

Englisch Sek II

Kompetenztraining Oberstufe

Reading fiction

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HELBLING

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Einleitung.....	5
Tipps und Hinweise: Developing reading and writing skills	9
Lesetexte und Aufgaben.....	14
1 Making a difference – individuals and society.....	14
1.1 ○ <i>A Week in December</i> (2009) by Sebastian Faulks	14
1.2 △ <i>Gray Mountain</i> (2014) by John Grisham.....	16
2 Modern Britain	18
2.1 △ <i>Autumn</i> by Ali Smith (2017).....	18
2.2 ○ <i>London Breed</i> (2001) by Benjamin Zephaniah.....	20
3 The USA – land of opportunities?	22
3.1 △ <i>Latino-Americanos: The Children of an Oscuro Pasado</i> (2018) by Xóchitl Morales	22
3.2 ○ <i>A medal for Willie</i> (1951) by William Branch.....	24
4 Migration, multiculturalism and diversity	26
4.1 ○ <i>The Namesake</i> (2003) by Jhumpa Lahiri.....	26
4.2 △ <i>Middlesex</i> (2002) by Jeffrey Eugenides	28
5 Regional and national identities in a globalized world.....	30
5.1 △ <i>Stones in His Pockets</i> (2000) by Marie Jones	30
5.2 ○ <i>Hum If You Don't Know the Words</i> (2017) by Bianca Marais	32
6 Varieties of English.....	35
6.1 △ <i>White Teeth</i> (2000) by Zadie Smith	35
6.2 ○ <i>Connecting Cultures</i> (2012) by Liz Lochhead.....	37
7 International relations and political challenges	39
7.1 △ <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> (2007) by Khaled Hosseini	39
7.2 ○ <i>Things We Carry on the Sea</i> (2018) by Wang Ping	42
8 Globalization and its effects.....	44
8.1 ○ <i>Capital</i> (2012) by John Lanchester.....	44
8.2 △ <i>Americanah</i> (2013) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	46
9 Ecological changes and challenges.....	48
9.1 ○ <i>When the Killing's Done</i> (2011) by T.C. Boyle	48
9.2 △ <i>Emancipation Proclamation</i> (1991) by William Heyen.....	50
10 Faith, religion and belief today	41
10.1 △ <i>Life of Pi</i> (2001) by Yann Martell.....	51
10.2 ○ <i>People Who Knock on the Door</i> (1983) by Patricia Highsmith	54
11 Art and literature	56
11.1 ○ <i>The Black Cat</i> (1845) by Edgar Allen Poe	56
11.2 △ <i>Shylock</i> (2010) by Arnold Wesker.....	58
12 The media and their input.....	60
12.1 △ <i>The Circle</i> (2013) by Dave Eggers	60
12.2 ○ <i>Licensed to kill time</i> (2014) by Kim Z. Dale	62
13 Science, technology and visions of the future	63
13.1 ○ <i>The Children of Men</i> (1992) by P.D. James.....	63
13.2 △ <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (2010) by Kazuo Ishiguro	65
Erwartungshorizonte.....	67
Zugang zum Online-Material	128

○ = grundlegendes Niveau

△ = erhöhtes Niveau

Developing reading and writing skills

I Reading and understanding a text

Before reading

Make sure that you **read the introduction to the text** carefully as the text will help you to understand the context of the given extract and might provide additional background information. This will make it easier for you to understand what the text is about.

Reading and reading strategies:

- First read the text once to get a general idea of what it is about. (*skimming/reading for gist*)
- Have a closer look at the annotations provided which will help you to understand the text.
- Read the tasks carefully. If you have problems understanding them, the tasks might give you additional hints as to what the text is about.
- Read the text a second time and mark or highlight information which is relevant for the first and second tasks, which are usually a summary of certain aspects of the text and an analysis. It might be helpful to choose different colours for different aspects. For example, different colours for words and phrases that describe different characters. (*scanning the text for specific information*)
- If you have problems understanding words or phrases, look them up in your dictionary. In particular, your monolingual English dictionary will be very useful to check the meaning of words or phrases.
- Remember that you can often guess the meaning of words from the contexts in which they are used.
- It might be useful to think of the W questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why?), when you read through the text again. Mark passages which give you information on these aspects. (*reading for detail*)
- Before you start developing your comment, identify relevant passages and read them thoroughly. (*intensive reading/reading for detailed information*)
- Make sure that you focus on the form of the text, for example: choice of words, narrative techniques, stylistic devices, structural devices and how these are used to achieve a certain effect and to convey meaning.
- Read between the lines beyond the surface of the given text to reflect on context, the messages that are conveyed, and what is being expressed and any use of irony. (*critical reading*). This type of reading is especially useful before working on a comment.
- Make sure you have definitely understood the given text and the tasks.

