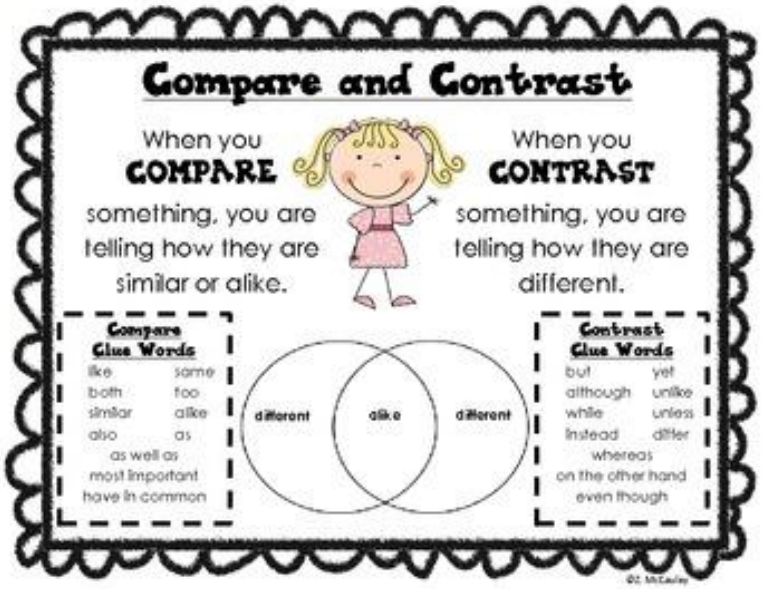


Practice questions

Key points to remember:

- ✓ Language of question could be: 'Compare and contrast' or simply 'compare' – either way you need to speak about the similarities and differences between texts;
- ✓ Make it clear which text you are talking about – Text A/ Text B;
- ✓ Highlight what is asked for in question – question will have a focus;
- ✓ Make sure you have points from both texts;
- ✓ Systematically work through – point (adjective) /evidence (quote);
- ✓ You will need to use comparison connectives throughout;
- ✓ Consider **title/ tone/ language choices/ images/ presentational devices and structure** across the texts and respond to these ideas in your answer.
- ✓ **Time and marks:**

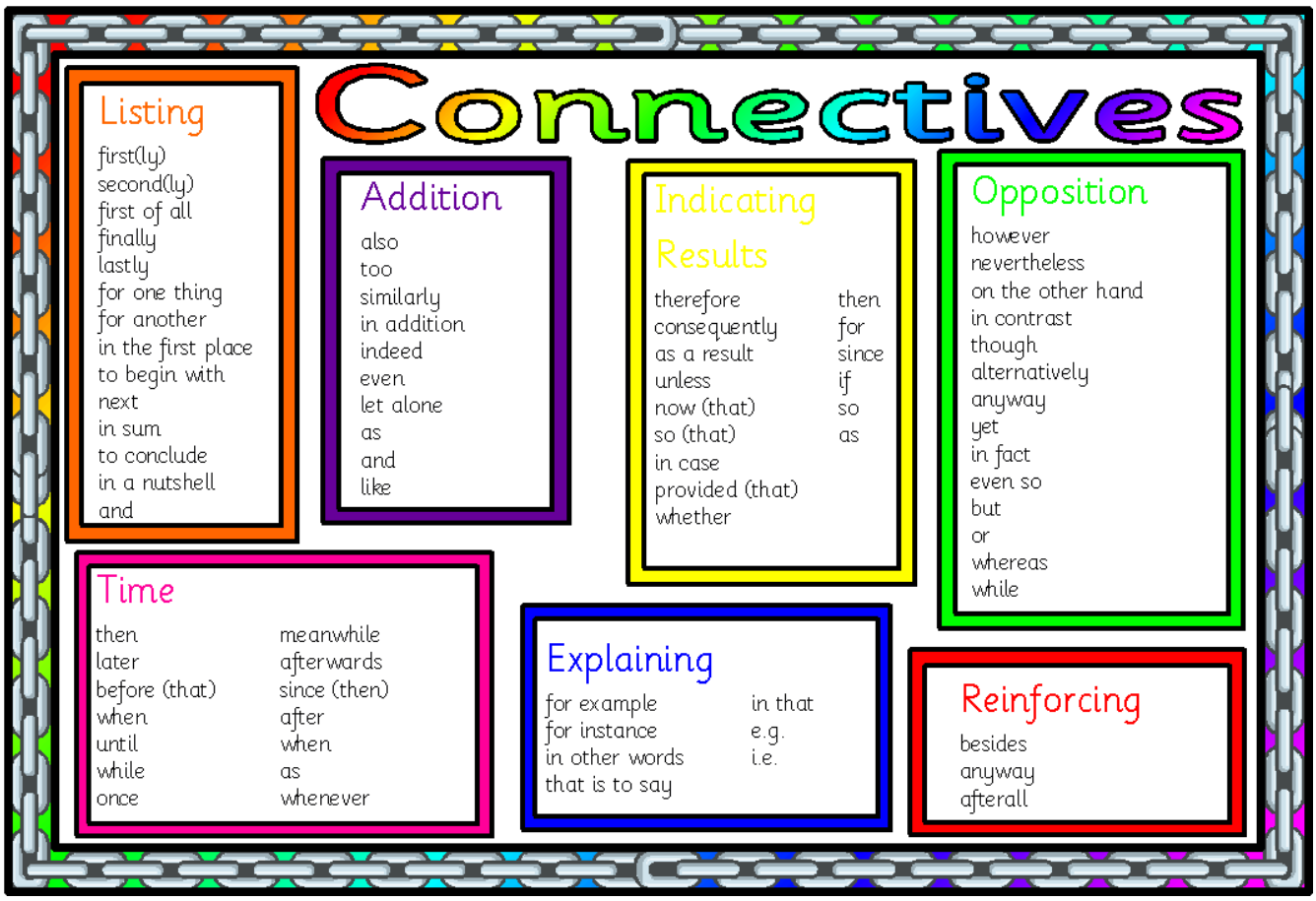
  *** 10 marks = 15 minutes reading and answering the question;**

  ***8-10 points = 10-mark question**

Table of useful connectives

Add your own examples when you find ones that are helpful. Many of the connectives shown with a capital letter can also be used, with care, in the middle of a sentence as an alternative to using them at the beginning.

Suggesting similarities				
Similarly...	In the same way...	This links with...	Equally, ...	...also...
...as well.				
Suggesting contrasts				
...whereas...	In contrast...	...while...	On the other hand...	(use negative)
However, ...	Yet...			
Making qualifications				
Nevertheless...	In spite of that...	However,...		
Summing up				
Overall...	Summing up...	In the main...	On the whole...	In conclusion...



Q: Compare and contrast what these two texts say about the urban fox [10 marks]

3

Fantastic Mr *Urban* Fox: The reason why our so-called pests are so at home in our cities. By Professor Stephen Harris

Whisper it – but deep down, we city dwellers love our urban foxes.

We may curse them when we find the contents of a ripped bin-bag strewn across the road, or when their barking has disturbed our suburban slumbers. But all this hostility is just an act. Secretly, we adore these red-coated invaders – as you can tell from our typical response to spotting one, maybe as it trots across the road or saunters casually along a garden wall. We stop for a moment and stare, marvelling at the sight of such a resourceful, intelligent and quite large wild animal so thoroughly at home in our human habitat. It's like a little bit of the countryside has suddenly come to town.

Which may be why so many of us feed them. Yes, that's right, feed them. Half of an urban fox's diet comes courtesy of us humans. I'm not talking about waste food they scavenge from our bins. (I find that nuisance is generally caused by stray dogs or greedy cats). I'm talking about food that is deliberately left out for them. As many as one in ten households regularly feed local foxes; sometimes with unexpected results.

The wife of a friend in Bristol was startled when she came into the kitchen one evening to find that a fox had calmly climbed through her cat flap and was busy eating the cat's food. But she didn't panic and nor did the fox. The animal fell into the habit of returning every night, knowing that not only would he find his special bowl of food but that, once he had finished, he could climb up onto the lady of the house's lap for a nap and to have his head stroked. This cosy arrangement continued happily for some time until the fox was caught one night by my survey team. We attached some tracking technology and the fox took it all in his stride and returned the next night for his dinner as usual. However, it was a rather frosty-sounding woman who rang me the next morning to complain that their after-dinner cuddle hadn't been the same now that the object of her affections had a plastic tag in each ear.

Stories like this show how totally at home foxes are in our cities. Unlike their country cousins, who are hunted and shot at daily, the foxes who live in towns have little to fear from humans, apart from our cars and our more ferocious breeds of dogs. This lack of fear is readily apparent – look how relaxed they are when you do spot them.

That's why I wasn't surprised to see the wonderful pictures of an urban fox riding up and down the escalators at an underground station in London.

However, it would be wrong to say that urban foxes cause no problems. Their barking can disturb a night's sleep, and to the normal diet of worms, insects and rats, I'm afraid must be added the occasional small pet – a rabbit, guinea-pig, even a kitten – that has been inadequately protected in a back garden. There is evidence of them very occasionally taking a curious nip at a baby left sleeping in a garden. But, as far as I know, no serious injuries have ever been recorded, and it pales into insignificance compared to the far more serious attacks on infants carried out by dogs. I see no reason why our love affair with the urban fox should not continue. They have found a place in our cities, and in our hearts.

