

◀ A World of Difference ▶

INTERMEDIATE

2 April 1997

HOW MANY OF THESE STATEMENTS DO YOU AGREE WITH?

1. THERE IS TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUCCEED IN THEIR STUDIES THESE DAYS.

2. YOUNG WOMEN ARE BETTER AT STUDYING THAN YOUNG MEN.

3. IT IS NECESSARY TO HAVE A LOT OF COMPETITION IN SCHOOL SO THAT CHILDREN STUDY HARDER.

4. MIDDLE-CLASS STUDENTS WILL ALWAYS DO BETTER THAN WORKING-CLASS STUDENTS AT SCHOOL.

5. LESS SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS ARE MORE RELAXED THAN CLEVER STUDENTS.

Clever girls racked by 'imposter syndrome'

In the competitive 1990s, middle-class girls cannot escape fear of failure, no matter how talented they are. According to a new study, they suffer anxiety and low confidence even though they have overtaken boys in academic achievement.

Girls as young as 10 begin to worry about academic results and careers, and continue to do so through school and university, despite good performance, according to the research.

Their reluctance to recognise their achievements is dubbed by one expert as the "imposter syndrome": though feminism has opened the door to the boardroom and other citadels of success,

girls are still not confident of their place there.

In the study, to be published in the summer, all the middle-class girls felt stressed and driven to achieve more. Expecta-

tion, more than actual achievement, coloured their views, according to Valerie Walkerdine, professor of psychology at Gold-

smiths College, London, who conducted the research.

She examined two groups of young women, aged 21 and 16, from working-class and middle-class backgrounds. "The majority of the middle-class girls went to schools where high performance was the norm, and therefore high performance



The heat is on: the rise of high-flying career women adds to the pressure felt by Jenny Austin and Emma and Natalie Wiggins

came to be regarded as average," she said. "A young woman who did well would not see herself as particularly outstanding because achievement was what was expected of her."

The study reveals that social class is still the key to determining academic success. All but one of the middle-class girls went on to higher education, while the majority of working-class girls in the study left full-time education at the age of 16.

However, working-class girls, despite average achievements, were held up as good examples by friends and families; the talents of middle-class girls who had done well went largely unsung.


THE SUNDAY TIMES
March 30 1997

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<http://www.sunday-times.co.uk>

In this lesson you will learn

<i>to recognise the main idea in a text</i>	1
<i>how the text is organised</i>	2
<i>to talk about success and failure</i>	3
<i>about joining sentences together</i>	4

1. Below are three possible summaries of the text. Quickly read the text, without trying to understand every word, and choose the *most complete* summary.

- a) Young women are more successful academically than young men these days.
- b) Although, these days, many young women are successful in their academic studies and careers, they do not feel confident or successful.
- c) Middle-class young women do better at school than working-class young women.

2. Which paragraph contains the key information of the whole text?



3. Match the words and phrases, taken from the text (on the left), with the definitions on the right.

	Word or phrase from text	Definition
1 K —	fear of failure	a) a condition which makes you feel you are pretending
2 ____	talented	b) success in your studies
3 ____	suffer anxiety	c) made it possible to become a senior manager
4 ____	academic achievement	d) unsure of yourself
5 ____	reluctant to recognise their achievement	e) to suffer greatly from
6 ____	imposter syndrome	f) an organisation where people are doing well and is difficult to enter
7 ____	opened the door to the boardroom	g) very good at something
8 ____	citadels of success	h) not willing to see what they have done well
9 ____	not confident	i) under a lot of pressure
10 ____	stressed	j) feel worried about something
11 ____	racked by	k) concerned about not succeeding



4

Make one sentence from two. Use the word or phrase in the brackets in your sentences.

Please see the examples taken from the newspaper text at the end of this task.

