

Section B: Written language

Answer the following question. The text is an article published in The Guardian Weekend Magazine giving the reader guidance on how to enjoy the world of online social media.

2. Analyse and evaluate the use of language in the text as an example of a magazine article [50]

In your response you should explore:

- ☐ the features that are typical of a magazine article
- ☐ how language is used to present the writer's attitudes towards social media

Mind your manners: **a timely guide to social media**

Is it ever okay not to follow back? And is that 'fave'
really a threat? It's a minefield out there, so arm yourself
with Tom Phillips' cut-out-and-keep rule book.

>Thou shalt not refer to any picture that happens to have a person in it as a 'selfie'

How the term "selfie" changed its meaning from "a picture you have taken of yourself" to "a picture" is unclear, but probably has to do with desperate politicians descending on vaguely trendy terms like a flock of down-with-the-kids vultures. It must stop. If we cannot keep the ancient and true meaning sacred, what hope have we as a society?

>Thou shalt fave wisely, and well

Facebook or [Instagram](#) likes, Twitter favourites: every social network worth its salt has an equivalent of the digital fist bump. It might seem like a simple system – see something you like, like it – but it is in fact a roiling hellpit of potential misunderstandings and barely decipherable codes.

Beyond even the perennial problem with the word "like" ("Sadly our beloved cat Gerald passed away last night." "LIKE!!!!"), the problem with these pings of acknowledgment is that it's unclear what it's acknowledging. On [Twitter](#), faves can act as bookmarks, backpats, parting handshakes, quiet agreement, omens of future blackmail and (naturally) endless flirtatious glances.

The pinnacle is the hate-fave, which is like a warning glance cast between rival suitors across a Regency-era royal court. "I'm watching you," it says. "I saw what you did and revenge will come to you when you least expect it." Hate-faves are great, but you don't want anybody thinking you're hate-faving them when you were actually trying to flirt.

> Subtweet not, and forgive those who subtweet against you

This is the noble art of tweeting about someone without including their name – in effect, talking behind their back in plain sight. It's the internet equivalent of a disapproving aunt at a wedding, loudly observing that some people just can't conduct themselves properly, and we all know where the blame for that lies.

The perfect subtweet is one that has every reader silently fretting that it's about them,

yet remains ambiguous enough that nobody dares ask if they were the target. It's the 'You're So Vain' of social media. Unfortunately, most subtweets do not rise to these heights: they're petty bitching and infuriatingly vague gossip-fodder. And we all know where the blame for that lies.

> Thou shalt chill out a bit with the goddamn #hashtags

Introduced by early Twitter users to discover tweets on specific topics, they rapidly spread to many other social networks. At first, useful; now, #annoying. Whether it's specifically for messages targeted at them, or #motivational #speakers who want to #inspire #positivity with pictures of #sunsets, they invariably mark the user out as a bit of a #cockwomble.

>Thou shalt not LinkedIn

If Twitter is a lively, rambunctious public salon and Facebook a warm gathering of friends and family, LinkedIn is a group of dead-eyed, sharp-elbowed junior executives in the bar of an airport Novotel at 2am after a conference, slapping themselves on the back while scanning their peers for signs of weakness. Imagine being trapped in that discussion on The Apprentice about what their team name should be, for ever. "Ascend!" "Zenith!" "Dominate!" "Evisceration!" "Widowmaker!" That's [LinkedIn](#).

> Thou shalt not covet retweets

Picture yourself at a dinner party, and judging how well a joke went down not by whether anybody laughed, but whether people turned round and shouted the joke word for word at the person sitting next to them. That would be a terrible party. The same applies to Twitter. Don't let your knee jerk, no matter how twitchy it feels

The internet and social media function as outrage factories, supplied with the bare minimum of facts as raw material. The internet can progress from "look at this adorable picture of a kitten" to "DID YOU HEAR DAVID CAMERON IS PLANNING TO PRIVATISE KITTENS PLEASE SHARE AND SPREAD THE OUTRAGE" staggeringly quickly. The reason is that mobs are fun to be a part of and flaming torches bathe everybody in a warming, flattering glow. But you'll be left with the realisation that you called somebody a Nazi because you saw a picture of a sad kitten on [Facebook](#).

>Thou shalt not tell other people what to do on social media

One thing worse than people on the internet is people on the internet telling other people on the internet they're being people on the internet wrong. It's the internet! It's built on principles of freedom! A safe space where people can be who they want! Honestly: do whatever makes you happy, even if it breaks these rules. But lose the hashtags.



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COMPONENT 1 Section B: Written language

| | AO1 | AO2 | AO3 |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Section B | 15 marks | 15 marks | 20 marks |

2. Analyse and evaluate the use of language in the text as an example of a magazine article

[50]

In your response you should explore:

- ☒ the features that are typical of a magazine article
- ☒ how language is used to present the writer's attitudes social media

There will be a range of different approaches to this question, but discussion should focus on the use of humour and attitudes shown towards social media. Responses should apply appropriate methods of language analysis, and should show critical understanding of the linguistic concepts underpinning magazine articles. Since AO3 is worth two fifths of the marks for this question, the ways in which contextual factors and language features shape meaning should be addressed. Look for and reward all valid discussion.