Developing reading and writing skills

II Writing a text

Before writing:

- Check how much time you have remaining to do the different tasks, decide how long you are going to spend on each of them and how much time you should allow for revision and corrections at the end. Stick to your own schedule.
- Write a short draft or a list of key words, structured with bullet points, for the different tasks. This is important to avoid redundancies and to make sure that you do not forget about important or interesting aspects while writing a text.

While writing:

- Take your draft and/or your key words and start with a summary of the text by summing up aspects of the text as the first task tells you to do.
- Tick off aspects you have already dealt with; if you think of new aspects while writing, add them to your list.

Remember what you have learned about

how to start writing:

- introduction of the text (title, author, year of publication, type of text...), introduction of the topic
- what tense you have to use (usually simple present to write about a fictional text)

how to write a summary or summarize the most important aspects as described in the first task:

- focus on the relevant aspects, do not include details that are irrelevant or superfluous with regard to the task
- sum up the information in your own words
- avoid quotations
- keep aspects that are relevant for the analysis and/or comment for tasks 2 and 3
- use formal language
- do not give your personal opinion

how to

- refer back to the task
- make sure that you refer to each of the aspects mentioned in the task; if you have a choice which of the aspects you may include, refer to the ones you have decided to write about
- stick to a logical structure
- ensure that you present your ideas and your train of thought clearly and convincingly, so that the reader of your text knows exactly what you mean

Developing reading and writing skills

- give examples from the text to support your arguments
- identify, for example, rhetorical devices, choice of words, narrative perspective and always explain what their function and/or effect is
- use formal language
- avoid the use of contractions such as “don’t”, “can’t”, etc.
- do not give your personal opinion
- make sure that you finish your analysis with a conclusion or by summarising your most important aspects

how to write a comment:

- start your comment with a reference to the given task
- structure your comment by writing an introduction, a main part and a conclusion
- refer to arguments and/or aspects given in the text
- clearly state your own opinion
- weigh up arguments (pro and counter-arguments, if possible)
- include background knowledge if you are allowed to do so
- do not forget to write a conclusion to finish your comment

how to do creative writing tasks:

- make sure that you have exactly understood what the task asks you to do (write a conversation/a diary entry/a continuation of a story...)
- mention the relevant aspects (Who is talking to whom? What is the situation like? What conflict has to be discussed?)
- present the characters and what they say in a way that is compatible with the way they behave and/or talk in the given text
- decide on the narrative perspective you want or have to use
- use a register and tone that is appropriate (formal/informal/colloquial/serious/cheerful...)

Do not forget:

- to structure your paragraphs, each of them consisting of several sentences that focus on one major aspect
- to make use of connectives to link your ideas.
- to check what you have written.
- to remember what typical mistakes you often make and correct them if necessary.
- avoid slang and in particular taboo words in a summary, analysis or comment. (There might be exceptions in creative writing tasks.)

III Language support

Introducing a text

The poem/extract from the novel/drama ... "title" by (name of author, dramatist or poet) published in (year)

The text/poem deals with/is about/depicts/presents ...

Referring to the different parts or structure of a text

The text consists of/comprises (number) parts/sections ...

The poem consists of/comprises (number) stanzas/lines/verses

In the first/second ... section/of the text ...

Describing what the narrator/speaker talks about (and how)

The narrator/speaker describes/depicts/presents/expresses/focuses on/criticizes/emphasizes ...

The narrator/speaker invites/addresses the reader/listener/audience by using ...

Describing the effects of stylistic devices/narrative techniques

... emphasize/point out/illustrate/allude to/...

The use of ... emphasizes/suggests/...

The reader/listener/audience feels sympathy for/sympathizes with/identifies with/gains insights into ...

The text/narrator attracts/arouses/maintains the reader's interest by ...

Developing reading and writing skills

Finishing your text

In conclusion, ... / ...