The Rise and Fall of Mr Fox

Once he had it all: good looks, fame and the affection of millions. As the hunting season gets under way, ***Adam Edwards*** *asks: where did it all go wrong?*

© Alamy images

In England, Mr Fox was hunted as vermin for centuries and he was always despised for his killing for pleasure, particularly of chickens. But in the twentieth century, his image changed. He became as lovable as Basil Brush, as cute as a Disney character.

So who then was to blame for giving the fox an image makeover, turning him into a victim of oppression? It was the poet John Masefield. In 1919, he wrote his hugely popular poem 'Reynard the Fox' which described the magic of country life and demonstrated a touching compassion for the animal. Over the following years, slowly but surely, the fox started to benefit from a public relations campaign that any *X Factor* contestant would die for. Advertisers cast him as an amusing fellow and Disney put the seal on his heroic status by turning him into a cartoon Robin Hood in 1981's *The Fox and the Hound*.

The makeover coincided with the rise and rise of the urban fox. He was protected by an army (the Animal Liberation Front), fawned over by animal charities and bunny-huggers, and finally saved from persecution by the law. He also began to find shelter among the houses of the suburbs and their long, lush gardens. He made slow progress at first, but now it is a rare night when residents in London do not record the carnivore on the prowl. The fox is regularly seen, even in daylight, in supermarket car parks, behind shopping centres, and scrabbling through bins near fast food shops. Each generation of foxes becomes more used to the ways of the town and is more able to deal with traffic. He has no predators, except man, and no shortage of food.

It is hard to believe that an animal so blessed as Mr Fox could, so casually, have chucked away his burnished image. Yet this summer he managed to do just that.

In 2010, he bit and mauled baby twins as they slept in their cot in London. And suddenly it dawned on the urban population of Britain that Basil Brush had a beastly side. He was nothing more than a feral chav, breeding indiscriminately and feeding off discarded buckets of KFC.

Last month it was revealed that he had crept into London Zoo and killed 11 penguins. For fun. Worse still, he decapitated the Queen's flamingos at Buckingham Palace and killed a number of pet rabbits, owned, unfortunately for him, by the children of various newspaper writers who then let rip in print.

It has not deterred him, and the charge sheet grows weekly: a woman in Fulham had her ear savagely bitten while sleeping in her bedroom. A baby boy was attacked in Dartford. In Islington a young girl had her arm mauled as she slept.

Across London, cries for the curbing of Reynard are mounting. Some have called – presumably in jest – for urban hunts to be introduced. It is hard for anyone in the countryside not to take pleasure in the misfortunes of the townies, particularly if you were one of the half million who demonstrated against the ban on foxhunting.

Actually, the only surprise in the fox's recent reversal of fortunes is that he was ever thought of as lovable in the first place. His cunning was first noted in the Bible, and in European folklore he has always symbolised trickery and deceit. In children's literature he rarely emerges with any credit. Even where the fox is a hero, as in Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr Fox*, he is also seen as a thief.

The events of 2010 are proof that the urban fox is more fearless than ever and there is no immediate solution to the problem. Shooting is the most effective form of control, but it is of limited practical use in towns and generally unpopular with local people. As a result, many councils have given up trying to control the fox at all.

Q: Compare what the writers of Text D and Text E say about the effects of Fairtrade on the farmers and workers who work for Fairtrade groups. You must make it clear from which text you get your information. [10 marks]

Text D is taken from The Guardian newspaper.

The story of a coffee farmer

Gerardo Arias Camacho is a coffee farmer in Costa Rica. He is a board member on his village co-operative, which is a member of the Fairtrade consortium COOCAFE. He is married with three children.

In the 1980s, the price of coffee was so low that it didn't cover the cost of production. Many farmers abandoned their land and some even left the country to find work. In the mid-90s, I went to America to make money and support my family. After eight years, I had earned enough to buy the family farm so that my parents could retire. But coffee prices were still so low that I was forced to return to America for another two years.

Then the coffee business was unstable. We did not have a local school, good roads or bridges. Now that we are Fairtrade-certified, prices are stable and we receive a guaranteed amount for our coffee. We spend the money on education, environmental protection, roads and bridges, and improving the processing plant. We have a scholarship programme so that our kids can stay in school. I believe that my farm would be out of business if it wasn't for Fairtrade. Free trade is not responsible trade. When prices go down, farmers produce more and prices drop further. Fairtrade is the way trade should be: fair, responsible and sustainable.

My oldest son is in college, my ten-year-old has already had as much education as me, and my little girl is in her second year at school. With the help of Fairtrade, they might all be able to go to university and get a degree. They won't have to jump the border from Mexico to America, like me. They can decide what they want in life.

Since Fairtrade, our farms have become more environmentally-friendly. Our coffee is now produced in a sustainable way. We plant trees and have reduced the use of pesticides by 80% in 10 years. We used to cut 50 acres of forest down every year to fuel the ovens at our processing plant. Now we have a new oven which is fuelled by coffee waste products and the skins of macadamia nuts that we buy from farmers on the other side of Costa Rica. It is a win-win business.

Fairtrade is not a closed system. It is open to everyone but we need more and more people to buy Fairtrade so other farmers can become certified. We already educate other producers around us about market prices so that buyers have to offer them a competitive rate and this benefits the wider community. When there was a hurricane, the main road became blocked and the bridge came down. We could afford to open the road and fix the bridge.

When you are shopping, look for the Fairtrade label – you can be sure that the money is going straight to the producers. It will help us, and it will help people around the world, because the benefits of protecting the environment are for everyone. It is a matter of helping each other.

As a Fairtrade farmer, I finally feel competitive. It has given me knowledge so that I am more able to defend myself and my people. I feel there is a future in front of us because we can stay in our own country and make a living growing coffee. Fairtrade is not charity. Just by going shopping, you can make a difference.

Text E *explains why some people now choose to buy products that are not Fairtrade.*

Why are coffee lovers turning their backs on Fairtrade?

At Workshop Coffee, customers savour their £4 Colombian coffees. It looks like caffeine heaven, but head of production Richard Shannon says some people think something is missing, "If it doesn't have a Fairtrade logo then we must be holding the farmer down and standing on his neck whilst we steal his coffee." Workshop is one of a number of specialist coffee companies that says it is committed to fair trade, but doesn't have the certificate to prove it. Companies like this, which boast about their ethical sourcing of coffee, are choosing not to join the Fairtrade labelling scheme.

This is bad news for Fairtrade, which saw UK sales fall for the first time ever last year, by 4%. This has largely been blamed on discount retailers such as Aldi and Lidl carrying far fewer Fairtrade lines than supermarkets like Sainsbury's. But Fairtrade is also being affected at the top of the market by high-end companies like Workshop who complain that Fairtrade doesn't pay enough for quality coffee. Many suppliers believe their trade is already fairer than Fairtrade. Last year, Workshop paid on average £6.50 per kilo, nearly twice as much for coffee as Fairtrade did. And, as they point out, Fairtrade doesn't provide farmers with any greater guarantee of future income.

Growers for the speciality market are able to call the shots. As the premium coffee market expands, producers get more power to choose who they sell to and for how much. The growth of the market also creates opportunities for more producers to benefit. Each year new farmers join as they see their neighbours being highly rewarded for producing high quality coffee.

There are doubts about the effectiveness of Fairtrade in getting a good deal for workers. The system guarantees prices for producers and money for social projects, but it can't ensure that those who receive these payments spread the benefits. Many Fairtrade co-operatives employ people whose wages are lower and who work in worse conditions than those non-Fairtrade areas. One poor use of the Fairtrade payment was in a tea farm where the modern toilets (funded with Fairtrade money) were only used by senior managers.

Some people are now beginning to question the fairness of Fairtrade and to ask, "Is it Fairtrade? Or is it fairly traded?"

Q: Compare what the two texts say about Bradford [10 marks]

Bradford

Bradford's role in life is to make every place else in the world look better in comparison, and it does this very well. Nowhere on my trip around Britain would I see a more depressing city. Nowhere would I pass more vacant shops, their windows covered with tattered posters for pop concerts, or more office buildings covered with TO LET signs. At least one shop in three in the town centre was empty, and most of the rest seemed to be barely hanging on.

Once the town had one of the greatest collections of Victorian architecture anywhere, but you would scarcely guess it now. Scores of wonderful buildings were swept away to make room for wide new roads and angular office buildings. Nearly everything in the city suffers from well-intentioned but misguided meddling by planners.

Nowadays, the local authorities are desperately trying to promote their meagre stock of old buildings. In a modest cluster of narrow streets just out of the city centre there still stand some three dozen large and striking warehouses, mostly built between 1860 and 1874, which together make up the area known as Little Germany. Of all the once thriving wool precincts in the city, only the few dark buildings of Little Germany survive in any number, and even this promising small neighbourhood seems bleak. At the time of my visit, two-thirds of the buildings were covered in scaffolding, and the other third had TO LET signs on them.

Still, Bradford is not without its charms. Lister Park is very attractive, there are some good pubs, and The Alhambra Theatre, built in 1914, has been skilfully renovated and remains the most wonderful place to see a pantomime. The National Media Museum has brought a welcome flicker of life to a corner of the city where previously you only had the world's most appalling indoor ice rink to go to. As I had an hour to kill, I walked over to the Museum and had a look through the various galleries. I watched in wonder as throngs of people parted with substantial sums of cash to see the two o'clock IMAX show. I've been to these IMAX screenings before, and frankly I can't understand the appeal. I know the screen is massive and the visual representation stunning, but the films are always so incredibly dull.

