

Unit 1. Working with texts 1

Task: Read the text. Decide if the statements below are **true** or **false** and give a short explanation (see the model, p 2).

Lane himself opened the door of his Holland Park mansion.

'You're late.'

Vernon, who assumed that George was trying on the part of press lord summoning his editor, declined to apologise or even reply, and followed his host across a bright hallway into the living room. Fortunately, there was nothing here to remind Vernon of Molly. The room was furnished in what he had once heard her describe as the Buckingham Palace style: thick mustard-yellow carpets, big dusty-pink sofas and armchairs with raised patterns of vines and scrolls, brown oil paintings of racehorses at grass, and reproduction Fragonards of bucolic ladies on swings in immense gilt frames, and the whole opulent emptiness overlit by lacquered brass lamps. George reached the massive brecciated marble surround of the coal-effect gas fire, and turned.

'You'll take a glass of port?'

Vernon realized that he had had nothing to eat since a cheese and lettuce sandwich at lunchtime. Why else would George's pretentious construction have made him feel so irritable? And what was George doing wearing a silk dressing-gown over his day clothes? The man was simply preposterous.

'Thanks. I will.'

They sat almost twenty feet apart, with the hissing fireplace between them. Had he been alone for half a minute, Vernon thought, he might have crawled over to the fender and knocked the right side of his head on it. Even in company now, he did not feel right.

'I've seen the ABC figures,' George said gravely. 'Not good.'

'The rate of decline is slowing,' was Vernon's automatic response, his mantra.

'But it's still a decline.'

'These things take time to turn around.' Vernon tasted his port and protected himself with the recollection that George owned a mere one and a half per cent of *The Judge* and knew nothing about the business. It was also useful to remember that his fortune, his publishing 'empire', was rooted in an energetic exploitation of the weak-headed: hidden numerical codes in the Bible foretold the future, the Incas hailed from outer space, the Holy Grail, the Ark of the Covenant, the Second Coming, the Third Eye, the Seventh Seal, Hitler was alive and well in Peru. It was not easy to be lectured by George on the ways of the world.

'It seems to me,' he was saying, 'that what you need now is one big story, something that'll catch fire, something your opponents will have to run with just to keep up.'

What was needed for the circulation to stop going down was for the circulation to go up. But Vernon kept a neutral expression, for he knew that George was working his way round to the photographs.

Vernon tried to speed him up. 'We've got a good story on Friday about a pair of Siamese twins in local government ...'

'Pah!'

It worked. George was suddenly on his feet. 'That's not a story, Vernon. That's tittle-tattle. I'll show you a story. Come with me.'

1

By simply saying *You're late*, the writer is conveying the idea that George is being rude.

True

False : The author is not trying particularly to imply rudeness: he is trying to imply that George is acting haughtily and arrogantly. The point is made clear in the following paragraph, where Vernon thinks of George as *trying on the part of press lord*.

2

The phrases *dusty-pink*, *oil paintings of racehorses* and *brecciated marble* imply that Vernon does not like the décor in the room.

True

False

3

The phrase *The man was simply preposterous* is meant to reflect the opinion of the character rather than the author.

True

False

4

The sentence *they sat almost twenty feet apart, with the hissing fireplace between them* implies hostility between the two men.

True

False

5

The books that George publishes listed are all of a similar type.

True

False

6

The line *What was needed for the circulation to stop going down was for the circulation to go up* conveys Vernon's frustration with George.

True

False

7

By including the section about the Siamese twins, the author is suggesting that Vernon is more intelligent and manipulative than George.

True

False