

## PERSONALITY, FRIENDS AND OTHER SOCIAL RELATIONS

A1

### MONOLOGUE

**Read the text and prepare to speak about it. Use the questions below to help you plan your monologue. Summarise the text and express your opinion on the topic. Do not retell the story in detail.**

#### YOUNG PEOPLE, IDENTITY AND POPULARITY

It is often claimed that young people buy certain brands, and use certain products, to express their personalities. For example, skateboarders wear baggy trousers. By wearing this kind of clothing, the young person shows which group he belongs to.

Professor Maggie Geuens and researcher Gitte Mast of the Ghent Management School ran a survey on this subject, covering 686 young people aged between 12 and 18.

According to the results, the average young person believes that personality traits are the most important ingredient, both in order to be popular within a group, and to form one's identity. Likeability, honesty, confidence, kindness, having one's own opinion, listening, laughing a lot, being self-confident and sociable seem to be the most important character traits.

Clothing style is also very important alongside personality traits, unlike clothing brands, which are only of medium importance. External features, like being physically attractive or special, are only moderately important in order to be popular or forge one's personality.

*<http://www.vlerick.be>*

- forge – to develop

1. What is the text about (the topic and the source)?
2. What is the message of the text? What is the author saying?
3. What is your point of view?

## FAMILY, HOME AND EVERYDAY LIFE

A2

### MONOLOGUE

**Read the text and prepare to speak about it. Use the questions below to help you plan your monologue. Summarise the text and express your opinion on the topic. Do not retell the story in detail.**

#### SAFE AS HEALING HOUSES

Can we make better use of colour as a means of relieving stress, stimulating our brains or promoting sleep and rest? Suzy Chiazzari, the author of *The Healing Home*, is convinced we can.

For the kitchen, she recommends rich nut browns, golden yellows, terracotta and peach, set off with lots of green, possibly from plants and herbs. To create a relaxing bedroom atmosphere, she suggests shades of pink, reinforced with green – in the carpeting, rugs or bed linen. Blue or green, says Chiazzari, can create a quiet, cool or peaceful feel.

“Teenagers,” she adds, “have always been known to decorate their rooms in colours which are at odds with their family. The colours they choose will highlight their need for self-reflection and identity crisis. It is for this reason that many teenagers choose to wear and decorate with black. Black reflects the need to withdraw within and search for answers.”

*John Illman, The Guardian*

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## ENVIRONMENT

### MONOLOGUE

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#### COUNCILS CHEW OVER GUM PROBLEMS

It costs 3p a stick to buy, but 10p to prise off the pavements. Chewing gum dropped on Britain's streets has enraged councils so much that 20 of them have banded together to ask for financial help to get rid of the problem.

They say that on London's shopping thoroughfare Oxford Street alone, there are more than 300,000 pieces of chewing gum. Westminster Council spends more than £100,000 a year dealing with the problem.

The councils took out a full-page advert in Monday's Guardian newspaper pleading for "financial support for the enormous clean-up bill" and "proper investment" for manufacturers to come up with a biodegradable gum.

"Enough excuses, give us promises that stick," the poster says. They are calling for 1p out of the price of a pack of gum to be set aside for cleaning up the millions of pieces "spat onto our streets each day".

*<http://news.bbc.co.uk>*

- biodegradable - of a material that, left to itself, will be decomposed by natural processes

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## ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

### MONOLOGUE

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#### A FOODIE ROADTRIP IN NEW ENGLAND

Autumn being the season of fruitfulness, we set out on a mission to find the best of American foods and flavours along the roads of New England. It was a journey in search of great diners, fantastic farmstands and the best of local produce, and, most importantly, a search for great pies.

It was early in the journey when we first began to realise the importance of pie to the American culture. Pies began to crop up on signs along the roadsides with increasing regularity. There were "homemade pies", "hot-from-the-oven pie" and "apple pie". Pies, it seemed, could not be ignored.

While you can tuck into a hearty breakfast of eggs, toast and hash browns in an American diner for \$2.99, a homemade pie is a premium product, on sale, even on farmstands, for around \$12-\$15. That's how important they are. Americans are prepared to pay top dollar for them.

*Rachael Jolley, The Times*

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## EDUCATION AND JOBS

### MONOLOGUE

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#### WHAT ON EARTH HAS HAPPENED TO GEOGRAPHY?

One in five British children under the age of 14 cannot find the UK on a map of the world and one in 10 children were unable to name any of the world's seven continents, a study found. National Geographic magazine questioned more than 1,000 children aged between six and 14. Fewer than two-thirds of children were able to locate the UK's closest political ally, the US, and despite Iraq dominating headlines in recent years, 86 per cent failed to locate it.

Professor A. Smithers from the University of Buckingham described the findings as "rather frightening". "These results underline the need for education to concentrate on the essentials," he said.

Chris Keates, general secretary of a teachers' association, called the magazine's findings "nonsense". She added: "The constant desire for groups to produce statistics to do down the English education system is quite appalling and does nothing to recognize the excellent work of children and staff."

*<http://education.independent.co.uk>*

- gore – blood from an injured person that is thick because it is partly dried

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## HOBBIES AND CULTURE

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#### HOW ACTORS REMEMBER THEIR LINES

What gives actors their seemingly effortless memory capabilities? Could acting teach us something about memory, and could acting principles help those with memory problems?

According to the researchers Helga and Tony Noice, the secret of actors' memories is, well, acting. An actor acquires lines readily by focusing not on the words of the script, but on those words' meaning as well as on the physical and emotional dimensions of their performance.

Some of the Noices' findings confirm those of other researchers on memory. Memory is heavily reliant on emotion, action and perception. In their work with actors, the Noices have found, for example, that memory is aided by physical movement. In one study, lines learned while making an appropriate motion – e.g. walking across a stage – were more readily remembered by actors later than were lines unaccompanied by action. The physical motion didn't need to be repeated at the time of recall.

*<http://www.psychologicalscience.org>*

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