As a result,

All in all,

Adding aspects

Furthermore,/Moreover,/In addition to that,/ Additionally,/Besides,

Ordering

First/Second/Firstly/Secondly/Finally

Expressing a comparison, weighing up aspects

On the one hand/on the other hand

In contrast to

However,/Nevertheless

Although/Even though

Whereas/While

Despite/In spite of

Drawing conclusions

Thus,

Therefore,

As a result,

Hence, it can be said/concluded that

1.1 Making a difference – individuals and society

A Week in December (2009) by Sebastian Faulks

Tasks:

- 1 Sum up the information given on Vanessa Veals and her family.
- 2 Analyze Vanessa's attitude towards her own life as well as her relationship with her husband and her children and explain what your findings reveal about her character. You should take into account the position of the narrator, the narrative techniques as well as the stylistic devices that are used and their effects on the reader.
- 3 Choose **one** of the following tasks:
 - a) Comment on whether Vanessa Veals leads a desirable life. Give examples from the text to support your arguments. Also take into account your ideas about what constitutes a desirable life in modern society.
 - or**
 - b) Imagine Bella telling one of her friends about her mother and their relationship. Write their dialogue.

A Week in December (2009) by Sebastian Faulks

The novel accompanies seven people in London through one week in December 2007. One of them is the hedge fund manager John Veals who is trying to seal the biggest deal of his career. He is married to Vanessa and they have two children.

- 1 As a start of the evening, Vanessa Veals had put cubes of ice into a Victorian rummer, poured
- 2 in vodka till it almost reached the brim, added some fresh mint, a slice of lime and a dribble of
- 3 grenadine cordial. It was her second open drink since six, and after it she would stick to what
- 4 she called 'just wine'. She took it into the living room, kicked off her shoes and sat on the sofa,
- 5 where she fired up the television.
- 6 She lit a cigarette, an American classic with a toasted wheat aroma, and pushed her hand back
- 7 through her hair, which had been professionally washed and dried that afternoon on Holland Park
- 8 Avenue. Before abandoning herself to the evening, she ran a check over everyone and every-
- 9 thing for which she felt responsible.
- 10 Max, the West Highland White Terrier, had his walk and a solid two hours' barking at the end of
- 11 the garden under the neighbours' window. Bella, her fourteen-year-old daughter, was having a
- 12 sleepover at Chloe's. Chloe's house. She had a sleepover most nights, Vanessa noticed, but it
- 13 was probably good for her social skills. Bella's school reports were not encouraging, but then she
- 14 was not a particularly clever girl. She was a mystery to Vanessa. She didn't seem to be interest-
- 15 ed in fashion, football. Perhaps that was because she was plump, but Vanessa didn't think so.
- 16 She didn't seem to care about discos or parties or boys or shoes or money or music or whatever
- 17 they were. She should be interested in. God knows what they did at these 'sleepovers', apart from
- 18 eat fatter than food and wear fleecy pyjamas in their sleeping bags. Bella seemed to have come
- 19 from a different decade. Vanessa had once found her reading about ponies, for heaven's sake.
- 20 The father. Well, he was up in his room and she no longer dared go up there. He could make
- 21 John's silence look like a gross breach of his privacy. [...] He looked very pale, it was true,
- 22 and as thin as Bella was plump, but what was his mother meant to do: make him go to the
- 23 gym, eat potatoes? It was best to leave him to find his own way forwards in life, up there, on
- 24 his own. It really was a nice room in any event; the best room in the house, John always said.
- 25 And John? Well, guess what, John was working late. And when he came home he'd work even
- 26 later. [...]
- 27 Vanessa lit another cigarette and sighed. She'd married John because he was rich and because
- 28 she felt he'd make few demands on her. [...]

