Year 8 Homework Project: Exploration of Nonfiction Texts

Learning Objective: Being able to analyse, compare and contrast nonfiction texts that are based on a range of different topics is an essential skill in English Language. The purpose of this project is to equip you with the key concepts and terminology so that you can confidently write a comparative response. In addition to this you will learn from the language and structural techniques that writers use so that you can express your own point of view in a formal and professional manner.

Exploration of Nonfiction Texts

Hard copies of all work completed will need to be handed in to your English teacher at the end of the project. If at any point you find yourself struggling or are confused, please find your English teacher who will be happy to help. If you need a paper copy of these instructions or the worksheets, please ask your teacher.

Remember that English staff are available to help after school throughout this project and Homework Club takes place in the library every night after school.

Task 1 – Understanding Nonfiction (40 minutes)

1) What is nonfiction? Write your own definition.
2) History books and encyclopaedias are examples of nonfiction texts. How many other categories can you think of?
3) Think of a nonfiction book you have read or referred to recently either at home or at school. Write a 50 word summary of its contents.

CHALLENGE TASKS

4) Why is it important to be able to distinguish between fiction and non-fiction?
5) Is there ever any crossover of fiction and nonfiction? Try to give some examples in your response.
Task 2 – Talking about Nonfiction (40 minutes)

We need to equip ourselves with the appropriate terminology so that we can talk about nonfiction texts in a sophisticated way. To help with this, complete the ‘Nonfiction Terminology’ worksheet in which you have to match the terms to their definitions.

CHALLENGE TASK

Complete the additional questions.

Task 3 – Comprehension (40 minutes)

Read Michelle Obama’s speech which was delivered to high school students in 2015 and then answer the following questions:

1. Choose four statements below which are TRUE:
   
   A) Young people are confident about how they can apply to college.
   B) Michelle Obama’s message to young people is that they do not need to work as hard as their parents.
   C) Michelle Obama founded the Reach Higher initiative.
   D) The Reach Higher initiative helps to pay for students’ tuition fees.
   E) Going to college is more expensive than it has been in the past.
   F) Michelle Obama spoke at San Antonio’s college signing day.
   G) Rocio’s father earned a lot of money.
   H) Rocio did very well in high school.

2) How would you describe the tone of this speech? Include a quotation to support your answer.

3) The speaker reveals some information about herself in this speech. Find some examples of this and explain why you think she has done this.

CHALLENGE TASK

4) What do you think Michelle Obama’s purpose is in this speech?

5) Would you describe this speech as informative or persuasive? Give reasons to support your answer.

Task 4 – Summary (40 minutes)

A summary aims to express the main points of a text in a condensed form. In addition to this, it should give information about the purpose, style and tone of the writing.

Write a 100 word summary of Michelle Obama’s speech.
Task 5 – Use of Language and Structure (40 minutes)

Michelle Obama’s speech has been very well constructed so that she can engage her audience.

1) Annotate your copy of the speech with the following techniques that she uses:

- Introducing herself as a figure of authority
- Use of clear headings
- Use of repetition
- Use of anecdote
- Inclusion of fact
- Use of informal language
- Repeated use of the pronoun ‘we’
- Emotive language
- Direct and commanding language
- An example used to support a point

CHALLENGE TASK

Add to your annotations by explaining the effect of each example you have identified.

Task 6 – The Ragged School (40 minutes)

Being able to read and compare texts that are about the same subject but from different times and points of view is an essential skill in English.

1) Read The Ragged School extract which is about a wealthy merchant who set up a charity school for destitute children in 1865.
2) Identify at least 5 words you don’t understand. Search for their definitions and write them down.
3) Write a bullet point summary of this text that includes all of the main events

OR

CHALLENGE TASK

4) Instead of using bullet points, write your summary as prose and also comment on the purpose, style and tone of the writing.

Task 7 – Comparing and Contrasting (40 minutes)

Complete the comparison table by making notes on each text for each of the areas identified.

CHALLENGE TASK

Include quotations to support your comments.
Task 8 – Comparative Writing (40 minutes)

Using your comparison table as a guide, write a response to the following question:

How is education presented differently in the two extracts you have studied?

- Aim to write at least 300 words
- Support your points with evidence from the texts
- Comment on the effect of language used by the writers

See Task 8 Support Sheet for further guidance should you need it.

