

Part 1: Comprehension and Summary

Unit 1: A matter of time

Topic outline

- **Main skills:** comprehension; summary; writers' effects
- **Secondary skills:** persuasive language; selecting material; complex sentences
- **Outcome:** summary; *magazine article; *comparison of texts
- **Materials:** argumentative article; novel extract; poem; Worksheet and answers for Text 1C; Summary writing process handout
- **Texts:** Text 1A: Time management; Text 1B: Time travel; Text 1C: Time

Lesson plan

- 1 Ask students to contribute to the creation of a class mindmap on the board for the topic of 'Time'. (5)
- 2 Ask students to read Text 1A and give definitions for the five verbs in bold. (10)
- 3 Ask students to work in pairs to identify and list the characteristics of argumentative language in Text 1A, and feed back to class. (10)
- 4 Give students the Summary writing process handout for them to refer to. Ask them to identify and list the points in Text 1A to use in a summary of 'recommended strategies for improving time management'. (There are 15.) (10)
- 5 Ask students to read Text 1B. Ask them to identify / highlight relevant points for a two-paragraph summary of a) what the time-traveller observed on the journey in the machine and b) what the time-traveller observed after the machine landed. Ask students to list the points in their own words. Check that the right points have been selected. (15)
- 6 Ask students to work in pairs a) to identify effective language in the description of the crabs in Text 1B, paragraph 5, and b) to provide explanations for their choices and how they contribute to an overall atmosphere. (10)
- 7 Go through the responses as a class, discussing why each choice is effective (or not). (10)
- 8 Ask students to read Text 1C aloud around the class. Ask them to complete the worksheet for Text 1C. (15)
9. Go through the worksheet and discuss answers. (5)

Homework task

Write the two summaries, using your points from Task 4 and Task 5, in not more than 120 words each, in complex sentences. Check your work for accuracy, clarity and concision of expression before submitting it. You will be marked out of 10 for content and out of 5 for style.

Additional tasks

- a Ask students to plan and write a magazine article called 'Passing time' which includes and develops ideas from the three texts in this unit, and the mindmap created in Task 1.
- b Ask students to write a comparison of Texts 1A and 1B, with attention to the differences of voice, structure and style.

Text 1A

Time management

How well do you manage your time? Do you feel overloaded, pressured by deadlines, as though you should be in two places at once? Do you rush things, half-finish things, leave things to the last minute?

The most successful and productive people are those who control time rather than let it control them. Many of us would like to be better time managers but have fallen into bad habits or lack effective strategies. If we could only avoid common pitfalls and adopt common-sense practices, we could change our lives overnight.

One of the main failures is to not keep a to-do list, so that, by the end of each day there will be things we should have done but didn't, because we forgot about them or didn't organise our time well enough to fit them in. Of course, having a list does no good if you don't look at it, or if it has an impossible number of items on it (so that they have to be moved on to the next day, and the next ...), or if you actually have no intention of doing those things.

It's tempting to **procrastinate** and repeatedly put off a job we don't want to do, but this just creates guilt, which spoils pleasure in doing other things, and panic, later, when we realise we haven't left enough time to make a decent job of it. Just making a start on a dreaded task makes you feel so much better than trying to avoid doing it, and then it's easy to come back to and continue with it or complete it the next time. Often it turns out not to be as bad as you thought it would be!

Knowing how to **optimise** scheduling is another time management strategy: some of us work better early in the morning, some in the afternoon, and others in the evenings, or even late at night. Make sure your daily to-do list takes account of this. You also need to accept what is possible; some people take on too much, out of fear or a desire to please, or because they don't know how to say 'No'. It would be much better to **negotiate** a less demanding task or a longer time frame in which to do it than to let people down when you fail to deliver, or damage yourself with stress and overwork. Sometimes it's appropriate to **delegate** rather than micro-manage or believe that you are the only person capable of doing a job properly. This doesn't mean getting your elder sibling to do your homework for you; it does mean letting your project partner do their fair share of the research. People often say that they like to be busy and that they are afraid of being bored, but being frantic over a long period, especially if eating and

sleeping are neglected, can lead to burnout or poor performance. Think quality not quantity!

It's essential that the items on your list are precise: 'learn Italian' is not going to be helpful, but 'read Chapter 5 of the Italian coursebook' is. And you have to

prioritise according to what needs to be done sooner, not what is more important: that way you won't feel the pressure of urgency and time running out. Of course, you must be flexible enough to put aside the list if an unforeseeable emergency arises, and you shouldn't spend so long writing your to-do list each day that you are taking up time that could be spent actually doing the things on it!

