

Part I

A) Comprehension questions on the text. Read the text and choose the correct answer. You must choose and answer only 2 out of the 3 questions below. (0,4 points each)

We are living in a golden age of ignorance. Has there been a moment in modern history where so many people in free societies have believed such damaging lies? It's easy to point to the US, where nearly 90 per cent of people who voted for Donald Trump believe Joe Biden's election victory was not legitimate. No surprise, then, that there is considerable support for the recent violent attempt to prevent the democratic transfer of power. But it's not just the US. In France, a minority of adults are confident that vaccines are safe, which explains why only 40 per cent say they plan to get a Covid-19 shot.

Meanwhile, across the world, substantial minorities believe that the Covid-19 fatality rate has been "deliberately and greatly exaggerated". The proportion of Covid-19 deniers is 22 per cent in the UK; in many other countries, it is even higher. How did it come to this? The simplest explanation -to repurpose a phrase from former US Treasury secretary Larry Summers - is: "There are idiots. Look around." But while there is a certain visceral satisfaction in that explanation, there is much more going on. Robert Proctor, a historian, coined the term "agnotology" to describe the academic study of ignorance. He became interested in the phenomenon after studying Big Tobacco's all-too-successful effort to seed doubt about the scientific evidence on the risks of cigarettes. Proctor once told me "we are living in a golden age of ignorance". Three elements of it are worth highlighting - none of them entirely new. First, distraction. It's possible for people to spend hours every day consuming what is described as "news" without ever engaging with anything of substance. Some distractions are obvious: doing the sudoku will not help you understand the implications of the post-Brexit trade deal, and neither will gazing at pictures of celebrities. At least such diversions are marketed thus. Others are more insidious.

Second, political tribalism. In a polarised environment, every factual claim becomes a weapon in an argument. When people encounter a claim that challenges their cultural identity, don't be surprised if they disbelieve it. It is obvious that political polarisation might shape our beliefs about questions of politics (do you approve of Boris Johnson's handling of the pandemic?) and government (was the US election fair?) and policy (should we provide a universal basic income?). But it also shapes our beliefs about apparently unrelated scientific questions, such as whether humans are causing dangerous climate change, or whether the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is safe. Logically, the answers to these questions should not skew left or right - but they do. My own advice work has a modest goal. Instead of trying to enlighten someone else, I suggest that each of us starts with our own blind spots. We are all distracted. We all have tribes too: social if no political. We are all vulnerable, then, to believing things that aren't true. And we are equally vulnerable to denying or ignoring important truths. We should all slow down, calm down, ask questions and imagine that we may be wrong. It is simple advice, but much better than nothing. It is also advice that is all too easy to ignore.

1. Why does the author think we are living in the golden age of ignorance?

- a) Because people like being ignorant.
- b) Because political debate has become violent.
- c) Because fake news is gaining ground.

2. Distraction is said to be contributing to the spread of ignorance because ...

- a) people now spend less time educating themselves.
- b) watching newscasts on TV makes people ignorant.
- c) doing the sudoku has become people's favourite pastime.

3. What is the authors advice?

- a) Everybody should try to be self-critical.
- b) People have to make sure they advise their ignorant mates.
- c) We should just let things be.

B) Use of English. Choose the correct answer. You must choose and answer only 8 out of the 11 questions below (0,4 points each).

4. The British Prime Minister resides ___ 10 Downing Street.

- a) in
- b) in the
- c) on

5. Choose the right answer: She said, "I'm sorry I lost the book you gave me."

- a) She apologized for losing the book I was given her.
- b) She apologised for lose the book I gave her.
- c) She apologised for losing the book I gave her.

6. Choose the right option: They didn't score a goal. I wish.

- a) they had scored a goal
- b) they scored a goal.
- c) they could score a goal.

7. Before he _____ for the US, he _____ all his belongings to a second-hand shop.

- a) left/sold
- b) leaves/sells
- c) had left/sold

8. Which word means the same or nearly the same as *overall*?

- a) fragmentary
- b) partially
- c) general

9. My grandfather got __ the flu very quickly because he's such a fit man.

- a) of b) off **c) over**

10. Be careful when you walk across that old wooden bridge. It _____ be very safe.

- a) might not** b) mustn't c) shouldn't

11. Choose the right answer: They are going to buy a new TV set next week.

a) A new TV set is going to buy next week.

b) A new TV set will buy next week.

c) A new TV set is going to be bought next week.

12. _____ having muscle problems, the defender was able to play.

- a) Even **b) Despite** c) Although

13. My parents used _____ to the cinema on Saturday evenings.

- a) like going b) to like go **c) to like going**

14. _____ broke into the house and stole some paintings.

- a) Thief **b) Thieves** c) Thiefs

Part II

Write an essay of 150-180 words on ONE of the following subjects (6 points):

A- Have you ever told a lie? How did you feel? Where there any consequences? Provide as much information as possible.

The wrong choice

One of the qualities I admire the most in a person is honesty. That is why I currently try to avoid deceiving others. Yet, there is a lie in my past that is particularly significant for me.

I was in my mid-twenties and I had developed an especial friendship with one of my colleagues. Every day after work we all used to have some beers in the adjoining pub. One night, she was not working because she was celebrating her birthday. She had invited me but I decided not to go at the last minute because I preferred to stay in the pub with my other work mates. I told her I was tired and it hurt her profoundly.

I remember talking to her the following day. She was crying because it was the first time she gave such a party and she couldn't imagine it without me. She considered me a dear friend. Needless to say, I felt awful. I was selfish and stupid. She is one of the most kind-hearted people I have ever met and I had let her down.

In short, I am obviously far from being proud of what I did. However, it is undeniable that such a hard moment between us marked our friendship forever. From then on I was committed to never let her down again, and now I can proudly say that she is my best friend.

B- What were some of the happiest, saddest or most exciting experiences you had as a child? Provide as much information as possible.

Feeling loved

Once you get older, being able to go back in time to happy childhood memories is a priceless gift. In my case most of them are marked by my grandparents.

When I think of them I picture sun, spring, flowers, joy and the smell of delicious food. As a kid my parents, my brother and I used to live next door, so we could spend a lot of time together. I remember having breakfast with them. My grandmother used to give me a very light and sweet latte and I felt like a grown-up.

With my grandfather my brother and I did many things. At their home, we did crosswords, play checkers, dice or domino. But above all, he took walks with us. We used to visit a nearby park where we fed the ducks on the lake. Moreover, both of them took us to brunch at weekends.

In short, I will never forget those times where there were no worries and we were surrounded by the love of our family. My main task now is allowing my child to feel so loved and to create his own joyful moments with my parents.