Task 9 – Nonfiction Research (40 minutes)

1) Find two contrasting nonfiction articles on an appropriate topic of your choice. For example, you may wish to search for a news story that is reported differently by different newspapers or news websites. You could also search for contrasting reviews of a film, book, product or experience.

   Note: Your extracts should be examples of formal writing from a credible source.

2) Write a list of the ways in which your two articles are different.

OR

CHALLENGE TASK

3) Write a 100 word summary of the contents of your extracts and the ways in which they are contrasting.

Task 10 – Persuasive Writing (40 minutes)

Write your own persuasive speech about the value of education. Imagine you will deliver this speech to the new Year 7s when they join in September. Your aim is to inspire and motivate them!

Points to consider:

- Make language and structure choices that will engage your audience
- Support your points with examples and anecdotes
- Include facts and/or statistics
Opinion: Making education a priority secures our students' futures

Michelle Obama

As first lady, I have spent a lot of time talking with young people all across this country. One of the main things we talk about is education.

The young people I talk to tell me their hopes and dreams. They want to go to college, get good jobs and one day start families of their own.

I also have heard about the challenges they face. For one thing, going to college costs more than ever today. For some students, the idea of college is a bit scary and mysterious. They are not sure how to apply to college, and they worry they will not do well. Many are the first person in their family to dream of attending college.

My message to these young people is simple: They need to be prepared to work hard.

We all Have to Work Hard

What that means is going to class every day, setting their goals high and working like crazy to achieve them. Education and hard work has been the story of my life and of my husband's life too. So when I talk to young people, my hope is that they see our story can be their story also. All it takes is a willingness to dedicate themselves to their education.

Of course, teachers, parents and government leaders have a lot of work to do too. They must do a better job of giving students the best schools and more opportunities for their future. They also have to do much more to let young people know just how important education is.

To help promote the value of education, I founded a program called the Reach Higher initiative. Its goal is to inspire young people to go to college, so they can have a better future. Our goal is to ensure that every student in this country understands how to apply to college and how to do well once they are there.

We are doing all of this because we know a high school degree is not enough these days. To get a good job, young people need something more. The same thing is true for our country as well. We need a highly trained, highly educated workforce. All across America, we need communities that truly value and promote education.

In San Antonio, T-Shirts Spark College Dreams

It is going to take all of us to inspire young people to reach higher. Parents need to push their kids to work harder, and they need to demand more from their kids' schools. We need more world-class teachers and more outstanding school leaders. Of course, young people need to step up and take responsibility for their futures as well.

The good news is that we know all of this is possible. Every day, we see examples of communities supporting their young people. Recently, I saw one of these efforts when I visited San Antonio, Texas, which was celebrating its fourth annual college week. I had a chance to speak at their college signing day, during which thousands of high school seniors came together to publicly announce their plans to attend and graduate from college.

Not only the graduating seniors were involved — everyone in San Antonio wears their college T-shirts on signing day. All week long, the community helps high schoolers learn how to apply to college and gives middle school students advice on getting to college.
One Student's Dream Comes True

Everything they are doing in San Antonio is helping to support the dreams of so many promising young people. They are young people like Rocio Alvarado, a remarkable young woman I met on my visit.

Rocio's family came to the United States when she was a child, and they lived together in one tiny, crumbling room. Her father worked long hours for low wages, and when they needed money to pay for her mother's medicine, Rocio helped sell homemade tamales outside her school. Even with all these challenges, Rocio's family never stopped believing deeply in the power of education. They pushed Rocio to study as hard as she could.

Rocio worked hard and did very well in high school. Next fall, she is heading off to college.

There are young people just like Rocio all over this country — young people with so much promise and so many skills. All they need is a little extra help. We have got to try harder to give them a chance to fulfill their boundless promise. If we do that, all kids will have the bright future they deserve.
Nonfiction Terminology

Match the terms to their definitions:

1) formal language 6) informative writing
2) informal language 7) structure
3) tone 8) anecdote
4) argumentative writing 9) case study
5) persuasive writing 10) purpose

a) The intention of a piece of writing
b) Writing that presents the facts about a particular subject
c) A personal story used to exemplify a point
d) Writing that is intended for professional purposes/situations
e) Writing that presents the points for and against a particular issue
f) The way in which a text is constructed
g) A detailed look at a particular example of something
h) A personal writing style that appears more conversational
i) The overall feeling or emotion generated by writing
j) Writing that intends to convince its reader of a particular viewpoint