I forgot to mention curry houses in my brief list of Bradford's glories, which was a terrible oversight. Bradford may have lost a wool trade but it has gained a thousand excellent Indian restaurants, which I personally find a reasonable swap as I have a strictly limited need for bales of wool, but can take about as much Indian food as you care to shovel at me.

The oldest of the Bradford curry houses, I'm told, and certainly one of the best and cheapest, is the Kashmir, just up the road from the Alhambra. For £5 I had a small feast that was rich, delicious, and so hot that it made my fillings sizzle.

Afterwards, bloated and with a stomach bubbling away like a heated beaker in a mad-scientist movie, I stepped out into the Bradford evening and wondered what to do with myself. It was just six o'clock on a Saturday evening, but the place felt dead.

Bradford Festival, June

BRADFORD

From stunning Victorian architecture to an amazing 3D visual feast at the IMAX Cinema, Bradford is culturally rich with a city centre full of history, yet vibrant and cosmopolitan.

Two hundred years ago Bradford changed from a small rural town, whose people spun wool and wove cloth, into the wool capital of the world. Bradford now enjoys a fantastic architectural legacy from this period, a heritage that can be explored through a series of self guided trails available from the Tourist Information Centre.

Many exceptional historic buildings remain, including the Grade 1 listed City Hall (built 1873), the gothic style Wool Exchange (1867), and the 15th century cathedral. Bradford's history is evident in the popular Bradford Industrial Museum in the unique commercial area known as Little Germany.

There are plenty of modern attractions to capture the imagination. The award winning National Media Museum – five floors of interactive displays – charts the past, present and future of image making and has three cinemas, including the incredible IMAX experience with its giant 3D screen.

Other major attractions within the city include Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, set in beautiful Lister Park, voted Britain's best park in 2006; the Alhambra Theatre; and The Priestley Theatre. There is a packed programme of festivals and events, including three major film festivals and the world-famous Bradford Festival – two weeks of music, theatre, film and street events.

Those who prefer shopping will also love Bradford, as the city is home to a host of unusual speciality shops, markets and mill shops where many bargains can be found. In the city, high street names rub shoulders with local shops, and for an elegant upmarket shopping excursion outside the city, nearby Ilkley offers top quality shops from high fashion to fine chocolatiers.

The city's nightlife, with its rich variety of restaurants, bars and nightclubs, might surprise you. And discover for yourself why Bradford has been crowned UK Curry capital, with well over 200 Asian restaurants across the district. But Bradford also has an interesting mix of fine international cuisine and traditional Yorkshire fare. The city has many traditional pubs to enjoy, like the New Beehive Inn with its Edwardian interior and gas lit bars, which caters for the Real Ale enthusiast, and appears regularly in the Good Beer Guide.

Plus ...

In June, Bradford swings to the sounds of the festival with live music in Centenary Square. By night, take in a show at the magnificent Alhambra Theatre.

The Industrial Museum gears up daily for a public demonstration of its Motive Power engines at 10.30 am and 2.00 pm (most days).

Odsal Stadium is home to Rugby League's 2005 Super League champions, Bradford Bulls, while football takes centre stage across town at Valley Parade, the home of Bradford City. There's fun for all the family at Bradford's 11 public swimming pools, and some of the other sports facilities include ten-pin bowling in the city centre and ice skating at the ever-popular Bradford Ice Arena.

The National Media Museum has three diverse film festivals each year – The Bradford Film Festival (March), 'Bite the Mango' Film Festival (Sept) and The Bradford Animation Festival (Oct/Nov) – perfect for film lovers of all ages!

BRADFORD

Q: . Compare what the two texts say about herring gulls. [10 marks]

The rise of the urban seagull

Seagulls are thriving in cities – attacking people, deafening residents, damaging buildings, spreading panic and disease. By 2014 there could be as many as 6 million of them, a new urban menace.

Herring gulls are huge birds, each one a kilo in weight, with a wingspan of 4½ ft. A thousand of them in the air together are a tonne of hardened muscle, and they possess vicious beaks and claws. The way things are heading, Britain's town centres are going to be overrun by an army of greedy and aggressive birds that will defend the rooftops against all-comers. They have already made headlines with their attacks on humans, whose heads they slash with their claws at 40mph. They are notorious for the way their cries keep people awake, and their droppings also cause damage to buildings and cars.

What began as a nuisance is becoming a much more serious problem. Fifty breeding pairs of herring gulls in a town are all it takes to make a huge impact, and many towns already have way beyond that. Because gulls now also live longer – 20-plus years is normal – it means populations are rocketing by 25% annually.

The RSPB argues that gulls do not attack people but only 'protect their nests'. The problem is that their nests are on the people's roofs. It is also untrue that gulls are only aggressive around their nesting sites. Any people with food in their hands – sandwiches, pasties, hamburgers, chips, ice creams – are targets for seagulls' beaks.

The NHS does not keep records of minor injuries, so it is impossible to know how many people have needed treatment after gull attacks. Local newspapers often have stories of postmen knocked from bicycles, householders terrorised, and scaffolders forced down their ladders. There has been at least one well-publicised death, of an 80-year-old man who was attacked and fell while trying to remove a gull's nest from his garage roof. He died of a heart attack. Last summer a woman was taken to hospital after being savaged at Burnham-on-Sea and, if reports are to be believed, at least one dog has been pecked to death.

Yet violence is not necessarily the worst problem. Gulls can start their noise as early as 4 a.m., and the slow torture of lack of sleep can affect people even more than the fear of a bloody head. Roofs and windows are plastered with droppings so alkaline that they eat through the paintwork of cars. Seagulls damage roof insulation, block gutters with their nests, and attack the contents of bins with the kind of wild energy that makes foxes look tidy. They are also blamed for spreading disease. The gull problem is not confined to Britain. From Norway to Portugal, every coastal country in Europe now reports an increase in roof-nesting gulls, as well as the USA, Canada and Australia.

HERRING GULLS: SOME FACTS

What are Herring Gulls?

Herring gulls are large, noisy gulls found all around our coasts, and also inland in our towns and cities. They have adapted very well to man's way of life, and they are the main scavengers around town and city rubbish dumps.

Internationally and in the UK, herring gull numbers are falling. The RSPB says that the UK herring gull population has declined by 40% since 1970. However, the RSPB says more birds are moving into towns because of a lack of food in their natural habitats. Here they cause problems by nesting on rooftops and cause lots of mess by searching for food in discarded rubbish bins.

Herring gulls build large nests out of vegetation. They lay 2 or 3 green eggs blotched with black. The eggs are laid from late April, taking about 25-33 days to incubate. When hatched, the young birds are fed by both parents for about a month. The adult herring gulls weigh about a kilogram. They have a wing span of almost five feet, and a very large beak.

Humans and Herring Gulls

Herring gulls are seen as a problem because they will dive and snatch food from a person's hand, which can be both frightening and distressing. However, what looks to us like an attack is, for gulls, just a way to survive. A gull will only act aggressively when looking for food, defending its territory, or protecting its young.

When young birds or the nests of herring gulls are approached by people, the gull's natural reaction is to protect the nest and its young; it does this by making a series of swooping dives over the intruder. Rarely, if ever, does the herring gull actually make physical contact with people. Any physical contact between swooping birds and humans is likely to cause serious damage to the bird. It will certainly feel like a worrying experience to a person, but usually even a raised arm will put off a swooping bird.

Problems and solutions

In towns, the herring gull is often regarded as a 'general nuisance'. Horrible early morning noise from birds at all times of the year, and mess caused by nest material and excessive droppings during the breeding season, are amongst the main causes for complaint.

There are certain basic rules that will help discourage gulls:

- cover regular perching and roof nesting areas with netting, to prevent gulls from landing;
- clean up thoroughly after barbecues and other outdoor meals;
- keep all household waste in hard, covered bins.

Herring gulls are quick to take advantage of the thoughtless disposal of food. Leaving rubbish outside overnight in flimsy black bags will provide a plentiful food supply and must be avoided as much as possible. Using hard containers for rubbish has proved successful, and it has also reduced the early morning noise from birds. Sadly, food discarded by thoughtless members of the public late at night, especially near take-aways, still causes problems.

Don't feed them!

Herring gulls are perfectly capable of finding food from nature. Their natural diet is fish, worms and small mammals and birds, so don't provide them with a meal. Herring gulls should never be fed, as this will not only increase the gull population, but will also cause unnecessary annoyance to neighbours.

If we don't feed herring gulls they will eventually turn to more natural sources of food. Not feeding them for a long period may even reduce the large herring gull population in our towns to more acceptable numbers through a natural process.

Stay within the law

The herring gull is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the removal of eggs and/or nests can only be undertaken by those licensed to do so. There are licensed Pest Control companies whose services include the removal of gull nests.

Q: Compare what the two texts tell you about the behaviour of younger and older drivers [10 marks]

Should older drivers retake their test?

Many motorists think that older drivers should be forced to retake their driving test at the age of 66. Younger drivers in particular are inclined to see the growing number of older people on the road as a problem.

However, official Department for Transport statistics from 2011 suggest these opinions are not based on the facts about road accidents. Their findings show that older drivers are much less likely to be involved in accidents. Although people over 70 make up 8% of drivers on the roads, they account for just 4% of serious accidents. In contrast, 16-20 year olds who make up just 2.5% of all drivers are involved in 13% of serious accidents.

A report carried out by Age UK, which included a survey of 2,000 people, suggests that older drivers behave better than their younger counterparts. Just over 7% of over 65s admitted to using a mobile phone when driving, compared with 21% of younger drivers.

