

A-level
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Language, the individual and society

Insert

Texts for Section A

Text A

How did Britain get so rude?

The country's leading manners expert bemoans how society has been ruined by louts whose irresponsible attitudes make life intolerable for the rest of us...

By **JO BRYANT**, ETIQUETTE EDITOR OF DEBRETT'S A-Z OF MODERN MANNERS

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A youth gestures at David Cameron during his now infamous walkabout on an estate in Manchester

We've all been there. It's Monday morning and you're on a busy train to work. The person next to you is listening to their music at deafening volume.

Someone else is tucking into a smelly fast-food breakfast. Then the comedy ringtone blares out into the carriage.

After a few intrusive rings, the phone is answered and a fellow passenger loudly discusses their antics from the weekend.

To top it off, when you arrive at your stop, people barge past you and try to board the train before you've managed to get off.

What happened to our well-ordered society where people recognised the difference between polite behaviour and sheer rudeness?

Perhaps traditional courtesies are disappearing because we live in an increasingly frenetic and complex world. If we're not dashing for that train then we're stressed out at work; if we're not fighting our way round the supermarket, then we're late to collect the kids.

Life today sometimes feels too fast-paced for old-fashioned politeness. We're always in such a rush, we don't have time to say please, thank you or excuse me. If people barge past us, we're happy to barge into them.

A loud and intrusive mobile phone call can all too easily tempt one to talk even louder. Bad manners have escalated as our standards of social interaction have declined. Why should we bother when other people don't?

Standards of social interaction have declined



POLITE: The way we were

In addition, the rigid social hierarchies that once governed behaviour are breaking down. In generations gone by, codes of acceptable behaviour were passed down. Families ate together at the table and manners were supervised; young women and men rarely interacted simply as friends; children were seen but not heard; the elderly were revered.

Perhaps today's more flexible society is a reaction against the straitjacketed customs and courtesies of bygone days.

As postwar society became more informal, social customs were simplified. Manners became more about spontaneity and instinct and being well-mannered became a personal responsibility rather than a social expectation.

The pace of life in the 21st century has placed unprecedented demands upon us. We're a time-short, take-away, disposable society with a diminishing focus on the social niceties.

Text B

RUDENESS OF WOMEN TO WOMEN
TO THE EDITOR OF "THE EVENING NEWS"

Sir, – In the article "The Rudeness of Women to Women," Miss Katherine Cox has not exaggerated, but has voiced a trouble with which women of gentle breeding have to contend every day.

Some of these women are doing splendid work as V.A.D.s¹, clerks, and in canteens, etc. They work hard and long hours, but this does not wear them out or crush their spirit. It is that terrible journey which disheartens them and which, at times, proves too great a strain. And why? Simply the rudeness of women to women.

I give two personal experiences. After trying in Whitehall to get on a 'bus several times without any luck I decided to make a jump for it. The conductress, who was on top, rushed down, roughly shook my arm, and bellowed, "Can't yer count? Don't yer see there's five standing."

I remonstrated by saying, "Well, there's no need to be rude," at the same time starting to dismount. The conductress assisted me by giving me a push, and a parting shot came from her as the 'bus started, "Rude! Some of yer can't understand perliteness. Yer can't."

I waited a little longer and eventually got on a 'bus, in which was an old lady, who asked politely, "Does this 'bus go right into Victoria Station, please?"

"Can't yer see? Where's yer eyes? There's the board. Victoria!"

"Yes, I can see that, but having luggage I want to know if it goes into the station."

"Yer luggage. Yer makes me sick – travel with half yer blessed homes on our 'buses, yer do!"

Men have been heard to say women are cats to each other. They are right.

MARY GREEN.

31, Birchwood-road, Tooting Bec Common, S.W.17.

¹ V.A.D.s: women working for the Voluntary Aid Detachment during World War One.

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