Challenge Questions:

1) In nonfiction writing, you may see fewer descriptive writing techniques such as simile and metaphor: why do you think this is?
2) Can you give an example of a nonfiction text that might use a case study? Why might this be helpful for the reader?
3) Make a list of as many types of informative writing as you can (e.g. instruction booklet, film review, weather report).
4) How many situations can you think of when you might need to write a formal letter or email in order to persuade someone to consider your point of view?
5) Can you think of any examples of nonfiction texts that might make use of informal language?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject matter (what the text is about)</th>
<th>Michelle Obama Speech</th>
<th>The Ragged School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writer (what we learn about them)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone (the overall feeling/mood)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style (informative/argumentative/persuasive/descriptive – there may be more than one style in each extract!)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure (the way in which the writing is set out, use of paragraphs, tense, sentence length, inclusion of examples/anecdotes).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 8 Support Sheet

The Question

How is education presented differently in the two extracts you have studied?

- Aim to write at least 300 words
- Support your points with evidence from the texts
- Comment on the effect of language used by the writers

Guidance

Write a paragraph about each of the following areas (from your comparison table). Remember to write about BOTH articles in each paragraph. An example paragraph has been done for you:

- **Subject matter**

e.g. Michelle Obama’s speech is aimed at young people and her main message is that ‘They need to be prepared to work hard’ and be ambitious in order to be successful. She focuses on the value of education and higher education in particular. In contrast to this, Quintin Hogg describes chaotic scenes and a lack of order among the staff and underprivileged students at his Ragged school. Despite the difficult conditions here, he does say that the class ‘prospered amazingly’ suggesting that education is also valued a lot in this time period.

Now try writing your own paragraphs:

- **Writer**
- **Tone**
- **Style**
- **Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrases to help with comparing</th>
<th>Phrases to help with contrasting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarly</td>
<td>However</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As well as</td>
<td>Whereas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same way</td>
<td>Although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have in common</td>
<td>On the contrary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both texts</td>
<td>On the other hand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Ragged School

Quintin Hogg talks about his memories of the Ragged school he financed from 1865. Ragged Schools were charity schools set up which provided free education and board mainly for destitute children often in cities.

The room in Of Alley was at first used only in the daytime, a female teacher being in charge, an earnest woman whose ambitions somewhat outstripped her capabilities. She begged me to open it in the evenings for the benefit of the older lads, but with the vision of my only attempt at that kind of work before I refused to take any active part, though I sanctioned the use of the room and gas, provided she would undertake to keep order. Nothing daunted, the good woman eagerly accepted the offer and made immediate preparations for the commencement of her plan.

Suddenly about eight o'clock in the evening one of the elder boys living in Bedfordbury came racing up to my father's house in Carlton Gardens (the house now occupied by Mr. Balfour), to beg me to come at once, as there was a row in the school with the boys, who were fighting the police and pelting them with slates. In about three minutes I had huddled on just sufficient clothes to suffice me, and slipping on an overcoat as I ran through the hall, I made for the ragged school as hard as my legs could carry me. On arriving there, I found the whole school in an uproar, the gas fittings had been wrenched off and were being used as batons by the boys for striking the police, while the rest of them were pelting them with slates, and a considerable concourse of people was standing round in a more or less threatening way, either to see the fun or to help in going against the police. I felt rather alarmed for the safety of the teacher, and rushing into the darkened room, called out for the boys to instantly stop and be quiet. To my amazement the riot was stopped immediately, in two minutes the police were able to go quietly away, and for the first time in my life I learned that I had some kind of instinct or capacity for the management of elder boys. From that day to 1868, when I had to go abroad for the first time, I scarcely missed the ragged school for a single night.

The boys used to come into the house in an indescribable condition, so that it was absolutely necessary to shave their heads and literally scrub them from head to foot before they were fit to associate with any human being; all of which unpleasant operations I used to perform.

The class prospered amazingly; our little room, which was only 30 ft. long by 12 ft. wide, got so crammed that I used to divide the school into two sections of sixty each, the first lot coming from 7 to 8.30, and the second lot from 8.30 to 10. There I used to sit between two classes, perched on the back of a form, dining on my 'pint of thick and two doorsteps,' as the boys used to call coffee and bread and treacle, taking one class in reading and the other at writing or arithmetic. Each section closed with ten minutes' service and prayer.