

# WRITING, READING AND LITERACY SKILLS FOR A LEVEL ECONOMICS

It can be difficult for everyone when they start a new subject to understand the terminology and language that are used and how best to apply them to get marks. This booklet will help you to develop the literacy skills that you need in order to do well as an A level economist.

All subjects can be more challenging if you have a specific learning difficulty or if English is an additional language, and economics is no exception. The exercises and strategies in this booklet have been carefully chosen to suit you too.

As an additional bonus lots of the strategies and exercises in this booklet will help you improve your literacy skills in other subjects, and will help you if you go on to study at university.

This booklet can be used by both Year 12 and Year 13 students. Don't worry if you aren't sure about some of the topics and theory referred to in the questions – you can always come back to this at a later date.

**DON'T SKIP THIS INTRODUCTION**  
It tells you how this booklet can help you!

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## SECTION 1

### WHAT DOES “GOOD” LITERACY LOOK LIKE?

Let's start with writing, and let's keep it general to start off with. We will return to reading later.

#### Task 1 | Good writing

Add your thoughts on what “good writing” looks like to the graphic below:



A key literacy skill is making sure you obtain from a piece of text exactly what it is you need.

For example, an exam question contains important **information**. An exam extract might contain **information** if the context is unfamiliar, **ideas** as to the sorts of areas you might discuss in your answers and some **evidence** that you could use in evaluation.

A few exercises are given below for you to assess your own reading literacy, and further strategies are given throughout this booklet.

## Task 8 | Better reading

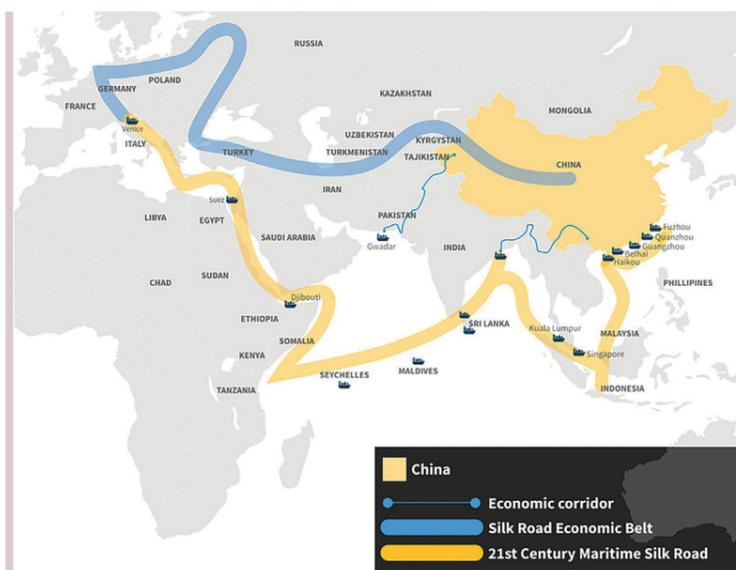
Here is an article from the World Economic Forum published in 2017. **Don't read it immediately** but skip ahead to the end of the article and use the exercises that follow it to guide you through effective reading.

# CHINA'S \$900 BILLION NEW SILK ROAD. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You've probably heard of the Silk Road, the ancient trade route that once ran between China and the West during the days of the Roman Empire. It's how oriental silk first made it to Europe. It's also the reason China is no stranger to carrots.

And now it's being resurrected. Announced in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, a brand new double trade corridor is set to reopen channels between China and its neighbours in the west: most notably Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

According to the Belt and Road Action Plan released in 2015, the initiative will encompass land routes (the "Belt") and maritime routes (the "Road") with the goal of improving trade relationships in the region primarily through infrastructure investments. The aim of the \$900 billion scheme, as China explained recently, is to kindle a "new era of globalization", a golden age of commerce that will benefit all. Beijing says it will ultimately lend as much as \$8 trillion for infrastructure in 68 countries. That adds up to as much as 65% of the global population and a third of global GDP, according to the global consultancy McKinsey.