One of the people involved in writing the Age UK report said, "Older drivers are, on the whole, confident and responsible, and compare favourably with other drivers across the country. For example, an 18-year-old driver is three times more likely to be involved in a crash than a motorist 30 years older."

The Age UK report is supported by research from the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) that found older drivers to be safer than drivers from all other age groups. The research showed older drivers use their experience to increase their margin for safe driving, for example, by keeping a greater distance from the car in front than drivers from other age groups. In the research, drivers over 70 reacted just as quickly as other age groups when a vehicle emerged from a side road or when a car in front braked suddenly on a rural road. Young, inexperienced drivers performed the worst, tending to just focus on what was straight ahead, often failing to respond to cars emerging from the sides of the road.

Commenting on the IAM research, an AA spokesman said, "Older drivers have a good safety record. Many tend not to drive long distances often because they will want to use a car mainly for shopping or for visiting relatives and friends; this means they will often stick to routes they know well and they become well aware of the potential hazards on those journeys." The safety record for older drivers is in stark contrast to younger drivers, who drive around five per cent of all the miles driven in Britain, but are involved in about 20 per cent of serious crashes.

Michelle Mitchell, Age UK charity director, said, "For many older people driving is a way of maintaining independence, so it's important that they should not be prevented from doing so just because they reach a certain age."

Driving age could rise to 18 under new proposals

A government report is proposing restrictions for newly qualified drivers, including a ban on night time driving.

The government is now considering a report which suggests that young motorists should have to wait until they are 18 before they take their driving test and would be banned from carrying their friends even after they've passed.

At the moment, teenagers can apply for a provisional licence three months before their 17th birthday. By taking intensive courses during that period of time, some drivers become fully qualified just days after reaching their 17th birthday. However, recent statistics show one in five young drivers have an accident in the six months after passing their driving test.

Transport ministers are examining the report which contains proposals intended to cut the number of young drivers involved in serious accidents. 15 per cent of the country's drivers are in their teens or twenties, but are involved in 34 per cent of crashes where injuries occur. One proposal is that a driving instructor would have to sign a form to say that their students were up to standard before taking a test. All drivers would then face restrictions for the first 12 months after passing their test.

Under the proposals, learner drivers would not only have to wait until they were 18 before taking the test but would be required to log at least 120 hours of supervised practice. Because young drivers have a higher proportion of crashes in the evenings, the supervised practice would also have to include 20 hours of night driving.

The new motorist would then be on probation for another year. They would also have to carry a green P plate, which would make it easier for the police to enforce the restrictions. Research shows that peer pressure can encourage reckless driving because young drivers will often 'show off' to their passengers. The more passengers, the greater the risk and the risk is even higher when the drivers are aged 17. New drivers would be banned from carrying passengers under the age of 30 or driving between 10pm and 5am unless there was also someone over 30 in the car.

These restrictions would apply in full to any newly qualified driver below the age of 30. Some of the restrictions, such as the ban on night-time driving and a ban on new drivers using even hands-free mobile phones, would apply to anyone for 12 months after passing their test whatever their age. Young drivers are more likely to use mobile phones while driving and they are less likely than older drivers to classify mobile phone use and drink driving as extremely unacceptable. Drivers under 25 have the highest incidence of failing a breath test and so the new proposals also include a zero drink-drive limit for a year for all new drivers.

According to the research, introducing these restrictions would reduce accidents involving young drivers significantly. These kinds of restrictions have proved effective in many parts of the world including the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

The government's Transport Secretary has highlighted road safety as a key issue and he admitted a passenger ban, along with proposals for a zero alcohol limit for a year after passing the test, was an option he was ready to examine. Because young drivers are frequently involved in late night accidents, he also believed the proposal to include a minimum of 20 hours night driving practice before taking the test was also a sensible move.

A government spokesman said, "We know that young drivers, especially young male drivers, take more risks than experienced older drivers. We are committed to improving safety for young drivers and that is why we will consider these proposals very carefully."

David Millward
Transport Editor

Q: Compare and contrast what these two writers say about queuing at theme parks. [10 marks]

THORPE PARK: how to scare your teenagers

Thorpe Park – Rollercoaster Central, the thrill capital of England, the most terrifying location inside the M25 – holds a special place in the affections of all teenagers in the south-east of England, and a kind of horrified fascination for their parents. It is where the teens want to go for their first independent day out and, although their parents may wonder why, they are unlikely to issue a blanket ban. The high-speed rides are billed as scary – and most are certainly that – but it's a pretty safe destination.

There really isn't anywhere like it so close to London. Legoland has rides and the London Dungeon has scares but the former is hardly likely to set a teenager's pulse racing and the latter is creepy rather than thrilling. You can tell from the names of the rides what Thorpe Park is about: Nemesis Inferno, Colossus and Slammer are not designed for the very old, the very young or the very timid. Which is just the way the customers want it. You don't have to be scared witless. There are some gentle rides but these are aimed at the wimpiest in teenage parties. You could aim for the water-based rides, in which case you won't die of fright but you will get very damp or – in the case of Tidal Wave – soaked to the skin.

But raw thrills are the name of the game. Rollercoaster purists will aim for Colossus where they will gain mighty satisfaction from the sheer number of loops. Nemesis Inferno dangles its participants as it whips them through gravity-defying swoops and swirls. Stealth – probably the fastest rollercoaster in Europe – is all about ultimate speed and Saw Alive adds a supremely creepy horror movie to a route crammed with stomach-challenging action. The latest (and by all accounts the scariest) attraction is The Swarm.

Two of the more basic concepts are still staggeringly effective. Detonator is essentially an enormous, multi-person, seated freefall and Slammer is almost artistic in its simplicity. It is just a gigantic platform which rises and then rotates around its halfway line. Many teenagers scoff on approach but they have all changed their tune by the time they stagger away, jelly-legged. Saw Alive is very scary indeed but that is down to the ancient expedient of having actors to do the scaring rather than machinery-based thrills.

It's good stuff and there is plenty enough for a day's entertainment, which makes the admission charge good value. It's particularly good value if the teens are alone, because – we are reliably informed – long queues are very much part of the fun, allowing endless opportunities to anticipate the thrills ahead and dissect those already experienced. Adults may find the prospect of such queues too much so Fastrack (queue jumper!) tickets are the answer. In summary, teens will enjoy themselves immensely and talk about it for weeks afterwards but adults who are only present as supervisors or chauffeurs should be prepared to make sure that they book in advance and arrive in good time for the queue for the Fastrack tickets.

GREAT DAYS OUT: ALTON TOWERS

My last trip to Alton Towers was on a hot summer's day and was an annual excursion organised by my school. I remember them announcing it in assembly at the start of the year and for the next eight months it was virtually the sole topic of conversation in the school yard.

When the day finally came, I remember waking early and instructing my mother to give me a light breakfast, so I wouldn't have to feel the embarrassment of vomiting while on a rollercoaster. I don't remember much about the journey there, apart from the fact I was worried about where I'd meet my friends, due to the fact that we were unable to travel on the same coach. My anxiety subsided as I began to see the signs for Alton Towers, tension replaced with anticipation. We passed through a couple of small, picturesque villages and, despite the fact that my adolescent mind was full of excitement, I caught sight of one of the villagers shaking her head at the fleet of coaches rolling by. For a brief moment the excitement died, and I felt sorrow for her. I realised that the expansion of Alton Towers must make life in these wonderful villages a nightmare in the summer months.

Once there, we were relieved we didn't have to worry about queuing at the ticket office as we had paid in advance. The first queue we encountered was the one to get through the turnstiles but the guys in the ticket booths were very quick and we didn't have to wait too long. Once in, the noise and euphoria hit us like an intoxicating drug.

The first sight we saw was a long street, namely Tower Street. On each side was a row of food outlets and gift shops. At the end of the street we were confronted by Swan Lake where you could ride on a Swan Boat. Adults probably like that sort of thing but my friends and I, of course, had no interest whatsoever in any of this and were certainly not the slightest bit interested in messing about in a Swan Boat. We ran like crazed, teenage lunatics, heading for the X Sector, home of Oblivion, the world's first vertical rollercoaster.

Oblivion

Oblivion is one of the scariest rollercoasters you can ever experience and the long queues only add to the tension. You're also subjected to a number of video clips of a man calling himself the Lord of Darkness, who tells you that the ride is perfectly safe, but then lets out that familiar, sinister laugh associated with all villains. Once you're on the ride, the tension rises even further as you ascend slowly upwards on the track then wheel to the right towards the infamous drop. The carriage comes to a stop just slightly over the edge so that you are actually staring right down into the hole. After a brief pause, you plunge downwards at a gut-wrenching speed of 68 mph. I must admit I remember little of the drop, as I was too busy screaming. I do remember feeling relieved though when the carriage came to a stop. I didn't know it at the time but I had plunged 150 feet. The decision to have a light breakfast was a good one on reflection.

Nemesis

After taking an hour to relax and enjoy some lunch, my friends and I proceeded at a more leisurely pace towards another famous rollercoaster, Nemesis, the first rollercoaster in Europe to run on the underside of the track. Once again, a long queue loomed but this time there were no video clips or booming laughter. Instead you shuffled slowly through an artificial canyon with rivers of red water. I remember a woman began to have a full-blown panic attack as she obviously thought the water was blood, or maybe she was just generally scared. She was rushed from the queue to have medical attention. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, our turn had come. To my delight, the operator signalled us to seats in the front row. 'I will not shut my eyes,' I said to myself as I strapped myself in. The ride started and almost instantly we were thrown into a series of terrifying loops. The promise I had made myself was overridden by instinct. My eyes slammed shut and I screamed, shouted, laughed out of terror. I felt the motion but saw nothing until we came to a stop. Only when I was safe did I remember the promise and feel regret that I would not have any visual memories of the experience.