The lists and short-term tasks need to be part of long-term goals: what do you want to have achieved by the end of the week, the month, the year? Without goals you won't be able to decide what's worth spending your time on or have the motivation to work towards the destination without distractions. It is so easy to wander off-track and spend time doing something trivial and unproductive but pleasant, such as reading personal emails instead of writing an essay, and then realise with a shock that several hours have passed with nothing to show for them. Successful work happens when we are totally absorbed, firing on all cylinders, and this cannot happen if we allow interruptions or flit from one task to another. Many people call this multi-tasking and believe it to be a useful skill, but it normally means making mistakes and doing jobs 20–40% less efficiently than doing them in sequence with full concentration.

Which is not to say that you can't take a break! Taking breaks is a crucial aspect of time management. No-one can keep working indefinitely at maximum output and efficiency. Students studying for exams, for instance, are advised to take a short break every two hours, preferably one involving physical movement from the work station, and thus return refreshed with a better focus. A break is especially necessary if you feel you've got a blockage or have reached a dead end and can't think of a solution to a problem. A rested brain will often produce the elusive answer and prove the value of a little down-time.



Text 1B

Time travel

'I HAVE already told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling. And this time I was not seated properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion. For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had arrived. One dial records days, and another thousands of days, another millions of days, and another thousands of millions. Now, instead of reversing the levers, I had pulled them over so as to go forward with them, and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a watch—into futurity.

'As I drove on, a peculiar change crept over the appearance of things. The palpitating greyness grew darker; then—though I was still travelling with prodigious velocity—the blinking succession of day and night, which was usually indicative of a slower pace, returned, and grew more and more marked. This puzzled me very much at first. The alternations of night and day grew slower and slower, and so did the passage of the sun across the sky, until they seemed to stretch through centuries. At last a steady twilight brooded over the Earth, a twilight only broken now and then when a comet glared across the darkling sky. The band of light that had indicated the sun had long since disappeared; for the sun had ceased to set—it simply rose and fell in the west, and grew ever broader and more red. All trace of the moon had vanished. The circling of the stars, growing slower and slower, had given place to creeping points of light. At last, some time before I stopped, the sun, red and very large, halted motionless upon the horizon, a vast dome glowing with a dull heat, and now and then suffering a momentary extinction. At one time it had for a little while glowed more brilliantly again, but it speedily reverted to its sullen red heat. I perceived by this slowing down of its rising and setting that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

'I stopped very gently and sat upon the Time Machine, looking round. The sky was no longer blue. North-eastward it was inky black, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the pale white stars. Overhead it was a deep Indian red and starless, and

south-eastward it grew brighter to a glowing scarlet where, cut by the horizon, lay the huge hull of the sun, red and motionless. The rocks about me were of a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was the intensely green vegetation that covered every projecting point on their south-eastern face. It was the same rich green that one sees on forest moss or on the lichen in caves: plants which like these grow in a perpetual twilight.

'The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering, and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now.

'Far away up the desolate slope I heard a harsh scream, and saw a thing like a huge white butterfly go slanting and fluttering up into the sky and, circling, disappear over some low hillocks beyond. The sound of its voice was so dismal that I shivered and seated myself more firmly upon the machine. Looking round me again, I saw that, quite near, what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. Then I saw the thing was really a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as yonder table, with its many legs moving slowly and uncertainly, its big claws swaying, its long antennæ, like carters' whips, waving and feeling, and its stalked eyes gleaming at you on either side of its metallic front? Its back was corrugated and ornamented with ungainly *bosses*, and a greenish incrustation blotched it here and there. I could see the many palps of its complicated mouth flickering and feeling as it moved.

'As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I struck at this, and caught something threadlike. It was drawn swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I turned, and I saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on

their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the same beach, and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped. Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there, in the sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green.

'I cannot convey the sense of abominable desolation that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the northward blackness, the salt Dead Sea, the stony beach crawling with these foul, slow-stirring monsters, the uniform poisonous-looking green of the

lichenous plants, the thin air that hurts one's lungs: all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years, and there was the same red sun—a little larger, a little duller—the same dying sea, the same chill air, and the same crowd of earthy crustacea creeping in and out among the green weed and the red rocks. And in the westward sky, I saw a curved pale line like a vast new moon.'

From *The Time Machine*, by H.G. Wells.

VOCABULARY

bosses: protruding features

Text 1C

Time

I am the nor'west air nosing among the pines
 I am the water-race and the rust on railway lines
 I am the mileage recorded on the yellow signs.

