

- 1 The following text is a post from a blog. The writer, David Durant, argues that there should be more good news on radio news bulletins.
- (a) Imagine you are the news editor at a local radio station, and are responsible for deciding which stories are to be broadcast. Having read the blog, you decide to change your current editorial guidelines. Write the guidelines, advising your reporters how an appropriate balance of positive and negative content should be achieved. Use between 120 and 150 words. [10]
- (b) Compare the language and style of your guidelines with the language and style of the original blog. [15]

It's all bad news on radio news bulletins – why?

I would like you to accompany me on a short journey. It's a Sunday morning and having put the kettle on to make myself a cup of tea, I switch the radio on and I am instantly transported to a wonderful place as the sound of Chopin¹ floats into my ears. As the music fades I am greeted by the soothing and calm voice of the presenter, who introduces an uplifting number full of Latin passion and oozing positive energy from every note. I feel alive and bursting with a deep feeling of peace and everything's all right in the world. 5

The news is next; the newsreader launches into an assault on all my senses with tales of murder, violence, extinction, war, financial ruin and natural disasters. At this point you could be forgiven for thinking so what? Those are the headlines for that particular hour and there is bound to be different news in the next hour and so on ... Sadly this theme continues throughout the day. 10

Someone at the radio station has to make the decision as to which headlines to include in the next bulletin. Someone at a higher level has to decide the overall editorial policy. I am intrigued to know the reasoning behind these decisions. 15

Because of this conscious choice by news editors, listeners are infected with news of pain and suffering for up to two minutes, leaving us experiencing negative and unresolved feelings of sadness, anger and depression, and remaining uninformed about the root causes of the issues we hear. Where is the balance? Where is the equal focus on the positive news stories which we know are happening too? What will it take for radio and TV news editors to make the conscious choice to focus as much energy on selecting stories which showcase the very best of human behaviour and of people and organisations who are actively taking action to make the world a better place? 20 25

Consider the alternative: positive stories of people, companies, organisations and governments doing good things; positive outcomes in the face of adversity; solutions rather than problems; hope rather than despair; humour rather than gloom.

How about letting listeners decide what type of news content they want to hear? How about introducing short bursts of positive stories two or three times every hour on some stations? 30

Thank you for taking the time to accompany me on this short journey. I very much look forward to hearing a revival of mainstream news reporting which focuses on positive stories and solution-based journalism, or at the very least for someone to explain the rationale behind the current practice. 35

¹Chopin: a classical composer and pianist

2 Texts A and B both relate to flightless birds.

Text A is a transcript of an extract from a television documentary about birds. These words are spoken as a voiceover.

Text B is an extract from a blog post entitled '8 Birds That Can't Fly' by Alison Eldridge.

Compare the language and style of Text A and Text B.

[25]

Text A

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

(1) = pause in seconds (.) = micropause underlining = stressed sound/syllable(s)

birds (.) are the masters of the skies (4) there are more than ten thousand species (2) and they behave in a huge variety of different ways (5) but of all the birds ive filmed over the years (.) theres nothing that can really compare with these comic characters (2) thats not just because of their great size but because they can't do the one thing that birds are famous for doing (.) they can't fly (2) the ostrich (.) the emu (.) the rhea together with two other birds (.) the kiwi (.) and the cassowary (.) are the court jesters of the avian world (3) theyre a family with a remarkable success story despite never having flown a day in their lives (5) but exactly how and why did these birds abandon flight (3) its one of the worlds greatest mysteries and its taxed some of the finest minds in science from darwins time right through to the present day (2) and now dna is promising to give us an answer (.) but what is even more exciting than the remarkable evolutionary history of these birds is their behaviour (.) because if youre a bird that can't fly (.) you have to find other ways of surviving (4) its said that a bird is three things (2) feathers (1) flight (1) and song (2) but what happens if youre a bird which can't fly (.) which doesnt sing (2) and whose feathers are closer to fluff (3) well (.) then you have to come up with some pretty unusual ways of surviving (3) this small group of birds are real oddballs (.) with a ragbag of characteristics that help them with life on the ground (.) among their number is the fastest bird on land (.) a bird with the biggest eyes on earth (.) one has dagger sharp talons (.) another killer thighs

Text B

Have you ever wished you were an eagle, soaring high above the prairie? How about the mythical phoenix, rising from the ashes? For centuries people have wistfully watched birds take wing and felt a bit jealous. But what about birds that don't fly? You'd think they'd hold a grudge against their freewheeling cousins, but these guys are just as awesome in their own right. These eight birds can't fly, but you should probably envy them anyway.

5

8. Penguin

No list of flightless birds would be complete without the penguin. All eighteen species of penguin are unable to fly, and are in fact better built for swimming and diving, which they spend the majority of their time doing. Their short legs and stocky build give them a distinctive waddling walk. While people tend to associate penguins with Antarctica, most species live in higher latitudes. A few even live in temperate climates, and the Galapagos penguin actually lives at the Equator. These birds are also remarkably romantic – penguins are largely monogamous and seek out the same mates each season, even among the hundreds or even thousands of birds that might live in their colony.

10

7. Steamer duck

15

Three out of four species of steamer duck are flightless, but four out of four species should not be messed with. Even within the flighted species, some males are too heavy to actually achieve lift-off. These South American ducks earned their name by running across water and thrashing their wings like the wheels on a steamboat. They use them for other forms of thrashing, too. Famously aggressive, steamer ducks are known to engage in epic, bloody battles with each other over territory disputes. They have even been known to kill waterbirds several times their size.

20

6. Kakapo

The kakapo, also known as an 'owl parrot', is a native of New Zealand. This nocturnal parrot has an owl's face, penguin's stance, and duck's gait. It is truly a strange bird – but also a beautiful one, with bright green-brown feathers. It can grow up to two feet in length, and is the world's heaviest parrot. The males make a distinctive booming call that sounds like a one-bird band, which can be heard up to half a mile away!

25

5. Ostrich

The mighty ostrich is truly the king of birds. The largest living bird, the ostrich can grow up to nine feet tall and weigh more than three hundred pounds. Their eggs, fittingly, are also the world's largest – about five inches in diameter and three pounds in weight. Their powerful legs can kick in defence, and they can run at speeds up to forty-five miles per hour across the open lands of Africa, where they live. And if that's not enough, they have long, luxurious eyelashes too.

30

35

BLANK PAGE

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (UCLES) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

To avoid the issue of disclosure of answer-related information to candidates, all copyright acknowledgements are reproduced online in the Cambridge Assessment International Education Copyright Acknowledgements Booklet. This is produced for each series of examinations and is freely available to download at www.cambridgeinternational.org after the live examination series.

Cambridge Assessment International Education is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which itself is a department of the University of Cambridge.