1.1 Making a difference – individuals and society

A Week in December (2009) by Sebastian Faulks

29 What Vanessa hadn't foreseen was either the narrowness of her husband's life or the peripheral
 30 sliver of it that would be set aside to her. He treated her politely and remembered her birthday
 31 and their wedding anniversary with small jeweller's boxes and silent dinners *à deux* in places
 32 of terrible expense from which she could barely wait to get home. She had believed that she'd
 33 like being left to herself, being independent, but had discovered that it meant being socially lonely.
 34 Although she did read books and did have friends, her inner resources weren't great enough to
 35 withstand the relentless, remorseless pounding of solitude. It was like the sea: it never stopped.
 36 John Veals had no interests outside the acquisition of money. He didn't read or tennis. He
 37 didn't support a football team. He threw all colour magazines in the bin. He went to the theatre
 38 or the opera once a year if there was a certain and measurable financial advantage in doing so.
 39 He never went to the cinema and he thought television was a waste of time. A personal shopper
 40 bought his clothes. His idea of dinner was sausages and peas, though he was prepared
 41 to sit it out over foie gras and Japanese beef if there was a purpose to the tedium. He disliked
 42 alcohol, though kept the cellar well stocked for Vanessa. He had an arrangement with a wine
 43 merchant in St James's to make a fortnightly delivery to his house [...].
 44 The only activity, the only aspect of human life, that interested John Veals was money. The odd
 45 thing was, Vanessa thought, as she lit another cigarette, that he'd made enough to last a thou-
 46 sand lifetimes – or, with his modest taste in sausages, with his hobbies, booze or entertainment,
 47 perhaps two thousand lifetimes, without ever running out of cash again.

(759 words)

Annotations:

- l. 1: rummer = a (big) drinking glass
- l. 3: grenadine cordial = sweet syrup that is mixed with alcohol, often in cocktails
- l. 21: enquiry = question about sth
- l. 41: foie gras (French for "fat liver") = an expensive food product made of specially fattened liver of either duck or goose
- l. 43: fortnightly = every two weeks

3.1 USA – land of opportunities?

Latino-Americanos: The Children of an Oscuro Pasado (2016) by Xóchitl Morales

△ Tasks:

- 1 Sum up what the speaker says about the different stages of her life.
- 2 Analyze the language (e.g. varieties of language, stylistic devices, choice of words) the speaker uses to express her feelings and her identity.
- 3 A recurring topic of Donald Trump – beginning with his presidential announcement speech on 16 June 2015, and continuing throughout his presidency – is the influx of Mexicans moving to and living in the USA. In response to statements like: “They’re not one of their best,” 16-year-old Xóchitl Morales wrote the following poem. Discuss to what extent Morales managed to put her message about Latinos across and to contradict Trump’s negative attitude.

Latino-Americanos: The Children of an Oscuro Pasado (2016) by Xóchitl Morales

Xóchitl Morales, a young American woman of Mexican heritage, started young: at her high school she already pursued the role of president of the Mexican-American Club. She practises and teaches mariachi, a traditional type of Mexican folk music, to young students. As a member of the slam poetry group Get Lit – Words Ignite, which brings classroom poetry to the streets and street poetry into the classrooms, she has performed in front of big audiences. Her slam poetry – and in particular the following poem and its video-clip – has gone viral on social media and has become well known in a short amount of time.

- 1 Baila conmigo.
- 2 Hips made from the rhythm of merengó, cumbias,
- 3 Samba
- 4 swagger
- 5 and a pinch of azúcar mixed into my blood.
- 6 My first language was Spanish.
- 7 I learned from sweet stories told to me at bedtime.
- 8 My tongue
- 9 a formation of the stardust of my heritage,
- 10 an intertwined galaxy of mixed roots, the pledge of allegiance.
- 11 It was something I would never forgive
- 12 after I was told it was wrong
- 13 taught a new way to introduce myself
- 14 “mi nombre es” turned to “my name is”
- 15 after the girl in my class
- 16 complained that she couldn’t understand me.
- 17 So I wanted to reject the language of my family and to be proud to call myself
- 18 American
- 19 over
- 20 Mexican.
- 21 My relative class seems so goddamn foreign
- 22 And I can’t seem to remember what comes after Domingo on my pop quiz.
- 23 I would love to hate my name, much preferring something like Tiffany,
- 24 Leaving behind my silent TL and X that sounds like an S because they said it was strange.
- 25 And when I visit my grandmother all I could do is nod or shake my head,
- 26 Because her native language sounds like a tongue twister I can’t seem to master.

