

**EXAMEN DE FIN D'ÉTUDES SECONDAIRES GÉNÉRALES**  
**Sessions 2023 – QUESTIONNAIRE ÉCRIT**

<i>Date :</i>	22.09.23	<i>Durée :</i>	14:15 - 17:15	<i>Numéro candidat :</i>	
<i>Discipline :</i>	Anglais	<i>Section(s) :</i>	GA3D / GACV / GIG / GIN / GSE / GSN / GSO		

**PART A – Essential Articles and Short Stories (30 marks)**

**Dictionaries are NOT allowed for this part!**

**Essential Articles (15 marks)**

**Blue for a boy and pink for a girl**

1. Why do some parents choose not to reveal the gender of their child? Illustrate their motives with examples from the text. (7 marks)

**The class ceiling is worse than the glass ceiling ever was**

2. What did the Social Mobility Foundation uncover about the so-called 'class-ceiling' in British society? What does the author of the article try to achieve in relation to these findings? (8 marks)

**Short Stories (15 marks)**

**The First Seven Years, by Bernard Malamud**

3. Explain Feld's and Miriam's opposite views on education. (8 marks)

**Dip in the Pool, by Roald Dahl**

4. How does the woman on deck react when Mr. Botibol jumps overboard? What explanation does the text provide for her behaviour? (7 marks)

**PART B – Text Analysis and Essay (30 marks)**

**You are allowed to use a dictionary**

**When critical thinking isn't enough: to beat information overload, we need to learn 'critical ignoring'**

A lot of high-quality information is available at our fingertips right next to a ceaseless torrent of low-quality, distracting, false and manipulative information. This fact alone has led to a lot of problems over the past decade, but why is that so and what can we do about it?

The 'why' of the question above is easily answered. Search engines were created to make money. Their business model is simple: the more our eyeballs remain on our screens, the more ads they can show us, and the greater profits their shareholders make. In short, they profit from our most precious and limited cognitive resource: attention. These platforms steal our attention by offering information that provokes curiosity, outrage, or anger.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, all this should influence our collective attention. A 2019 analysis of Twitter hashtags, Google queries, or Reddit comments found that across the past decade, the rate at which the popularity of items rises and drops has become faster. In 2013, for example, a hashtag on Twitter was popular on average for 17.5 hours, while in 2016, its popularity faded away after 11.9 hours. More competition leads to shorter collective attention intervals, which lead to ever fiercer competition for our attention – a vicious circle.

To regain control, we need new strategies that protect us from the excesses and traps we find online.

The textbook cognitive strategy is critical thinking, an intellectually disciplined and effortful process to help identify valid information. In school, students are taught to closely and carefully read and evaluate information. Thus equipped, they can evaluate the claims and arguments they see, hear, or read.

But is it enough in a world of information overload and large amounts of disinformation? The answer is "No" for at least two reasons.

First, the digital world contains more information than the world's libraries combined. Much of it comes from unverified and unreliable sources. Critically thinking through all information and sources we come across would paralyse us because we would never actually have time to read the valuable information we are looking for.

Second, investing critical thinking in sources that should have been ignored in the first place means that attention merchants have been given what they wanted, our attention.

A tool that complements critical thinking is critical ignoring, which is the ability to choose what to ignore and where to invest one's limited attentional capacities. Critical ignoring is more than just not paying attention – it's about practising mindful habits in the face of information overload.

It is an important competence for all citizens in the digital world. Without it, we will drown in a sea of information that is, at best, distracting and, at worst, misleading and harmful.

Three main strategies exist for critical ignoring.

The first strategy is called 'self-nudging'. In the digital world, this strategy empowers people to be "choice architects" by designing the environments in which they get their information on their own, in ways that work best for them. When people apply this strategy, they will protect themselves by limiting their activities in ways that are good for them. We can, for instance, remove distracting and irresistible notifications. We may set specific times in which messages can be received, thereby creating pockets of time for concentrated work or socialising.

The second strategy is called 'lateral reading'. It is a strategy in which people imitate how professional fact checkers verify whether the information they are reading online is true. It involves opening up new browser tabs to search for information about the organisation or individual behind a site before reading its contents. This strategy enables people to check whether the information they are about to read is worth their attention.

The third and last strategy is called 'do-not-feed-the-trolls heuristic'. It targets online trolls and other evil users who harass or cyberbully others. Trolls love attention, and people who want to spread dangerous disinformation often use trolling tactics. They like creating the appearance of debate where there is none. The third strategy advises against directly responding to trolls.

These three strategies are not for the elite. Everybody can make use of them, but educational efforts are crucial for bringing these tools to the public.

(The Conversation, Ralph Hertwig, Anastasia Kozyreva, Sam Wineburg, Stephan Lewandowsky, published 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023, 699 words, shortened and edited for the purpose of this exam)

**I. Comprehension Questions (15 marks)**

***Answer the following questions in your own words.***

1. How do search engines take advantage of people? What impact has this business model had on our attention span? (4 marks)
2. What is critical thinking? Why is it not the answer when dealing with an overload of information? (5 marks)
3. What are the strategies of critical ignoring? Name and explain them. (6 marks)

**II. Development Question (15 marks)**

Write a structured essay of 250 words (+/-10%) on the following topic. Do not copy arguments from the text. Indicate the number of words used at the end of the essay.

**People put too much faith in information they see online. Discuss.**