Overview

The article establishes itself immediately as a humorous and light-hearted guide to social media, employing a semantic field of pragmatic references to youth culture (verbs 'fave' and 'follow'; nouns 'selfie', 'hashtag', 'Linkedin', 'Twitter', 'Facebook'). The article skilfully balances intelligent debate with playful parody through the religious reference to the 'Ten Commandments' and this can be seen within the declaratives that open each section ('Thou shalt not covet retweets'). Parody is emphasised through dated lexis (the pronoun 'thou' and modal verb 'shalt'). Typical of a magazine article, the text engages the audience through rhetorical interrogatives ('what hope have we as a society?') and humorous metaphorical and figurative language ('it's a minefield out there'). Extended noun phrases with compounded adjectives are common (cut-out-and-keep rule book, down-with-the-kids vultures, sharp-elbowed junior executives). The register fluctuates between the high formality typical of a high-brow broadsheet article (decipherable, politicians, Regency-era, ambiguous) and informal, colloquial lexis (trendy, cockwomble, bitching) to emphasise humour. The typography is designed to make the article accessible and easy to read (e.g. large font headline, subheadings are emboldened) and the old-fashioned image acts as a visual parody referencing the typical gossip and upper class social politics of bygone eras, fused with 21st modern technology; this is employed in order to reflect how social networking has evolved.

Notes

The following notes address features of interest which may be explored, but it is important to reward all valid discussion.

Medium

- the use of headline and subheadings
- typographical features to attract attention e.g. rhetorical interrogative in the opening paragraph
- image- playing on upper class stereotypes and reflective of technological evolution of social interactions

Content

- Parody of the Ten Commandments - mimics Biblical language with dated pronouns and modal verbs: 'Thou shalt not covet retweets'
- Lexical field of internet social networks and youth culture ('fave', 'follow', 'selfie', 'hashtag', 'Linkedin', 'Twitter', 'Facebook')
- Humour used to emphasise the complexities that occur on digital social media, such as the extended noun-phrase: "a roiling hellpit of potential misunderstandings and barely decipherable codes"

Register

- fluctuating tenor and register e.g. formal polysyllabic lexis: abstract noun 'politicians', and 'principles', adjective 'rambunctious', juxtaposed with informal slang and colloquial expressions e.g. noun 'selfie', verbs 'fave' and 'chill out'
- Humour created through taboo compound noun 'cockwomble' reflecting sociolect of the 'Facebook generation'
- Mixture of high-brow observations and high register language and colloquialisms creates a playful yet intelligent tone

• Lexis and semantics

- Lexical field of online networking through nouns and proper nouns e.g. retweet, hate-fave, hastags, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Writer's attitude towards the negative side of social media reflected through noun phrases 'omens of future blackmail', 'outrage factories', 'perennial problem', 'gossip-fodder'
- present tense dynamic verbs: 'like', 'follow', 'descending', 'watching', 'telling', 'hate-faving'
- Extended noun phrases with compounded adjectives (cut-out-and-keep rule book, down-with-the-kids vultures, sharp-elbowed junior executives)
- Modal verbs: 'shalt', 'must', 'would'
- Adjectives with negative connotations e.g. 'desperate', 'unclear', 'disapproving', 'vague', 'terrible'
- abstract nouns reflecting moral and social debate: 'freedom', 'principles', 'manners', 'society', 'politicians'
- Metaphorical and figurative language: 'minefield', 'arm yourself', 'flock of down-with-the-kids vultures'

Form and structure

- Grammatical patterning of 'Thou shalt not'

- Forceful imperatives reflect opinionated yet humorous tone : ‘Mind your manners’, ‘arm yourself’, ‘lose the hashtags’
- Non-standard grammar: fronted conjunctions ‘And is that fave...’, ‘But you’ll be left...’; a noun used as a verb ‘Thou shalt not LinkedIn’
- Dated use of language to emphasise Biblical parody to the Ten Commandments: dated pronoun ‘Thou’ and modal verb ‘shalt’; omission of dummy auxiliary verb ‘subtweet not’; juxtaposition of dated language and modern taboo to create humour ‘Thou shalt chill out a bit with the goddamn #hashtags’
- Syndetic listing e.g. ‘bookmarks, backpats, parting handshakes, quiet agreement, omens of future blackmail and (naturally) endless flirtatious glance’
- Parenthetical phrases and clauses e.g. ‘and (naturally) endless flirtatious glances’, ‘...– see something you like, like it – ...’
- Mixture of sentence types with some complex, multi-clausal complex sentences e.g. ‘If Twitter is a lively, rambunctious public salon [...] while scanning their peers for signs of weakness.’; some simple and short ‘it’s the internet!’
- subordination is often in the form of non-finite –ing clauses which provide additional information (e.g. judging..., slapping...)

• **Pragmatics**

- Aimed at professional, well educated and intelligent readership (target audience)
- Pragmatic and cultural references e.g. referencing professional power struggles in ‘The Apprentice’: "Ascend!" "Zenith!" "Dominate!" "Evisceration!" "Widowmaker!"; referencing the song ‘You’re so Vain’ to reflect narcissistic nature of social networking
- Extended noun phrases reflecting economic posturing of young professionals ‘sharp-elbowed junior executives’
- Parody of the Ten Commandments reflects the metaphorical ‘minefield’ of rules that should be followed for successful social networking
- Cartoon image used reflects simile ‘like a warning glance cast between rival suitors across a Regency-era royal court’ and symbolises how, whilst appearing to be very different, internet social interactions vary little from the gossip of the Regency court
- Serious and shrewd critique of online networking lies beneath informal and comical language use e.g. ‘The reason is that mobs are fun to be a part of as flaming torches bathe everybody in a warming, flattering glow’