3.1 USA – land of opportunities?

Latino-Americanos: The Children of an Oscuro Pasado (2016) by Xóchitl Morales

27 So she reminds me that the colors in my soul and the rhythm in my bones are blessings
 28 and that I come from the Incas, the Mayas, los Aztecas, los Mexicas
 29 who built an empire nunca imaginado.
 30 That we are a children of an oscuro pasado,
 31 A mixture of pain, sadness and oppression,
 32 But we have inherited the strength.
 33 We have inherited the passion.
 34 She reminds me that my name holds the power of the most legendary princesses
 35 who ruled with the grace of the most beautiful flower.
 36 So this is for the women that still name their children in Nahuatl
 37 the families that still pass on recipes of arroz con pollo,
 38 and the men that still wake up on Sunday mornings to listen to Vicente Fernández with their
 39 fathers.
 40 Because we are the sons and the daughters,
 41 And we hold the stories,
 42 The journeys
 43 of the remembered,
 44 Those who walked through deserts, waded through rivers,
 45 We wear their legacies on our shoulders with pride,
 46 And we do not lose ourselves to broken perceptions,
 47 But rise above with the help of our powerful senses,
 48 Our melodies,
 49 our galaxies,
 50 Porque somos Latino-Americanos
 51 And we will never be forgotten.

Annotations:

title: oscuro pasado (Spanish) = a dark past

l. 1: Baila conmigo (Spanish) = Dance with me

l. 2/3: merengés, cumbia, samba = Latin American dances

l. 5: azúcar (Spanish) = sugar

l. 22: domingo (Spanish) = Sunday

l. 29: nunca imaginado (Spanish) = unimaginable

l. 34: With the remark “my name holds the power of the most legendary Aztec princesses”, poet Xóchitl Morales refers to the fact that her first name can be traced back to an ancient Aztec goddess called Xochipilli. The goddess’ name consists of two words of the Aztec language: xōchitl (“flower”) and pilli (“child”), thus meaning “flower child”. Xochipilli was, among other things, considered the patron of literature and art.

l. 36: Nahuatl [ˈnaːhuatl] = Aztec language that used to be spoken by the Aztecs and is now spoken in particular in rural areas throughout central Mexico

l. 37: arroz con pollo (Spanish) = rice with chicken = a traditional dish of Spain and Latin America, closely related to paella

l. 38: Vicente Fernández = singer/songwriter/actor, who started his career as a street musician and has since become a cultural icon in Latin America

l. 46: perception = the image you have of how you see or understand sth.

l. 50: porque somos Latino-Americanos (Spanish) = because we are Latin-Americans

11.1 Art and literature

The Black Cat (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe

○ Tasks:

- 1 Outline what the narrator says about his intentions and his attitude towards the events he narrates.
- 2 Analyze the position of the narrator and what he reveals about his state of mind. Refer to the language he uses (choice of words and stylistic devices) and describe the effects on the reader.
- 3 Choose **one** of the following tasks:
 - a) Discuss to what extent the beginning of this short story is comparable to other short stories you have dealt with in class. Give reasons.
 - or
 - b) Write a draft in which you outline how you expect the story to go on.

The Black Cat (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe

The Black Cat is a short story by American writer, editor, translator and literary critic Edgar Allan Poe, first published in an edition of *The Saturday Evening Post* (1843). Even though Poe was focusing on poetry at the beginning of his short career, he was best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre. Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story and is considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre.

- 1 FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I ever heard of, I neither expect nor
- 2 solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own
- 3 evidence. Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I
- 4 would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly,
- 5 and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events
- 6 have terrified – have tortured – have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To
- 7 me, they have presented little interest – to many they will seem less terrible than baroques.
- 8 Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the com-
- 9 mon-place – some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which
- 10 will perceive, in the circumstances, nothing more than an ordinary succession of
- 11 very natural causes and effects.
- 12 From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of
- 13 heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond
- 14 of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most
- 15 of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of
- 16 character grew with my age, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources
- 17 of pleasure. Those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need
- 18 hardly be troubled with the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable.
- 19 There is something so unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the
- 20 heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of
- 21 man.
- 22 I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own.
- 23 Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most
- 24 agreeable kind. We had birds, gold-fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat.
- 25 This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an aston-
- 26 ishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with
- 27 superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats
- 28 as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever serious upon this point – and I mention the matter
- 29 at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

11.1 Art and literature

The Black Cat (1845) by Edgar Allan Poe

30 Pluto – this was the cat's name – was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he
 31 attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him
 32 from following me through the streets.

33 Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my original temperament
 34 and character – through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance – (I do not wish to confess
 35 it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more morose, more irritable,
 36 more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use obscene language to my
 37 wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My cats, of course, made to feel
 38 the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still
 39 retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, and made no scruple of maltreating
 40 the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through infatuation, they came in
 41 my way. But my disease grew upon me – for what disease? Alcohol! – and at length even
 42 Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish – even Pluto began to
 43 experience the effects of my ill temper.

