

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (8700)

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert The two Sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

A newspaper article called "Do children have the right to term time holidays?"

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

"The relations between school life and home life: school discipline and home training"

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

Do children have a right to term- time holidays?

Toby Young finds the idea hard to support.

When Jon Platt was fined £120 by Isle of Wight Council for taking his daughter on a trip to Disneyland during term time, he decided to fight back. He got the decision overturned in magistrate's court, the council appealed to the High Court, the lower court's decision was upheld, and the council appealed to the Supreme Court. Yet in spite of this gruelling legal process, Mr. Platt hasn't backed down.

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When interviewed on television, he seems genuinely angry about being told when he can and can't take his children on holiday. He doesn't regard himself as a deadbeat dad- his daughter's attendance rate at school is above 90%- but believes the new rules, which were introduced by the government in 2013 are too severe.

I don't have much sympathy for his cause.

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I supported the government's decision to introduce fines for parents who take their children out of school without permission, not least because unauthorised absences make life more difficult for teachers. Having helped to set up four schools I know that teachers think carefully about the sequence in which children should be introduced to different units of study within each subject. They design schemes of work and plan lessons with this in mind.

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A child who skips a day of school or worse, a week- as the majority are- may well have missed out an essential step. If a teacher is conscientious, as the majority are, they will still feel obligated to get the relevant worksheets to the child, explain to their parents what it is they've missed- and in some cases, give up their lunch break to sit down with the child and go over the material. When you bear in mind the workload that teachers already have his behaviour seems incredibly disrespectful.

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It is not the Isle of Wight Council that he is challenging but his daughter's school. The principle he's standing up for – and which he's worked himself into a lather of moral indignation about- is his right to massively inconvenience his daughters' teachers just so he can go on a family holiday when the costs of overseas travel are lower. Not such a noble cause after all. The vast majority of parents play by the rules, which is one reason travel costs are so much lower in term time.

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Nevertheless, there's strong evidence linking poor attendance to poor academic attainment. Of those children who miss 50 per cent of school, only 3 per cent get five or more GCSEs at grades *-C including maths and English. By contrast, of those who attend 95% of the time or more, 73% achieve that standard. And while it's true that only a minority of children from disadvantaged backgrounds are persistent absentees it's also true that they make up a relatively large percentage of the total.

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The truth is that if you reduce penalties for unauthorised absences, you make it harder for schools to close the attainment gap.

Mr. Platt doesn't have the right to take his daughter out of school whenever he pleases. In accepting a place at the school, he implicitly agreed to abide by the rules. He may not be a deadbeat dad. But he's also a selfish bastard.

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TURN OVER FOR SOURCE B

Source B- 19th Century literary non fiction

This source is taken from the writings of Charlotte Mason, a famous C19th educationalist and thinker.

The relations between school life and home life: school discipline and home training.

School: a new experience

When a child goes to school a new life begins for him; not only so, but no change that may come to him afterwards will be in the same sense a new life. And for this reason: socially speaking, two lives are possible to us- private and public life; we live as members of a family, and as members of society. Hitherto, the child has lived in a family; his duties have all been pretty plain, and his affection fairly given.

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Of course he loves and obeys his parents, more or less, and is fond of his brothers and sisters- there is no choice for him. The law of the family and the love of the family follow him when he goes to mix with the outside world. "Mother says" is his law, "Father told me" is his supreme authority.

But when he goes to school, all that is changed: though he is still loving and dutiful towards those at home, other things have come in and the child looks at the world from a new standpoint.

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The family is a limited monarchy, with sovereign parents; the school is a republic, with an elected president. Now we see why the child finds himself in a very new and stimulating element when he goes to school. For the first time he has to find his footing amongst his equals. At home he seldom had more than one equal. But here he has a whole class of fellows, some stronger, some weaker than himself, working with him in lessons and games. It is very exciting and delightful.

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Work is the order of the day: the desire of distinction, a strong spirit of emulation, stimulated by marks and prizes regulate behaviour and the teachers have very little difficulty. Work: regular disciplinary exercise, is so entirely wholesome for the brain, that girls, even more than boys should be the better for definite work with a given object. It cannot be too strongly put that, as a matter of health, growing girls as well as boys cannot afford to be idle mentally.

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It is just as pernicious that they should dawdle through lessons as that they should lounge through the day.

The parental duty is the more to be insisted on because there is so much going on at school. Children are so much occupied with school companions and school interests that the parents gradually lose hold.

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The worst of it is that many parents, with the diffidence of good people- are ready to believe that children get something better at school than they have the power to give; that, in fact, all proper and suitable training is given there, and they just make a merit of not interfering.

The absorption in school life is the more complete because then young people are, for the time, conscious of no want, which the school does not supply.

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Work and play, in due proportion, make life delightful: and nowhere are work and play so well balanced as in school. What finer training could the pupils have for a world in which pluck and temper win them prizes?

END OF SOURCES