But reviews from the rest of the world have been mixed, with several countries expressing suspicion about China's true geopolitical intentions, even while others attended a summit in Beijing earlier this month to praise the scale and scope of the project. The project has proved vast, expensive and controversial. Four years after it was first unveiled, the question remains:

### Why is China doing it?

One strong incentive is that Trans-Eurasian trade infrastructure could bolster poorer countries to the south of China, as well as boost global trade. Domestic regions are also expected to benefit – especially the less-developed border regions in the west of the country, such as Xinjiang. The economic benefits, both domestically and abroad, are many, but perhaps the most obvious is that trading with new markets could go a long way towards keeping China's national economy buoyant.

Among domestic markets set to gain from future trade are Chinese companies – such as those in transport and telecoms – which now look poised to grow into global brands. Chinese manufacturing also stands to gain. The country's vast industrial overcapacity – mainly in the creation of steel and heavy equipment – could find lucrative outlets along the New Silk Road, and this could allow Chinese manufacturing to swing towards higher-end industrial goods.

Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/china-new-silk-road-explainer/>

This extract contains almost 400 words. We are going to look at various ways of making sure you obtain from the text exactly what is needed.

- a First, **skim the text**. To do this:
- 1 Read the title
  - 2 Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph
  - 3 Read any words in bold
  - 4 Look at any illustrations

Jot down your ideas below as to what the article is about, based on your skim read:

b Next, think about any background information you already know about this topic. Jot this down.

c Think about some questions the text might answer. Note them down below (it doesn't matter if the text doesn't end up answering your questions!).

**Scanning** is something we do every day. Scanning means moving your eyes quickly through the text until you find what you are looking for. In an exam, you might scan the text for a second time looking for a piece of information you recall reading.

d Scan the text looking for how many countries will be involved in the project. Add your answer to the box below.



Prefix or suffix	Meaning	Examples
-less	Without	Eg endless
-age	A result	Eg wreckage
-ance	Quality or state, action or process	Eg performance
-ous	Full of	Eg joyous
-some	A tendency to	Eg quarrelsome
-aceous	Resembling or made of	Eg herbaceous
Mis-	Wrongly	Eg misjudged
In-, im- or -ir-	Into or not	Eg invade, immoral, irresponsible
Dis- or de-	Opposite of or not	Eg discomfort or dehydrated
Circum-	Around or about	Eg circumference, circumscribe
Auto-	Same or self	Eg autobiography
Un-	Opposite	Eg unlock
Sub-	Under	Eg substandard
Super-	Above	Eg superstar
Non-	Not	Eg nonsense
Poly-	Many	Eg polyethylene
Fore-	Before	Eg foretell

Here are some made up words. Using the clues given and the information above, can you decide what the meanings of the words might be?

Made up word	Clue (where needed)	Your guess at the meaning
<b>Polypter</b>	“pter” means wings	
<b>Logaceous</b>	“Log” means word	
<b>Forebio</b>	“Bio” means life	
<b>Exism</b>	No clue	
<b>Superance</b>	No clue	
<b>Exotherm</b>	“Therm” means heat	

Perhaps you could make up some imaginary words of your own?

## SECTION 5

# WRITING ABOUT DATA AND DIAGRAMS – IN FOCUS



In Section 3, we touched on how to write about data and diagrams. Writing about quantitative and qualitative data is a core skill of all social scientists, including economists. Economists also need to be able to write about any diagrams that are used as part of analysis and arguments. In this short section, we go into more detail on some of the ways in which you can develop these specialist written skills.

### Quoting and using data

All A-level economists have to answer data response, or context, questions in exams. All of these questions require “application” of the context. The examiner needs to see evidence of this “application” in order to award marks. Therefore, you need to be able to quote and use data from the extracts in your answer.



#### What is a quote?

A quote, or quotation, is the repetition or use (in your own writing) of a group of words or piece of information that comes from someone else’s writing.

#### How much should I quote?

You need to use as much evidence as you can to support your argument(s). But, you need to be **selective** about how much evidence you quote – if you use too much, it can get in the way of your argument and make your answer difficult to read and follow.

#### In what ways can I quote?

You can directly quote key sentences in your answer. You can also **paraphrase** (that is, put the information from the data or context into your own words).



### Task 1 | Signalling a quote or paraphrase

It can be helpful for examiners to see a clear signal that you are quoting or paraphrasing data. Some words and phrases you can use are shown below:

As stated in / by...	According to...	Extract A states that...
Extract B notes that...	As claimed in / by...	As per...
As reported in / by...	As mentioned in...	As specified in...
In light of the data which suggests that...	As noted in...	As argued by...

