related violence. It wasn't.

No, uniform does what it says on the tin. It is about conforming. It heartens many a parent to see their child as somehow ready for work. Politicians love a uniform. Indeed the fetishisation of school uniform is education policy. Most schools are obsessed with it, parents like it and many children say it makes their lives easier.



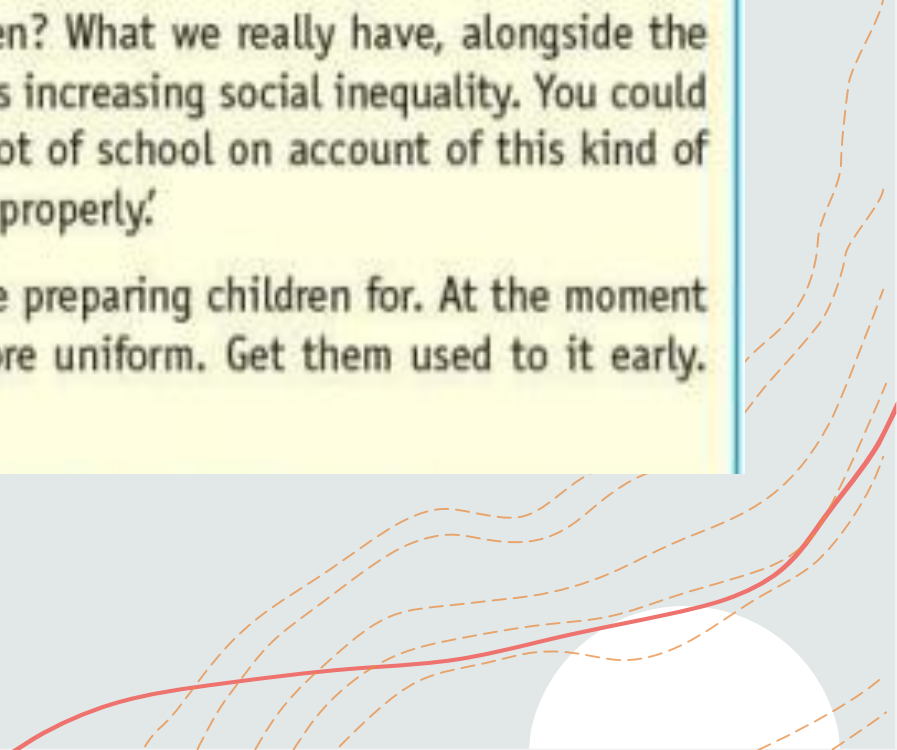
hearted way, and having engaged her readers in her argument, the writer then starts to make some more serious and developed criticisms of the requirement for children to wear school uniform.

The article is clearly paragraphed. Each paragraph presents a different perspective on the topic and moves us a little further forward in the argument.

Teachers vary, some reporting that too much of their time is spent on policing clothing violations. If education is to be about conforming and not drawing out talent, I guess that's fine, though the kind of overall worn in France for science or art would surely suffice. Uniform covers up many social ills. Sometimes, even poor parenting. ('Well they were always clean and in the right uniform.') The signifiers of class and money are simply rejigged around bags, phone and pens. It is as it ever was.

This nostalgia for a uniform is based on emotion not reason. Evidence does not come into it. Does all this produce better results? Happier children? What we really have, alongside the increasing prevalence of the ghastly blazer/tie combo, is increasing social inequality. You could map it out but don't ask me to, as I missed an awful lot of school on account of this kind of attitude. 'Don't ask questions, girl, and put your tie on properly.'

Don't ask questions about the world of work that we are preparing children for. At the moment it looks as if some will work for free in some superstore uniform. Get them used to it early. Compliance. Zero tolerance. The best days of your life.



The final three paragraphs return to the writer's own experiences which are those shared by many of her readers. This technique gives the whole argument more weight and authenticity.

The final paragraph starts quite light-hearted with the statement that the writer's daughter appears to be proud of her uniform (and, not surprisingly, is perhaps doing this to 'get at' her mother). However, the tone becomes more serious at the end and the writer leaves us with a thought to reflect upon. This is given extra force by being expressed as a three-word, short sentence without a main verb.

My daughter will shortly start at a new school and in the Uniform Me shop this week it was hot and sweaty, as nasty polo shirts were pulled on. Skirts must be knee-length with over-the-knee socks. At least the stuff I bought was cheap. Some inner-city uniforms are close to \$300.

When I have had jobs where I had to wear a uniform – in restaurants and hospitals – I just got on with it. I saw the need. But to learn? To learn what? Again, I ask: where is the evidence that uniform works?

Since I bought my daughter's uniform she has, of course, had it on all the time, though school doesn't start until next week. She is expressing herself or getting at me. She makes me laugh. But the idea saddens me that when she gets to secondary school individuality must be knocked out of her as early as possible via the reinforcement of petty rules about shirts. This is indeed preparation for the real world. Of uniform thinking.

Adapted from the *Guardian*, 29 August 2012

Note the use of vocabulary:

- 'myth'- which suggests that there is no substance to the requirement to wear a uniform
- 'fetishisation'- a word that conveys the idea that there is something unnatural and perverse about the idea of wearing a uniform.



Note the beginnings of sentences which engage the reader and link ideas:

- 'Unsurprisingly,...'
- 'No, uniform does what it says on the tin.'
- 'Don't ask questions about the world of work ...'
- 'When I have had jobs where I have had to wear a uniform ...'





Writing your response

Now practise writing the words of your speech against the motion. In order to help you with this, we have provided an opening for your speech, and some ideas and advice that will help you to construct your argument in favour of wearing uniform.

'Fellow students, I would like to oppose the motion that school uniform is an out-dated concept and should be abolished. You have listened to the arguments of my opponent who has wittily and articulately presented her reasons for suggesting that school uniforms should be abolished. However, there is a lot more to consider in this matter than the points you have listened to, however skilfully they may have been made. For example, let us consider ...'

Continue your speech from this point, focusing on the following two key aspects:

- First, **rebut** some, or all, of the arguments made in favour of abolishing uniform; it is important to do this because, in a directed writing task, you must show that you have understood the key points of the original passage.
- Second, **structure your argument** in such a way that you present ideas of your own in favour of uniform. You should aim to produce a forceful and memorable concluding statement.

Here are some points that you might like to include in your speech (in no particular order):

- School uniform avoids the pressure of deciding what to wear each morning and students take less time to get ready.
- Overall, uniforms are a cheaper alternative to wearing your own choice of clothes.
- Uniforms help students to identify with the school that they are part of and so create a better school spirit and a more studious environment.
- Wearing uniform helps to reduce bullying in schools as students are not judged by the designer logos on their clothes.
- Uniforms can be reused and recycled.
- Identification of intruders is made easier in a school where students are wearing the same uniform.



GOOD LUCK!