Q: Compare and contrast what these two writers say about relationships between parents and children [10 marks]

How To Deal With Lazy Teenagers

For many frustrated parents, parting the Red Sea might seem more of a possibility than parting the couch from their teenager's rear end. We have entered an age where playing a video game or sending a text is about the extent of many teenagers' weekly physical exertion. Our country is rapidly producing a generation of kids that are overweight and unexercised. Sadly, parents are often to blame for this problem. In an effort to avoid confrontation, or a desire to make their children happy, many parents are actually responsible for their kids being lazy.

You may know the scene. The room is a mess, you ask the children to tidy up and they suddenly remember that they are tired. They may even summon up some pressing homework – anything rather than help or do as you ask. You then get bossy. 'Do this NOW', you bellow, but they claim they had no hand in the mess themselves and drift off, leaving you furious, powerless and unable to see what you have to do to get their co-operation.

But why should parents be the only ones to take care of daily tasks in the home? Assigning jobs around the house is a great way to teach responsibility and you can encourage a sense of pride by thanking or complimenting them when they have done a good job. Let them know the importance of doing their bit to help the family. You should also develop a system of 'consequences' for failing to get jobs done.

It is sensible to listen to their grumbles and let them have their say about how tidying or homework or whatever will eat into their football or television time. But you don't have to give in. Often children just want to moan. When they say they didn't make the mess so why should they clear it up, don't answer. If you rise to the challenge, you will simply provoke an argument. Just make it plain what is required from now on so that they don't think that putting an empty crisp packet in the bin is all you mean by cleaning the house. They will feel understandably aggrieved if it is not clear what you expect them to do.

Teenagers always need money and many have the insane idea that they are entitled to a certain portion of the parental income every week. This can be exploited by parents offering opportunities to complete specific jobs as a way to earn spending money. Is there a room that needs painting? Perhaps a garage needs to be cleared up? You only pay when the job is completed.

The biggest factor in dealing with lazy teenagers is consistency. It is also vital to communicate effectively. Being a parent is a hard job but you should make every effort to let your teenager know that fun and pleasure come as a result of hard work.

Wash up? That'll cost you £5, Mum.

Should you really have to pay your children to help around the house?

My boss had told me I had to phone him at 6:30 pm – right in the middle of crisis hour, that time of the day when tired, hungry children collide with irritable parents and edge the household towards complete and utter meltdown. However, this evening my little girl was having an especially spectacular tantrum because, she alleged, someone had taken her blue plastic pony.

"Sophie, stop that noise. I need to make a phone call," I thundered, as if that would somehow make my crimson-faced daughter pipe down.

She simply cranked up her howling. In desperation, I turned to Max, my 15-year-old son, and asked him to take his sister into the garden. I uttered the magic words, "I'll pay you." Lifting an eyebrow, but not turning from his Xbox, he started negotiations. It was 6:26 pm. Time was trickling away fast.

"How much?" he opened.

I offered a pound.

He wrinkled his nose and said, "Ten."

I told him I was only going to be five minutes, and this was extortion.

I gave this boy life – and it was particularly painful. However, he sensed the urgency of the situation. We settled at a fiver and so he led his sister outside and gave her a half-hearted push on the swing.

I know. You don't have to tell me. I shouldn't have to pay my children to help me. But I do. And frequently. I'm not talking about chores such as unloading the dishwasher (it was cheaper to employ a cleaner). But it seems that I've found myself in the grip of their money-making manipulation, resorting to cash bribes whenever I need something doing at any given moment. Life is not easy for a working mother.

How did it come to this? My husband, Martin, may be to blame for making my children so mercenary. When my eldest son sat his GCSEs last year, Martin promised him a cash reward for every A* he could achieve.

"I was brought up to believe that achievement should be its own reward," I argued when he told me his plan. "He should want those grades for his own self-respect and because he wants to get on in the world."

"Nah," replied Martin. "Money talks. That'll get him going."

Let's just say that when my son netted 10 A*s, he earned more than me that month. And so my children are aware they can get large amounts of cash by taking advantage of me.

Please tidy the playroom, we've got visitors coming. Going rate a fiver. Move a load of cardboard boxes out of the garage. Negotiable, depending on the size of the boxes. Get the suitcases down from the attic and dust them ready for our holiday. Each case is £3. I meekly suggested a family discount – maybe a fiver for two – and received a withering look for having the nerve to suggest such a proposition.

It's not that I have reared a brood of merciless youngsters who know the price of everything and the value of nothing. They're actually a very loving, friendly bunch. They are simply taking their cue from me.

You see, the way I live my life has been my undoing. Every day is a demented juggle between running a home and doing a job. My downfall was raising children who are sharp enough to realise that in my desperation to get everything done, there is money to be made.

I don't always give in. The other day I asked Max to answer the door.

"I answered it last week," he murmured.

"Just do it," I ordered.

"How much?" he ventured, although he was joking (I think) and shot me a knowing smile before strolling off to let my visitor in.

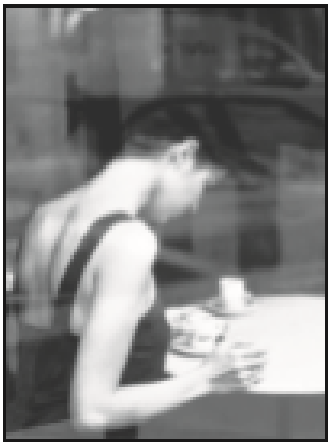
Don't get me wrong. There are times when children should have incentives. They can learn a lot by being paid to wash the car or do the garden. It's honest work and I'd have to pay someone to do it – so why shouldn't they make a few quid?

It teaches them early on in life that there is great dignity in being rewarded for hard work. But I can't seem to resist the temptation to cough up whenever I need to buy another pair of hands or ten minutes of silence. Anything for an easy life.

When I finally made my call to my boss, he couldn't speak to me. His grandchildren had just arrived and he wanted to rearrange our conversation. "Children come first," he chuckled. "I'm sure you understand."

Q: Compare what these two texts say about what sort of person becomes an intelligence officer.[10 marks]

3



If the qualities that make a good spy were obvious, they wouldn't make a very good spy.

Spy. It says it all, doesn't it? Covert surveillance. Peering around corners. High-speed chases and shoot-outs in casinos.

Everyone knows that this is what spies do. It's obvious, isn't it? Well, the first thing to know about MI6 is that nothing's obvious. The skills that make for a good Intelligence Officer certainly aren't. Let's face it, if they were, then counter-espionage would be the easiest game in the world.

So while it's true that the work is often challenging and even exciting, the qualities we look for are more ordinary than you would imagine. And more subtle. The simple ability to get on with all sorts of people from all kinds of cultures, for example. To talk and listen. To develop the sort of relationship that means you can convince them to do what's needed to protect our national interests. This is a vital skill, along with drive and imagination to link up pieces of data to reveal opportunities others have missed.

What other pre-conceptions can we shatter? Well, spies are loners, aren't they? Expected to fend for themselves, even in dangerous situations. In reality, while spies need to be resilient and resourceful, this is a team game and every member is constantly supported.

Oh, and let's not forget the old 'Tinker, Tailor ...' image of the hyper-intelligent, slightly dysfunctional oddball. In fact, you'll find that we value both emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

Now what about the image of the globe-trotting secret agent, rushing abroad at a moment's notice? Certainly we're an organisation with an overseas focus, so that does happen sometimes. But while we actively seek people with an interest in global affairs, many operational jobs are in our London HQ and fit well with family life.

What about secrecy? Well, obviously the details of your work will be secret and we ask you not to discuss your application with anybody. That said, once you join us you'll be able to disclose your role to one or two close friends or family. We'll help you create a credible cover story for everyone else. Paradoxically, the need for secrecy creates a uniquely open and supportive working culture within the organisation.

As for the white, male stereotype, the truth is we don't care what sex you are or where you're from, as long as you're a British national. We don't even care what you do now, only what you can do.

Finally, what about the belief that those who work for MI6 are extraordinary people doing extraordinary things for their country? Well, perhaps that's one you can investigate yourself.

For outstanding candidates we are introducing a Fast Track programme. Find out more at sis.gov.uk/intelligence officer

SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE MI6

What are spies really like?

Most people have watched a spy film, but few have ever met someone from the intelligence community. So how close are real spies to the Bournes and Bonds? Peter Taylor looks at the world of the modern day secret agent.

From James Bond to 'Spooks', from Jason Bourne to 'Tinker Tailor', spying is big box office business and the fact is that the image of such operations as depicted on the big and small screens is firmly rooted in reality.

However, those who actually carry out these covert and potentially dangerous operations could not be further removed from their imaginary counterparts, as I found out when I interviewed serving officers from MI5 (the domestic Security Service) and MI6 (the overseas Secret Intelligence Service).

There is a myth that to be a modern spy you have to come from the dreaming spires of Oxford or Cambridge. But it is patently untrue.

Shami, an MI5 surveillance officer, thought he never had a chance of being recruited. He'd never been to university.

'My understanding was that you had to be upper class, academically bright and white male generally. I just felt I had nothing to offer,' he says.