I am dust, I am distance, I am lupins back of the beach
 I am the sums the sole-charge teachers teach
 I am cows called to milking and the magpie's screech.

I am nine o'clock in the morning when the office is clean
 I am the slap of the belting and the smell of the machine
 I am the place in the park where the lovers were seen.

I am recurrent music the children hear
 I am level noises in the remembering ear
 I am the sawmill and the passionate second gear.

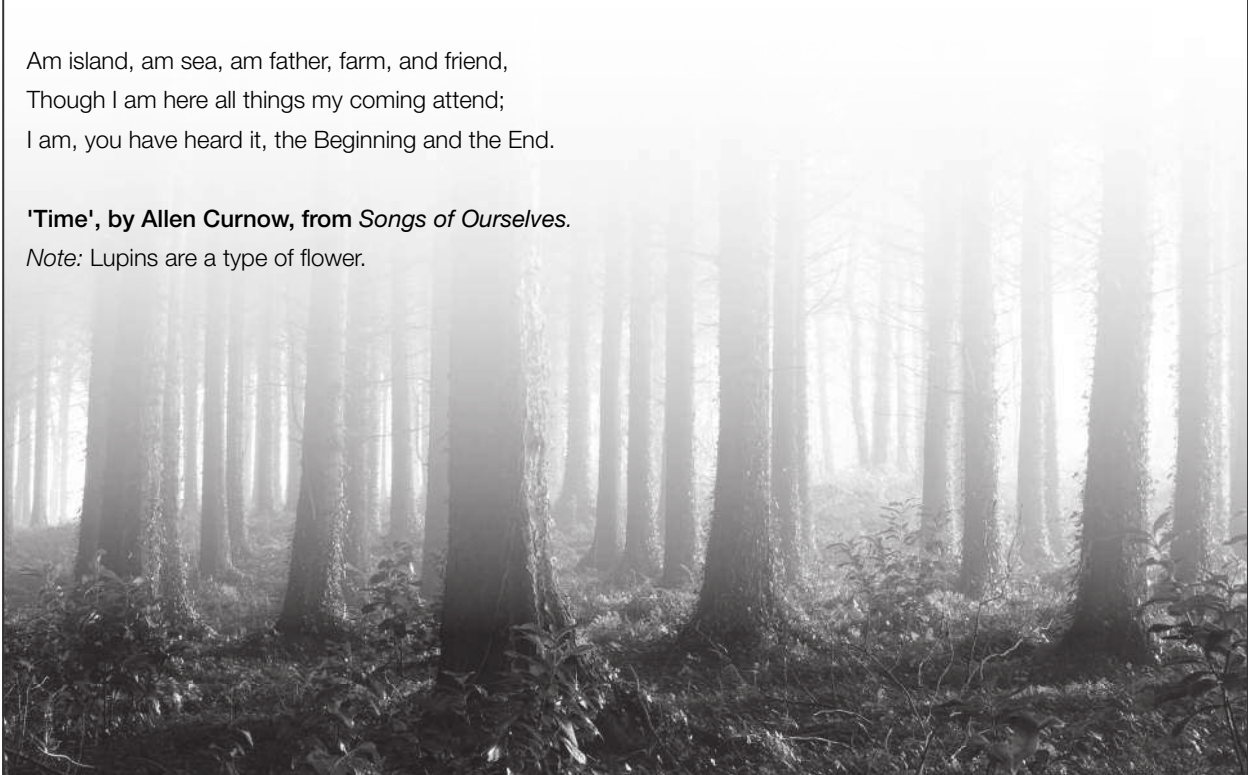
I, Time, am all these, yet these exist
 Among my mountainous fabrics like a mist,
 So do they the measurable world resist.

I, Time, call down, condense, confer
 On the willing memory the shapes these were:
 I, more than your conscious carrier,

Am island, am sea, am father, farm, and friend,
 Though I am here all things my coming attend;
 I am, you have heard it, the Beginning and the End.

'Time', by Allen Curnow, from *Songs of Ourselves*.

Note: Lupins are a type of flower.



Worksheet for Text 1C: Time

1 Explain in your own words how Time is represented in the following lines of the poem:

a *I am the mileage recorded on the yellow signs.*

b *I am the sums the sole-charge teachers teach.*

c *I am the slap of the belting and the smell of the machine.*

d *I am recurrent music the children hear.*

2 What do the following devices contribute to the effect of the poem:

a alliteration _____

b repetition _____

c rhyme _____

3 Choose the line from the poem which you think best illustrates the role of Time, and give your reasons.

4 Write another three-lined rhymed verse for the poem, each line beginning 'I am.'

- 5 Write a paraphrase and summary of the final three verses of the poem.

