

Access for Higher Education (Health Care)

Contributor's notes

This resource was used as part of a literacy assessment during interviews for Access to Healthcare students. It also makes a challenging reading and writing assignment for any Level 2 literacy student.

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Main Curriculum References

Actual references will vary with the learner group and the way the resource is used.

Rt/L2.4 Read an argument and identify the points of view

- (a) read about and distinguish the pros and cons of an issue and come to their own conclusion
- (b) understand that texts presenting an argument are adopting a particular point of view
- (c) understand the difference between objective fact and opinion/point of view

Rt/L2.5 Read critically to evaluate information and compare information, ideas and opinions from different sources

- (a) understand that selection and presentation of information is rarely completely objective
- (b) understand that information on the same topic from different sources may have different, even contradictory emphases
- (c) understand the concept of bias and that it can be the result of what is left out of a text as well as what is there

Rt/L2.8 summarise information from longer documents

- (a) Summarise the key points (e.g. from a newspaper article/official report on a subject relevant to their own life) in order to discuss the issue at a meeting (e.g. re proposal to close a local school/post office/sell open land for building).
- (b) understand that selection involves distinguishing the main points and supporting detail in the document
- (c) understand that what to select and how best to present it in summary form will also depend on knowing the purpose and audience for the summary

Wt/L2.6 use different styles of writing for different purposes (e.g. persuasive techniques, supporting evidence, technical vocabulary)

- (a) understand that the style of writing involves choice of vocabulary, sentence length and structure, how the text is organised
- (b) understand that what is appropriate style depends on purpose, audience, context

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THANK YOU

Health Care – Literacy Assessment

Please read through the text that follows and answer the three questions given below. The excerpt is taken from an article in the Nursing Times, 31st October 2006.

You should use the lined paper provided and write a paragraph for each question. You may not use bullet points.

1. What are the main arguments that Linda Nazarko is putting forward in the article?
2. How much of the article is factual and how much is Nazarko's opinion? Can you explain the difference between fact and opinion using examples from the text?
3. Is Nazarko biased in her description of poverty amongst the elderly? Give reasons for your answer.

“In 21st Century Britain, 1.8 million pensioners live in poverty”

MARGARET Williams is 93, widowed and childless. She is thin and undernourished and living in poverty in England, the fourth richest nation on earth. Her income is £84.25 a week. Once Margaret has paid her bills she does not have enough money left for food. The council tax bill has risen by 22.1% in the last nine years. Gas, water and electricity have also risen by huge amounts. The basic state pension hasn't kept pace.

Margaret is not claiming the benefits she is entitled to claim. She does not like to beg and has no idea of what is available. She is not alone. The government trumpets its success in reducing poverty, but the strategy is based on a labyrinth of means-tested benefits. Not only do you have to know that they exist, but also you need to fill in long forms of irrelevant questions and know how to negotiate the system. That is difficult when you are very old.

It can be hard to read the forms, let alone complete them. It can be hard to call up the benefits office when you're faced with a range of options and placed in queues, or to talk on the phone when your hearing is not good. Many older people rely on the help of family and friends. So the most vulnerable older people – the oldest, most isolated and most at risk of ill health – have the greatest difficulty in obtaining the benefits that they need.

The government estimates that 22-36% of older people who are eligible for the minimum income guarantee and council tax benefits don't claim it. In 21st-century Britain £4.1bn of benefits remain unclaimed and 1.8 million pensioners live in poverty. These individuals are faced with stark choices: do I put on the heating or do I eat? Can I afford a warm coat? People who have lived in the UK, paid their taxes and rely on us to provide them with a basic income in old age are cold and hungry. Last year 31,000 older people died of the cold – and this in a nation that orders private jets for the prime minister. This is disgraceful.

Linda Nazarko, OBE, is consultant nurse, older people, Twickenham.