

Page 29 Task information**Page 31** Action plan**Review****Answer the questions about Reading and Use of English Part 6.**

- 1 What is the connection between the four texts?
- 2 There are four questions. Does that mean that there will always be one A, one B, one C and one D answer?
- 3 Will you find the answer to each question by looking at just one of the texts?
- 4 Is it better to read the questions or the texts first?

Follow the exam instructions, using the advice to help you.

You are going to read extracts from articles in which four writers give their opinions on the relationship between the study of literature and job prospects. For questions 37–40, choose from the extracts A–D. The extracts may be chosen more than once.

Tip! Remember to look quickly at the questions before you read the texts.

Tip! Remember to write down the letters for each of the possible answers after each question and then to score them out as you eliminate them.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

The relationship between the study of literature and job prospects**A**

Most of the lecturers from university literature departments interviewed in our survey said their aim is to provide an education for its own sake rather than to focus on any skill likely to be required in the workplace. However, they also believed that what they were teaching would stand students in good stead in their future employment. Their main argument was that appreciation of writing style makes students more effective employees when they join the workforce. Yet, curiously, none of the lecturers reported actually stressing that point in their classes. As a result, few students ever considered mentioning this skill when it came to applying for work. Had they done so, provided that their claims were reinforced by a well-written application, they might have found it more straightforward to acquire a position.

B

Literature students are often concerned about the utilitarian value of what they are doing. This is understandable, but it is misguided. It is undoubtedly true that few jobs will require an employee to discuss a poem's rhyme scheme or to consider the influence of one 19th-century novelist on another. But life is about more than simply one's employment prospects. Literature teaches us about ourselves and other people and why we behave as we do. It encourages us not just to read, but to reflect on what we have read, and this makes us much more rounded people. It achieves this by helping us to examine our assumptions and the ways in which we relate to the world. The lessons of literature have a profound impact on our minds and souls, and surely this is as significant as any of the practical skills whose importance no one questions.

C

When students are worried about the job market, when they perceive an urgent need for job skills and training, how do I argue for the value of the study of literature and the humanities more broadly? Well, I do what any judicious participant in the neoliberal university does: I tell them that the study of literature will make them entrepreneurial. It will make them attractive to employers because they will be adaptable and flexible. They will have good critical-thinking skills and be better writers than most of the people competing for those same positions. They will be able to manipulate and manage a wide range of information. They will become comfortable with ambiguity. They will learn empathy, which will help them deal with people from a wide range of backgrounds. They will become creative problem-solvers, which is so crucial in the 21st-century knowledge economy.

D

The pragmatic English literature student will consider doing a combined degree course. Studying English with another subject, such as psychology or Spanish, will bring enormous benefits in terms of employability. Such graduates will develop a wider range of skills, and far more employers will be prepared to consider their applications. It is also the case that an unusual proportion of joint honours graduates end up in managerial positions. This may be because such students have shown themselves capable of multi-tasking and of coping with an exceptionally heavy workload. The choice of which subject to combine with English is, of course, not unimportant. One with a more transparently practical element is advisable; thus, a foreign language or psychology may prove more sensible choice than, say, history.

Which expert

shares expert B's opinion on the relationship between studying literature and understanding human psychology?

37

has a different opinion from the other experts on whether a literature degree will help with employment prospects?

38

shares expert A's view on the need for students to be aware of the skills they are gaining?

39

shares expert C's view on the way in which literature develops thinking skills?

40

Tip! If you find one question difficult, leave it and do the other ones – as you do those, you may notice clues that help you with the harder question.

Advice

37 Underline what expert B says on this topic and then look for a parallel idea in one of the other texts.

38 The first sentence of A may make you want to jump to the conclusion that this expert does not see the value of literature studies from an employer's point of view, but read to the end of the text to check that this is really the case.

39 Mark the part of the text in which expert A comments on student awareness and what the general point that he is making is.

40 All the other texts refer to 'skill' or 'skills', but which does so in relation to the development of thinking skills?

Follow-up

Which of the tips did you follow when you did this task?