- 6 Explain the use of capitals in the final line.

Answers to Worksheet for Text 1C: Time

Note: This is a complex poem of ideas and the questions are designed to make students look at language and imagery, and to infer meanings, rather than to elicit 'correct' answers. Accept any reasonable attempts to convey understanding.

- 1
 - a Time is shown by how long it takes to travel a distance.
 - b Time is the subject of maths problems asking how long it would take to perform a task.
 - c Time is measured in the passing of a day at work.
 - d Time makes music possible because notes have duration / form a beat.

- 2
 - a Alliteration calls attention to phrases and connects their components memorably in logical collocations or surprising juxtapositions, e.g. *place in the park, father, farm and friend*.
 - b Repetition: the insistent use of *I am* at the start of lines has religious connotations and personifies Time as a domineering divine power which is everywhere and to which everything is subject; it stresses the concept of identity in its simplest and most inescapable form.
 - c The rhyming of each end-stopped line of the tercet (three-lined stanza) creates a regular and predictable pattern consistent with the fixed measure of Time.

- 5 Time is everything that has happened, however trivial and transitory; it is a constant and controlling force, both concretely and also in the form of memories, which are abstract products of the unconscious, tied to beloved people and places. Time is ever-present, yet always being waited for; it is the cause and symbol of beginnings and endings.

- 6 Time is capitalised and personified to signify its omnipotent and god-like status, and the capitals for *Beginning* and *End* emphasise the control Time has over the journey of a human life, from birth to death, and how nothing can exist outside of Time: past, present or future.

Answers – Unit 1

- 1 Example content for mindmap: dates, diaries, schedules and calendars, routine, seasons, ageing, change, decay, healing, regrets, hopes, prophecy, promises, horoscopes, memory, sport, examinations, travel
- 2 *procrastinate* – to delay or postpone deliberately the performance of an action
optimise – to make the most effective use of something
negotiate – to discuss in order to reach an agreement on something
delegate – to entrust a task to another person
prioritise – to rank items in order of importance
- 3 Argumentative language in Text 1A: rhetorical questions; triple structures; antithesis; use of inclusive 'we'; exclamations for lively tone; concessive language (*Of course, Which is not to say ...*)
- 4 Fifteen 'Recommended strategies for improving time management':
 - Keep a to-do list and refer to it.
 - Don't aim to do too much each day.
 - Don't put things on the list you have no intention of doing.
 - Don't put jobs off, but at least make a start.
 - Allocate jobs according to the time of day you work best.
 - Turn work down that you don't really want or need to do.
 - Negotiate for an easier task or more time where possible.
 - Delegate when appropriate.
 - Retain good eating and sleep habits.
 - Be precise about the tasks.
 - Do the most urgent tasks first.
 - Don't spend too much time on the list.
 - Have long-term goals and relate the tasks to them.
 - Resist distractions and avoid multi-tasking.
 - Take refreshment breaks every few hours.
- 5 a What he observed on the journey in the machine:
 - high speed
 - hands moving fast towards the future
 - alternation of dark and light became slower
 - a continuous half-light
 - passing comets visible
 - Sun became redder and ceased to set
 - Sun finally became stationary
 - no Moon

- stars circled slowly
 - when levers reversed, the hand indicating thousands (of years) stopped moving
- b** What he observed after the machine landed:
- black sky with bright stars in N.E.
 - starless red sky overhead
 - Sun on the S.E. horizon
 - bright red rocks
 - green vegetation
 - sloping beach
 - sea to S.W. with bright horizon
 - no waves, but slight swell
 - thick layer of pink-hued salt
 - huge crabs
- 6 a** Effective language in paragraph 5:
- antennae* – they are receiving signals and very aware; makes them seem more machine than animal
- like carters' whips* – pain-association of whips, and makes crabs seem in control, as carters control horses
- waving and feeling* – their antennae seem inescapable
- stalked eyes gleaming* – unpleasant image associated with sci-fi aliens
- metallic front* – reinforces idea of machines, and invulnerability
- corrugated and ornamented* – shell of its back impenetrably hard, like armour
- greenish incrustation blotched it* – all words associated with ugliness
- its complicated mouth flickering and feeling* – like the antennae, the mouth has a life of its own
- b** Their alertness and constant movement make the crabs threatening and dominating, and their ugly and alien aspect is alarming. The combined effect of the descriptive language is to convey a 'sinister apparition'.