- a) Working-class girls continue to receive respect. Their academic achievements are average.. (even though)
*Working-class girls continue to receive respect, **even though** their academic achievements are average.*
- b) Middle-class girls worry a lot about failure. They are successful.(no matter how)

- c) There are many more opportunities for women in work these days. It is difficult for them to reach the top. (although)
Although.....
- d) Very young girls are anxious about their studies, They gain excellent academic results.(despite)

- e) Boys are more confident than girls. They have been overtaken by girls in academic achievement. (although)

- f) Middle-class girls receive less recognition than working-class girls. They achieve better academic results. (despite)

- g) Most countries now have equal opportunities. Most women are not as successful as men in the workplace. ()
Though.....
- h) Many middle-class girls are racked by feelings of under achievement. They do well in their studies. (no matter how)

Here are examples from the text of how the language was used:

- In the competitive 1990s, middle-class girls cannot escape fear of failure, **no matter how** talented they are.
- According to a new study, they suffer anxiety and low confidence **even though** they have overtaken boys in academic achievement.
- Girls as young as 10 begin to worry about academic results and careers, and continue to do so through school and university, **despite** good performance, according to the research.
- **though** feminism has opened the door to the board-room and other citadels of success, girls are still not confident of their place there.
- However, working-class girls, **despite** average achievements, were held up as good examples

5. Use your own ideas to complete the following sentences:

- a) The majority of senior managers in the factory are men, even though *the majority of the workers are women.*
- b) In my country, although many middle-class womenC
- c) Though girls are better educated these days,
- d) Unfortunately, it is unlikely that women will be as successful as men in the workplace, no matter how
- e) Middle class girls, despite excellent academic achievement,.....

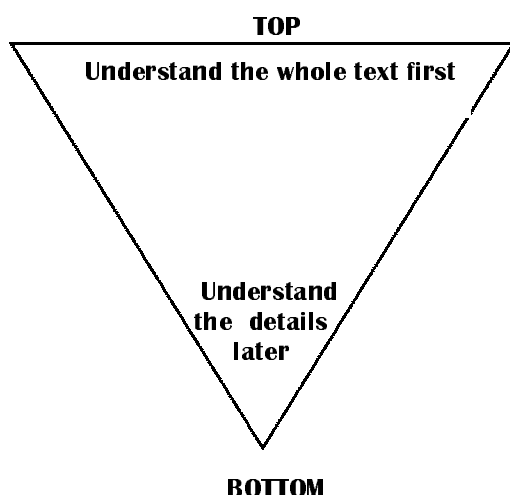


Skills Focus

Reading Skills

It is very helpful to have a general idea what the main point of a newspaper text is before you try to understand every detail. The purpose of task 1, on page 2, is to help you develop this skill.

It is important to try not to understand all of the details at first because it can make it difficult to have a picture of the whole text.



This is often called the “top-down approach”.

Often, in newspaper texts, the most important information is contained in the first paragraph. This is true in this Times article as in Task 2, on page 2.

Language Focus

Words and expressions to learn:

academic achievement, citadels of success, fear of failure, imposter, not confident, opened the door to the boardroom, racked by, reluctant to recognise their achievement, stressed, suffer anxiety, syndrome, talented

Words related to:

Useful structures to learn:

No matter how is a conjunction and is used to join two

Confidence	No Confidence
assertive	demoralised
belief in yourself	insecure
self-assured	lack confidence
self-confident	unsure of yourself
sure of yourself	

clauses together. It cannot be used with only one clause. It suggests that the action referred to will not make any difference.

- In the competitive 1990s, middle-class girls cannot escape fear of failure, **no matter how** talented they are.

Even though is used to connect two contrasting ideas. (*Even though* is stronger than *though*).

- According to a new study, they suffer anxiety and low confidence **even though** they have overtaken boys in academic achievement.

Despite is used to contrast two statements. *In spite of* is also used in the same way.

- Girls as young as 10 begin to worry about academic results and careers, and continue to do so through school and university, **despite** good performance, according to the research.

Though and **although** can be used to join two contrasting clauses together

- though** feminism has opened the door to the boardroom and other citadels of success, girls are still not confident of their place there.

