

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand some of the features of non-fiction texts and prepare you to answer exam questions on them.

## KEY POINT

All non-fiction writing describes real events but, depending on the genre, the author gives their own account of events. This means that the 'truth' of their account can be questioned.

## SUBJECT VOCABULARY

**objective** based on facts, or making a decision that is based on facts rather than on your feelings or beliefs

**unbiased** fair; not influenced by one's own or someone else's opinions

**broadsheet** a newspaper printed on large sheets of paper, especially a serious newspaper

## TYPES OF TEXT

The types of non-fiction text that may appear in Paper 1 include examples of:

- |                                  |                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| ■ biography or autobiography     | ■ travel writing     |
| ■ obituaries                     | ■ diaries or letters |
| ■ speeches                       | ■ reviews            |
| ■ newspaper or magazine articles | ■ reference books.   |

The texts that you will write about in Paper 1 will be non-fiction. Fiction describes scenes imagined (at least partly) by the writer. Non-fiction writing does the opposite: it is about things that really happened, although you cannot rely on all non-fiction to be accurate.

In an **autobiography**, the writer describes his or her own life. However, some events may not have been remembered accurately, or some events may be exaggerated for effect, perhaps to show the writer as positively as possible. Some autobiographies may be considered more like fiction than non-fiction by their readers because they are not very accurate.

A **biography** is the life story of a famous or interesting person, whether from history or from the present day. Today, there are also 'authorised biographies', in which the subject of the biography gives the writer specific legal permission to produce the biography. The subject can decide which events are included or omitted and how the writer describes them.

Another form of autobiographical writing is the **diary** or **journal**, or the modern equivalent, the **blog** (short for 'web log'). For example, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank contains important factual material about her daily life during the German occupation of the Netherlands. It is therefore more than just a personal account. However, not all diaries set out to be accurate or truthful. Many diaries have other purposes, such as to entertain, to give personal views and to communicate with friends.

**News reports** may appear in newspapers or magazines. News is expected to be **objective** or **unbiased** and based on clear evidence. As readers, you want to know whether a reporter is trying to present the material in a particular way because of their own opinions on the topic. However, some newspaper and magazine articles are undoubtedly biased. In all forms of non-fiction text, therefore, the question of truth and accuracy really matters. This means that part of the reader's analysis should include looking for any examples of bias or opinion that is not supported by evidence.

**Feature articles** are usually about a topic of interest to a large number of readers: they can be about almost anything, from family matters to global politics. They are usually based on research. Opinion or comment pieces will contain factual evidence and explanation, but aim to argue a case about a topic of general interest.

An **obituary** is a newspaper article, found most frequently in **broadsheet** newspapers, about a remarkable or well-known person who has just died. Its length depends on the fame or significance of the subject.