Nevertheless he applied online and to his amazement, after rigorous assessment, was offered a job. Although Shami hadn't realised it, he was exactly the kind of person MI5 was looking for to carry out the surveillance that is invariably the starting point for investigating any suspected terrorists. Shami is streetwise, smart and can easily blend into any community.

Anonymity is the key to the way in which Shami operates.

He says, 'You're constantly analysing your own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others. The clothes you're wearing, how you're walking and how you're talking are all factors that you constantly have to be thinking about. You've got to blend in. You have to be 'Mr Grey' – a nobody, a person you might pass on the street but you'd forget in a second.'

He admits he gets a 'buzz' from it and says his greatest fear is 'missing a vital bit of information that will go on to cause loss of life.' His greatest satisfaction is 'the arrest of the individuals we're up against.'

Emma is an intelligence officer who works at MI5's headquarters. Like Shami, her preconception of MI5 was wide of the mark.

'I thought it would be largely male and women would be secretaries like Miss Moneypenny from James Bond,' she says.

Her job is to analyse intelligence coming in from a variety of different technical and human sources and from partner agencies. 'It's like piecing together a jigsaw,' she says. Emma's mother was worried when her daughter told her the news that she was going to join MI5.

Emma remembers, 'She was rather horrified. She'd watched 'Spooks' on television and her initial reaction was that I would end up with my head in a fat fryer!' – a reaction to an early episode in which a young woman MI5 officer is tortured and has her head thrust into a pan of boiling fat.

Emma knows that a vital piece in putting the 'jigsaw' together often comes from agents recruited from inside terrorist organisations – a standard plotline of Hollywood movies. But recruiting and running agents can pose potentially life-threatening questions, in case the source turns out to be a double agent. The popular series 'Homeland' is based on that intriguing question. In reality too, such possibilities are always there and every precaution is taken to check out the agent is genuine and not a plant.

Recruiting and running agents is the most dangerous part of being a modern spy. That's what Michael does for MI6 in locations abroad which are confidential for security reasons. He admits the initial approach to a potential agent is a heart-in-mouth moment.

He says, 'There are risks involved in everything we do. I don't think we'd get very far if we were risk averse. We have to do what we can to cope with them.'

Michael sees 007 as pure fantasy.

He says, 'The key elements of the James Bond myth is that we're some sort of military organisation – that's not the case.'

And the idea of having a licence to kill?

'No, we don't,' he insists. 'If James Bond actually worked in MI6 today, he'd spend a large amount of time behind a desk doing paperwork and making sure everything was properly cleared and authorised. He certainly wouldn't be the lone wolf of the films.'

by Peter Taylor

Q: Compare and contrast what these two texts say about the problems and disadvantages of cycling. [10 marks]

The Pleasures of London Cycling *Deborah Moggach*

I've biked in London all my life. My children bike; everyone I know, with any sense, bikes. How else does one get around the place? Nothing beats weaving through the rush-hour traffic or whizzing past the eternal gridlock that is the Strand. Cycling is the only way to free ourselves from the misery of the tube, the wall-to-wall buses that line Oxford Street, the hopelessness of even thinking about driving. It's the only way you can get where you want to go, on time, fast.

We all know the advantages of cycling. It's free, it's non-polluting and it's a wonderful way to keep fit. Isn't it weird that people take the tube to work and then spend their lunch hour sweating away on an exercise bike? What is less recognised, however, is its efficiency. You know exactly when you'll arrive at your destination. It takes me 25 minutes from my front door to the West End. Any other form of transport entails allowing for delays – endless waits, traffic jams. What a waste of life!

Not only that. I can do errands en route. Drop off a parcel, do a bit of shopping here and there, pick up some tickets, stop for a coffee. And I do these things on impulse. Once you start cycling, the city opens up for you. No longer are you fighting it, hot and frustrated. No longer are you at the mercy of bus drivers, roadworks, decisions made by others and over which you have no control. Believe me, once you've tasted this freedom, you're hooked.

More and more of us are taking up cycling. Side streets are less polluted, and more interesting anyway. Besides, the more of us who cycle the safer it is. Traffic has to accommodate us. We also make the streets safer. For a lone woman, walking home at night, a passing cyclist is a reassuring presence. We give the city a human scale.

Some people find the notion of confronting London's aggressive car drivers scary, especially in places like Hyde Park Corner, but if you're spooked you can always get off and walk. And as long as you treat all drivers as idiots who are just about to fling open the door of their parked car, or cut you up with their horrible 4x4, or squash you with their ghastly bendy bus, you'll be okay. Of course there are other disadvantages, like arriving at your destination sodden with sweat and with hideous 'helmet hair'. Sexy clothes and biking don't go together, so one has to pop into an alleyway to change, hopping about on one foot and looking a bit of a twit. And of course, cycling is no fun in torrential rain. Drivers can be aggressive, but I've met with a lot of politeness. Perhaps it's because I look harmless tootling along with my basket of shopping.

That said, how friendly is London to cyclists? There is still a scandalous lack of facilities. Ever noticed how few cycle racks adorn our streets? So we have to lock our bikes to a parking meter or a lamppost. The bike then falls over and gets damaged, or trips up a pedestrian. Worse still, many railings have a sign saying 'Bikes will be removed' – railings of offices whose bosses arrive each day in chauffeur-driven cars and, best of all, railings at a heart hospital! Isn't that lunatic?

Still, if you love London there's no better way to see it. On a bike, it's you who owns the city, instead of the city owning you.

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

Charles Starmer-Smith rediscovers a lost love.

My own conversion to cycling has come late. I remember childhood holidays in France where I would pedal among the villages in search of bread and adventure, revelling in the freedom of pedal power as I sped past vineyards, forests and fields, imagining I was one of the Tour de France greats.

Then came adolescence and girls and guitars and cars. Cycling was no longer cool and the limitations of a bike, rather than its freedoms, became all too apparent. It couldn't play Pearl Jam on the stereo, with the roof down and a pretty girl in the passenger seat, like my battered silver Mini.

However, there is nothing like purchasing new gear to give you an inflated sense of your sporting prowess. Only a week ago, tackling the gentle contours of Richmond Park, I was puffing like a man on an epic ascent of some legendary alpine peak. Now, dressed in the outfit I spent a small fortune on this morning, I stride down the stairs with new purpose, ready to join the British Lycra Brotherhood. I feel streamlined and ready for anything the Alps of Surrey can throw at me.

'I want a divorce.' My wife's words stop me in my tracks. She looks both amused and horrified as I put on my helmet and fluorescent bib. 'You look like a Village People tribute act.' Deflated, I hurry past the mirror and wheel my bike out into the winter drizzle for the short journey to the North Downs.

A wave of smugness washes over me as I weave easily through the noisy commuters and choking traffic which stall everyone else's progress. One right turn towards Box Hill and suddenly...silence.

The North Downs Way, which runs from Hampshire through Surrey, awaits. The first rays of sun streak across the chalk hillside, but there's still a chill in the air. I zip up my jersey, looking enviously at the thick coats of the sheep. But I soon forget the cold. With the wind at my back I hear the hum of the tyres and the whirr of the chain. Below me a patchwork of green fields. No deadlines. No delays. For these precious moments I care for little but the verdant hills and plunging valleys – and the panoramic views my efforts have earned.

The British Lycra Brotherhood – for whom mornings, evenings, weekends and holidays are all about pedal power and for whom travel is not just about the destination but the journey there – can welcome its latest recruit. My love of cycling has come full circle.

But how has it come to this? The rise of cycling in Britain has been well documented. A string of champions on the track, from Chris Hoy to Victoria Pendleton, and now on the road, with the new Sky Team led by Bradley Wiggins, has done much to inspire a new generation of Britons on to their bikes.

Aided by an overpriced and overcrowded transport system and savings from the 'Cycle to Work' initiative, the bicycle is now seen as an answer to rising carbon emissions. But it is the escapism it gives that is the real draw. You don't need to emulate the endless wave of intrepid cyclists crossing the Americas or circumnavigating the globe to be part of this revolution.

The landscape of Britain is perfect for cycling. Across every hill and valley, country lane and woodland track, the national cycle network covers a mind-boggling 10,000 miles, and we are clocking more than a million journeys on these routes each day.

www.britishcycling.org.uk

Q: Compare and contrast what Bill Bryson and Max Davidson think about Manchester. [10 marks]

I took a train to Manchester and, having left home late, it was four o'clock and getting on for dark by the time I emerged from Piccadilly station. The streets were shiny with rain, and busy with traffic and hurrying pedestrians, which gave Manchester an attractive big-city feel. For some totally insane reason, I had booked a room in an expensive hotel. My room was on the eleventh floor, but it seemed like the eighty-fifth, such were the views. Manchester seemed enormous – a boundless sprawl of dim yellow lights and streets filled with slow-moving traffic.

I played with the TV, confiscated the stationery and spare tablet of soap and put a pair of trousers in the trouser press – at these prices I was determined to extract full value from the experience – even though I knew that the trousers would come out with permanent pleats in the oddest places. That done, I went out for a walk and to find a place to eat.

I walked for some distance but the only places I could find were either the kind of national chains with big plastic menus and dismal food, or hotel dining rooms where you had to pay £27.95 for three courses of pompous description and overcooked disappointment.

Eventually I ended up in Chinatown, which announces itself to the world with a big colourful arch and then almost immediately loses heart. The better-looking restaurants were packed, so I ended up going to some upstairs place, where the décor was tatty and the food barely OK. When the bill came, I noticed an extra charge marked 'S.C'. 'What's that?' I said to the waitress, who had, I should like to note, been uncommonly surly throughout.

'Service charge.'