Language Resources

E-mail pen-pals can be a very useful way to make new friends and improve your English at the same time! Here is part of an e-mail message from a 15 year old young lady from Texas about the Times newspaper article:

"The second I read this article, none of this surprised me. No matter how successful, smart, talented, or beautiful a girl is, she always sees people who have more than she does, and it makes them nervous, and causes the "Imposter syndrome"...
...there are the pressures of peers and parents to achieve even more...
About the social class:
The working class see their parents as failures,... and the idea that they will never succeed enters their mind and they begin to doubt themselves, as their grades start to fall....
Sorry it took so long to reply. Been too busy in school trying to stay in the above average bracket :)"- Becca

Find Pen Pals from All Over the World!

http://www.dare.com/fr_main.htm



Useful Grammar Resource:

Unit 112 of English Grammar in Use (C.U.P.) by Murphy has very useful language explanations, exercises and answers about the grammar you have learnt today.

I'd recommend it as a very useful book for students to have as a reference book at home.

Lesson Notes

You might want to ask students to do the tasks for homework. At the beginning of the next lesson have the students check their answers together.

This reading assignment will be followed by a discussion based worksheet, which will help students to re-use some of the language they have learnt in this lesson.

1. **Purpose:** This is a top down reading task which requires the students to have an understanding of the main point of the newspaper article. Once the main point is understood, students should find it easier to understand the significant elements in the text.

Suggested approach: Explain to students the importance of not trying to understand all of the text.

Correct answers: b) Although, these days, many young women are successful in their academic studies and careers, they do not feel confident or successful.

2. **Purpose:** The purpose of this task is to help students focus on one element of text cohesion: the first paragraph very often contains the main point of the text.

Suggested approach: It might be helpful to explain to the students the importance of locating and understanding the main point of the text.

Correct answers: Paragraph one contains the main point as in the following sentence:

"According to a new study, they suffer anxiety and low confidence even though they have overtaken boys in academic achievement."

3. **Purpose:** To help students focus on some of the key vocabulary in the text.

Suggested approach: Trying to guess the words in context is a very useful approach. Encourage students to try to do this as much as possible.

Correct answers: 1. K; 2. G; 3. J; 4. B; 5. H; 6. A; 7. C; 8. F; 9. D; 10. I; 11. E

4. **Purpose:** For students to focus on some of the key structures in the text.

Suggested approach: Point out the five examples sentences, in the second column of page 3, before they do the exercises.

Correct answers:

- a) Working-class girls continue to receive respect, even though their academic achievements are average.
- b) Middle-class girls worry a lot about failure, no matter how successful they are.
- c) Although there are many more opportunities for women in work these days, it is difficult for them to reach the top.
- d) Very young girls are anxious about their studies, despite excellent academic results. Or:
Very young girls are anxious about their studies, despite gaining excellent academic results.

- e) Boys are more confident than girls, although they have been overtaken by girls in academic achievement.
 - f) Middle-class girls receive less recognition than working-class girls, despite better academic results.
Or:
Middle-class girls receive less recognition than working-class girls, despite achieving better academic results.
 - g) Though most countries now have equal opportunities, most women are not as successful as men in the workplace.
 - h) Many middle-class girls are racked by feelings of under achievement, no matter how well they do in their studies.
- 5) **Purpose:** The purpose of this task is to help students produce the target language in a less controlled activity.
Suggested approach: Students might enjoy reading each others' sentences. You might also ask students to write a few sentences of their own about the situation in their country or region.
Possible answers:
 - b) In my country, although many middle-class women are well educated, they find it difficult to get a permanent job.
 - c) Though girls are better educated these days, the boys still get the better jobs.
 - d) Unfortunately, it is unlikely that women will be as successful as men in the workplace, no matter how hard they work.
 - e) Middle class girls, despite excellent academic achievement, do not receive as much praise as working-class girls.

A note from the author.

I very much appreciate you being involved in this project. I feel very excited about the potential of using the latest technology to deliver these materials in a way which is impossible by conventional paper-based materials.

I would warmly welcome any feedback via e-mail at the following address:

paul@po.cc.yamaguchi-u.ac.jp

Negative feedback is as helpful as positive feedback, I think! So, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Paul Snookes



Looking forward to hearing from you!