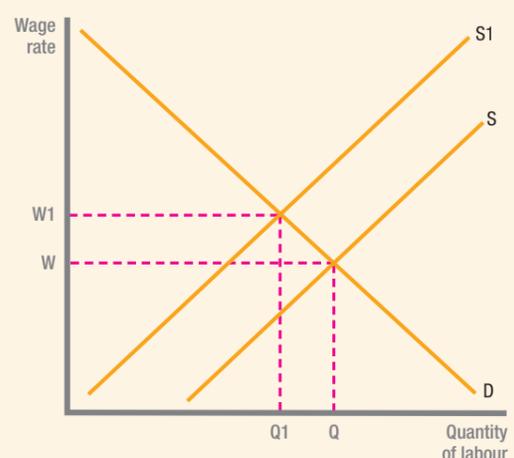
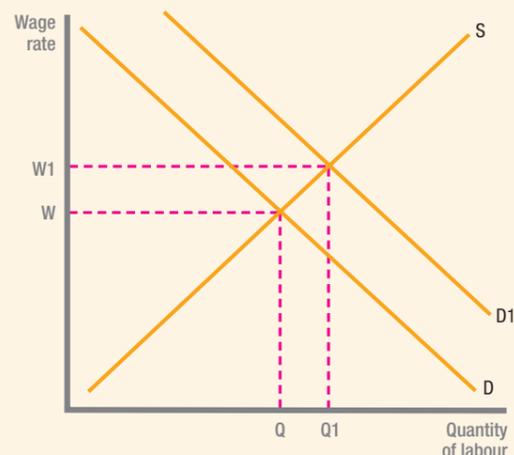
**Q2 Explain, with reference to the data and using a diagram, possible causes of rising wages in a free market.**

**Student answer**

Wages are determined in the labour market, and in a free market are influenced by demand for and supply of labour. A free labour market has no trade union influence, no monopsony employers and no government intervention in the way of minimum wages etc.

One way in which wages will rise in a free labour market is if there is an increase in demand for labour i.e. an increase from D to D1 as shown in the diagram. This can happen if there is an increase in demand for the product being produced by that labour market. If the wage rate stayed the same, at W, then there would be excess demand for labour and labour shortages. So, employers raise wages, and the higher wages incentivise workers to supply their labour and causes an extension in the quantity of labour supplied so a new equilibrium is reached.

A second way in which wages will rise in a free labour market is if there is a decrease in supply of labour at all wage rates i.e. a decrease from S to S1 as shown in the diagram. This can happen if there is outwards migration, or if an industry becomes unpopular to work in, or other factors that make it difficult for people to work in that industry. The decrease in supply leads to an increase in the wage rate.



**My improved answer:**

Blank area for the student's improved answer to Q2.

**Q3 Using the information provided and your own economic knowledge, explain the difference between structural unemployment and cyclical unemployment.**

**Student answer**

Unemployment in general refers to people who are out of work but who are able and willing to work at the going wage rate. There are many different causes. One cause is structural unemployment. This relates to a change in the structure of the economy, where some industries shrink and others grow. Workers in the declining industries do not necessarily have the skills that are relevant in the growing industries, and so they can't find a job. Another cause is cyclical unemployment. This is unemployment that is linked to the economic cycle. When there is recession, less output is demanded. Because demand for labour is derived from demand for goods and services, demand for labour therefore falls in recession.

**My improved answer:**

Blank area for the student's improved answer to Q3.

**Task 4 | Writing about diagrams**

You probably noticed that the answers to questions 1 and 2 for the previous task included diagrams. In both cases, the written analysis clearly referred to the diagrams and gave a detailed explanation of what the diagrams showed.

Good features of written diagram analysis include:

- Reference to specific labels on the diagram
- Clear explanation of why curves have shifted
- Clear explanation of how new equilibrium points are reached
- Where relevant, explanation of changes to areas on diagrams

As indicated by...	Increases at all prices / decreases at all prices	Contraction / extension of demand (or supply)	Signals
Incentivises	Allocates	More than proportional increase	Less than proportional increase
Ceteris paribus	Assuming that	Inversely related	Directly related