I looked at her in surprise. 'Then why is there also a space here for a tip?'

She gave me a bored, nothing-to-do-with-me shrug.

'That's terrible,' I said. 'You're just tricking people into tipping twice.'

She gave a heavy sigh, as if she had been here before. 'You want to see manager?'

The offer was made in a tone that suggested that if I were to see the manager it would be with some of his boys in a back alley. I decided not to press the matter, and instead returned to the streets and had a long, purposeless walk through Manchester's dank and strangely ill-lit streets. I can't remember a darker city. I couldn't say where I went exactly because Manchester's streets always seem curiously indistinguishable to me. I felt I was just wandering in a kind of urban limbo.

Eventually I ended up beside the great dark bulk of the Arndale Centre. What a monumental mistake that was. I suppose it must be nice, in a place as rainy as Manchester, to be able to shop undercover but at night it is just 25 acres of deadness, a massive impediment to anyone trying to walk through the heart of the city. Outside it was covered in those awful tiles that make it look like the world's largest lavatory, and indeed as I passed up Cannon Street three young men with close-cropped heads and abundantly tattooed arms were using an outside wall for that very purpose. It suddenly occurred to me that it was getting late and the streets were awfully empty of respectable-looking chaps like me, so I decided to get back to my hotel before they put me to similar use.

I awoke early and hit the streets determined to form some fixed impression of the city. My problem with Manchester, you see, is that I have no image of it, none at all. It is an airport with a city attached. If I haven't got a very clear image of the city, it's not entirely my fault. 'Shaping Tomorrow's City Today' is the official local motto, but in fact Manchester is decidely of two minds about its place in the world. At Castlefield, they were busy creating yesterday's city today, cleaning up old warehouses, recobbling the quaysides, putting fresh coats of paint on the old arched footbridges and scattering about a generous assortment of old-fashioned benches and lampposts. By the time they have finished, you will be able to see what life would have been like in nineteenth-century Manchester if they had had wine-bars and cast-iron litter bins. At Salford Quays, on the other hand, they have done everything they can to obliterate the past, creating a kind of mini-Dallas on the site of the once-booming docks of the Manchester Ship Canal. It's the most extraordinary place – a huddle of glassy modern office buildings and executive flats in the middle of a vast urban nowhere, all of them seemingly empty.

MANCHESTER: Another Angel of the North

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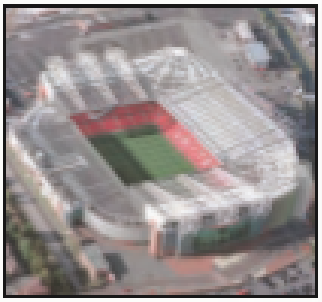
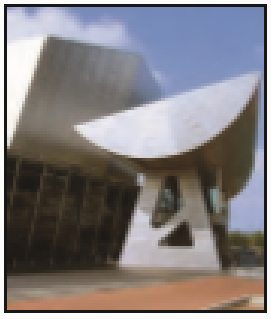
Manchester doesn't blow its own trumpet, but it's a perfect place for a city break, says Max Davidson.





The people of Manchester are not slow to laugh at themselves, and a lack of pomposity is pure Manchester – a great city, but also an oddly shy city, not quite sure of itself in company. It would rather play the clown than give itself airs and graces.

Because Manchester has never blown its own trumpet, it has never really figured on the tourist map of Europe. But make no mistake, it belongs on that map. If Manchester were in France or Germany, we would visit it in droves. In fact, in many ways it is the perfect city-break destination: accessible, reasonably compact, but blessed with a bewildering variety of attractions, including a clutch of superb free museums such as the People's History Museum. At Easter a new indoor attraction for families, the Legoland Discovery Centre, is due to open in the city. Throw in the Metrolink, a tram system that would delight Londoners, and you have the complete package.

The bad news about Manchester should be got out of the way first. The weather is unpredictable, which is being kind to it, and if you are visiting it is best to pack thermals and an umbrella. But what is a drop of rain between friends – particularly when there is so much to do indoors?

Every year, Manchester seems to throw up something new, whether it is a state-of-the-art museum, a funky restaurant, or a seriously cool hotel. The Light, where I am staying, is so new you can almost smell the paint dry. But what a brilliant place. It is in the fashionable Northern Quarter, a cluster of wacky boutiques and vegan cafes and dusty record shops. I have dinner in a super-stylish restaurant, packed with young people, and then move on to Matt and Phred's, a Manchester institution, fabled for its live jazz. Couples canoodle in dark corners to the strains of a saxophone. Outside, the rain is coming down in stair-rods, but somehow that only adds to the cosiness of the setting.

Architecturally, Manchester is a mess, but a glorious mess. It is hard to find an area in which each building blends harmoniously with its neighbours. Everything is higgledy-piggledy: a crumbling Victorian pile here, a shiny new office block there. Architectural masterpieces stand alongside buildings that should never have got planning permission.

Of the older buildings, the real gem is the John Rylands Library, a little Victorian masterpiece nestling in a forest of shops and offices. However, if that is not your bag, then head for The Lowry, a gallery and performing arts centre at Salford Quays. It is ten years old but still seems intoxicatingly new, a riot of modern culture in a once derelict canalside setting. Centre stage, inevitably, are the paintings of L.S. Lowry, but there is so much more to The Lowry than the paintings of Lowry.

Take a bridge across the Ship Canal from The Lowry and you come to the superb Imperial War Museum. It is not just a thrilling space, architecturally, but the perfect museum for an age sceptical about war. The exhibits do not celebrate deeds of bravery, but document the human cost of war, from civilian casualties to mass migration.

Elsewhere in the city, Urbis, the once cutting-edge exhibition centre, is due to close temporarily and open again as the National Football Museum. The Museum of Science and Industry is also being refurbished.

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Being sports-mad, I keep the best to last: a visit to Old Trafford, the Theatre of Dreams, home of Manchester United. Great memories come flooding back as I walk down Sir Matt Busby Way and pause to admire the statue of the Holy Trinity of the sixties – Bobby Charlton, Denis Law and George Best.

The Manchester United shop, with its red sea of tacky merchandise, is not for the squeamish. What loving parent would dress a baby in a Wayne Rooney romper suit? But the club museum can be recommended to anyone with even the remotest interest in football. It is not just a standard collection of trophy cabinets and signed football shirts, but a celebration of the role football has played in the life of Manchester.

The 1958 Munich air disaster left a whole city in mourning, but the rebuilding of Manchester United, years of success on the pitch, and the subsequent emergence of a world super-brand, have all made ordinary Mancunians walk that little bit taller.

With great interactive exhibits, including a chance to try your skills as a commentator, and replays of wonder goals bombarding you from every direction, it is hard to suppress a smile of pure pleasure. Football suddenly seems like the Beautiful Game again, not the sour, cynical industry it can sometimes resemble.

I am just having a quiet coffee in the museum cafe when a familiar figure in a tracksuit comes bustling past. Sir Alex Ferguson, no less, beaming like Father Christmas.

'How are you doing, son?' he says, patting *my* elbow.

Son? I am over 50. And why is he grinning? How does he know I am not a Chelsea fan? Or a plain-clothes referee?

It is an unexpectedly warm welcome, but somehow it sums up my visit to Manchester, city of surprises, the pride of northern England.

Pack your thermals, to be on the safe side. Then get on the next train.

Q: Compare and contrast what the two texts say about the impact of Fairtrade on people in developing countries. [10 marks]

How fair is Fairtrade?

The Fairtrade label is increasingly common. But while shoppers seem keen to pay a little over the odds for Fairtrade products, I have to ask how effective it really is in helping farmers in developing countries.

Fairtrade products are popping up everywhere. Gone are the days when you had to trek to an off-the-beaten-track shop to buy a chocolate bar or a woolly jumper. Now you just need to visit the High Street. Topshop sells Fairtrade tunics, bubble tops and racer-back vests. Marks and Spencer works with more than 600 Fairtrade cotton farmers in developing countries, using their cotton to produce chinos, jeans and a host of fashion items. Sainsbury's sells Fairtrade coffee and chocolate, and recently announced that the only bananas it will sell in future will come from Fairtrade producers.

There are more than 2,500 product lines in the UK that carry the Fairtrade mark. Last year we spent £290 million on Fairtrade food, furniture and clothing. The aim of Fairtrade is clear – to get a better deal for producers in developing countries. In order to win the Fairtrade tag, companies have to pay more than the market price for their products. This means producers have extra money to invest in education for their children and other social needs.

But I am not totally convinced that Fairtrade is a good idea. By focusing just on getting a fair price, the Fairtrade movement doesn't encourage mechanisation so workers are forced to continue doing back-breaking work and don't escape poverty.

So how fair is Fairtrade? Is it just about getting workers in developing countries to accept their situation by giving them, at best, just a little bit more? I suspect that Fairtrade can end up being a trap for workers in developing countries, making them dependent on charity-minded shoppers in the West. I worry that these workers can become prisoners of our shopping habits as they depend on us paying higher prices for their goods.

We all want to be charitable to people who are less fortunate than we are, but I would also ask how a few extra pennies a day from Fairtrade can be celebrated as an outstanding achievement for the poor. I recently read about some Fairtrade farmers in Peru who were being paid about £2 a day for working from 8am to 4.30pm. This is more than they normally earn, but not much more. We are surely right to be concerned that the Fairtrade movement is focusing on increasing wages by fairly small amounts rather than really changing poor countries through development and modernisation. Perhaps Fairtrade is more about flattering Western shoppers than changing the lives of people in developing countries. It appeals to our vanity and makes us feel good about ourselves but really does little to improve the lives of the poor.

It seems to me that Fairtrade is not the best way out of poverty for everyone.

Going for Gold?

Just make sure it's Fairtrade

Often I have nights when I complain that I'm so tired I feel as though I've been working down a mine all day. Like most people, I have no concept of how hard some people – mostly in developing countries and mostly female – work to bring us luxury goods. But now that I am in a gold-mining village called San Luis in the middle of the desert in Peru, I'm beginning to get the idea.

Mine shafts are given female names but it's forbidden for women to enter them, which is why women are relegated to the back-breaking work of grading rubble on the surface. When I get permission to enter one of the mine shafts – called 'Diana' – I have no idea how anyone could work there. Dark, dusty and sometimes wet, it keeps making me think of the Chilean gold miners who were trapped for 69 days. The only light is from my helmet, and there are steep, dark drops to seams below us in the mountain. I suffer both vertigo and claustrophobia.

Over the past few years, we have become familiar with the term 'blood diamonds', gems mined by workers in terrible conditions that are sold to fund the arms trade. But we know little about where the rest of our jewellery comes from. There are no big chunks of gold in these mines, just gold dust that has to be extracted by crushing rock into powder before it is treated with mercury and cyanide. In San Luis, there are opencast mines next to where children play. Houses are made of old sacks. The miners are on desperately low wages, there is no crèche and there are no safety rules for the handling of chemicals and dynamite. Child labour is common. 'My children are thin and small,' says Yessica, the wife of a miner and a mother of two. I find it hard to believe that anyone involved in this industry is poverty stricken when gold sells for over £1,000 an ounce. But of course, these miners receive just a fraction of the price the gold brings in the West.

However, I am also in Peru to see the first Fairtrade gold extracted from the Peruvian mines. The village of Santa Filomena, home to 3,000 people and situated in a remote mountain area, is one of only nine places in the world producing Fairtrade gold, and it is almost too good to be true.

The difference between Santa Filomena and the neighbouring village of San Luis, which is not Fairtrade, is enormous. Fairtrade miners earn £250 a month and an extra 5% for being environmentally-friendly. Santa Filomena straddles a river and this means the mine is wet, which can be hazardous, causing rock falls. However, while the big mining companies will blow up a mountainside, the Fairtrade miners respect the environment. To be rated 'Fairtrade', the dangeous chemicals used to treat the gold in the mines are not allowed to enter the eco-system.

In Santa Filomena, there are shops, a health clinic, sick pay, maternity leave and rapidly improving sanitation. There is no running water but there are proper wooden houses instead of slums. There is a crèche and a school.

I speak to Paulina, 25, who toils sorting rubble and who has invited me to her home to meet her children, Jennifer, nearly 3, and Shamel, 5. Her husband is also a miner. Paulina came here to find work and her house is two rooms, with a tiny stove and a coop of chickens outside. What does she want her children to be when they grow up? 'I don't want them to be miners. But now there is a way out – at least they get to go to school,' she says.

Each week, the gold is carried up the mountain by the miners and then driven to La Paz where it is refined and exported. A lump is placed in my hands. It's big and heavy and worth about £30,000. Fairtrade gold means some of the poorest people in the world, working in a very dangerous industry, have protection and a future.

Liz Jones

Q: Compare what these texts say about the effects of flying and tourism. [10 marks]

Addressing binge flying is vital for the climate

Almost all of us are hypocrites about climate change. We know that it is real, and desperately serious. Yet, we are in a shocking muddle about how to relate our personal behaviour to the phenomenon.

For those who inhabit the developed world, opportunities for travel represent the most significant new personal freedom of the past half-century. Even as recently as the 1960s, hitch-hiking to Greece or Turkey was a big deal for the adventurous young middle class. South America and Australia were almost off the map. Today, it is possible to fly cheaply almost anywhere, and we all do. Every arriving jet at Nairobi or Buenos Aires disgorges crowds of tourists, and short breaks, which mean intensive plane use, are booming.

Common sense tells us that all this is environmentally disastrous. Yet common sense also tells us that tourism is doing great things for the economies and people of poor countries all over the world. Carbon emissions soar as a result of flying flowers and vegetables to Europe and America from Africa and Mexico. Yet if that traffic stopped, millions of needy people in the grower's trade would suffer.

All this leaves many of us confused. Relatively speaking, the travel boom has hardly started. In the decades ahead many more millions will possess the means and the desire to fly further and more often. The Chinese, for example, have only just begun to discover the joys of holidaying abroad. Suggesting to people who live in the third world that they should not travel is like the modern, Western enthusiasm for saving Africa's great animals after slaughtering them for two centuries.

Even in the West, it is not popular for any government to try to reduce the passion for flying. Flying could be made more expensive, but it does not sound good if the poor cannot travel while the rich stay airborne.

The obvious way forward would be to tax aviation fuel and end the ridiculous situation where flying is cheap but driving a car is expensive. However, it is almost impossible to reach an international agreement which would stick, or persuade people to pay more to fly.

The bad news for the environment is that it is impossible to believe that the global travel boom will stop. Whatever is done in Britain, or other Western countries, many other nations that have only just begun to experience prosperity have no intention of depriving their citizens of its privileges.

However, that is no reason for us to do nothing. Indeed, it would be irresponsible not to do anything. We must impose some discipline on our own travel, refusing to give in to 'binge flying'. However, only a minority of people, the same kind who buy organic products, are likely to listen. Most of us change our habits only when we are made to do so. We will fly less only when it hurts our pockets too much to fly more, but that will not be easy to enforce.

WHEN IT'S GOOD TO FLY

First we say you've got to fly less. Now we're saying you have to jet across the planet to stay in eco-luxury. Life's confusing, says Mark Hodson

Flying is bad, right? Nobody with a social conscience should fly halfway round the world on holiday, spewing carbon into the atmosphere.

Well, it depends. If we were all to stop travelling to developing countries tomorrow, who would suffer? Not just us, but hundreds of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on tourism. We've spent a generation trying to persuade people in poor countries throughout the world that if they protect their local ecosystems, we'll pay them a rewarding visit. So, do we walk away from the rainforest eco-lodges, community-run safari camps and conservation diving schools just because environmentalists tell us to?

This does not give us the right to whizz around the world, but it should remind us that travel, when organised with care, can be a great force for good.

PORINI CAMP, Kenya

African national parks are a good thing. That's a no-brainer, isn't it? But what happens on the other side of the fence? In Kenya, it turns out that the local Masai people felt excluded and their feelings weren't exactly boosted by the busloads of tourists who were herded into their villages to stare at the 'colourful' natives. No surprise, then, that the Masai continued to hunt protected animals, which they regarded as a threat rather than a benefit.

But Jake Cook, a white Kenyan, had an idea. Why not open a camp on Masai-owned land outside the national park, employ local people to build and run it, and pay them rent? Not only would the tribes reap a real benefit from tourism, they would also have an incentive to conserve the wildlife. Visitors, in turn, would experience a genuinely warm welcome and get the run of a vast area of wilderness.

The result is Ambolesi Porini, a small tented camp a few miles north of Ambolesi National Park. Because only twelve visitors a day are allowed in, the animals – elephants, cheetahs, lions and leopards – remain genuinely wild and unaccustomed to the sight of vehicles.

GROOTBOS, South Africa

On paper, the Grootbos private nature reserve looks as though it might be too goodie-goodie to be true. A five-star eco-resort, it's so environmentally friendly that it lectures its guests about trees and seaweed.

Dull and worthy? Not when you get there. Barely visible from the road, the hotel hugs a wooded hillside overlooking a protected wild beach. It's stylish and comfortable, with cosy cottages hidden among trees. The hotel's ethos is 'luxury, conservation and social responsibility'. The owner has opened a gardening school, the first in South Africa, to train jobless men from the nearby town, and built four football pitches for local schoolkids. The children can play only if they turn up with a bag of rubbish to recycle.

Trained guides – also recruited from the local towns – walk guests through the grounds, pointing out the wildlife and some of the 9,700 plant species. Even if you have only a passing interest in plants, you'll be entranced.

SHINTA MANI, Cambodia

There aren't many hotels where you can phone room service and order two live piglets. But then Shinta Mani is no ordinary hotel. It works with the local community to take young people out of poverty and set them up in a career in the hotel industry. Each year, the hotel takes 20 disadvantaged youngsters and puts them through its own hospitality school. Guests can sponsor a student in exchange for photos and progress reports, or support local villagers: a donation of £45 buys a freshwater well, while £40 pays for the pair of piglets that an enterprising local family raise and sell on for a profit.

All well and good, but how is the hotel? With all those students running around, are you in for a Cambodian-style Fawlty Towers experience? Happily not. The service is outstanding, and the staff are polite and friendly.

ZEAVOLA, Thailand

When the tsunami swept over Thailand's coast, one of the worst affected areas was Ko Phi Phi. In the weeks after the disaster, there was talk that tourism was finished. The islanders had other ideas. A sparkling example of Phi Phi's resurgence can be seen in Zeavola, a sumptuous hotel on a white-sand beach. Guests stay in villas built in the style of a traditional village, and dine at a seafront restaurant. Since it opened, the hotel has worked with a local school which was badly hit by the tsunami. A donation is made for each night a guest stays, and the locals have repaired the school which now has a new classroom and a playground. The hotel also does good work in the community – donating staff and materials for clean-up projects.

Mark Hodson *(The Sunday Times)*