44 One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my rambles about town, I fancied that
 45 the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight
 46 wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of the moment instantly possessed me. I knew myself
 47 no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take flight from my body, and a more than
 48 fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-
 49 pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its
 50 eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

51 When reason returned with the morning – when I awoke, after the excesses of the night's debauch –
 52 I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty;
 53 but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again
 54 plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine the memory of the deed.

(867 words)

Annotations:

- l. 4: unburthen = unburden
- l. 7: baroques (*here*): having the qualities of extravagance, complexity
- l. 13: jest = joke
- l. 17: sagacious = showing understanding and capability to make good judgments
- l. 20: paltry = of very little or no importance
- l. 20: gossamer = something light, delicate and insubstantial (e.g. a cobweb)
- l. 26: tintured = affected, tinged or inspired with an idea
- l. 30 Pluto = the Roman god of the underworld
- l. 34 fiend = the devil, any evil spirit
- l. 34: intemperance = a habit or behaviour that is too extreme and uncontrolled, e.g. because of excessive consumption of alcohol
- l. 48: every fibre of my frame ≈ every inch of my body
- l. 53: equivocal = that has two or more meanings; ambiguous

1 Making a difference – individuals and society

○ *A Week in December* (2009) by Sebastian Faulks

Anforderungsniveau: grundlegendes Niveau

Material: Auszug aus einem Roman, 759 Wörter

Quelle: Faulks, Sebastian (2010). *A Week in December*. London: Vintage, S. 274ff.

Tasks:

- 1 Sum up the information given on Vanessa Veals and her family.
- 2 Analyze Vanessa's attitude towards her own life as well as her relationships with her husband and her children and explain what your findings reveal about her character. In doing so, take into account the position of the narrator, the narrative techniques as well as the stylistic devices that are used and their effects on the reader.
- 3 Choose **one** of the following tasks:
 - a) Comment on whether Vanessa Veals leads a desirable life. Give examples from the text to support your arguments. Also take into account the idea of what constitutes a desirable life in modern society.
 - or**
 - b) Imagine Bella telling one of her friends about her mother and their relationship. Write their dialogue.

Erfüllung Aufgabe 1)

Folgende Informationen über Vanessa Veals und ihre Familie werden z. B. zusammengefasst:

- Vanessa is married to a very rich, handsome woman's husband who is only interested in money. Even though her husband treats her kindly and provides her with large amounts of money she can spend on, for example, clothes and going to the gym, she still feels very lonely. Not even her interest in reading books, or the many friends she has, help her to overcome this feeling. She spends the evening drinking and thinking about her life, in particular her loneliness.
- Her daughter is a mystery to her. She has sleepovers with her girlfriends. Vanessa does not dare to disturb her son who spends every evening in his very nice room. Her husband is working late, as usual.

Erfüllung Aufgabe 2)

Vanessa Veals' Haltung gegenüber ihrem eigenem Leben, ihr Verhältnis zu ihrem Mann und ihren Kindern wird in der Erzählung z. B. folgender Aspekte (vgl. Aufgabenstellung) analysiert und erläutert.

- The events are told by a third-person narrator. The perspective is called selective omniscience because the narrator only has access to Vanessa's thoughts and feelings. In the last part of the text John is seen but seen through his wife's eyes.
- A vivid picture of Vanessa pouring herself a drink is given; scenic presentation is used. The reader gets the impression that she is a heavy drinker, even though she carefully mixes her drinks and knows exactly what kind of alcohol (and how much) she is going to drink. This shows that she has not yet lost her self-control.
- The reference to the special brand of cigarettes she is smoking and to her "professionally washed and dried" (l. 7) hair emphasizes that she is conscious of her outward appearance and, furthermore, tries everything money can buy to relax herself and to enjoy her free time.

- She is also concerned about checking “everyone and everything” (ll. 8/9) she feels responsible for, which also shows that, despite her heavy drinking, she has not lost her sense of responsibility.
- To express Vanessa’s thoughts about Bella, a technique is used that is similar to an interior monologue, but the narrator’s voice is obvious, so that her thoughts are reported in a detached way. This technique is referred to as free indirect discourse (or free indirect speech). However, when her thoughts are described with the words “God knows what they did at these parties” (l. 17) and “for heaven’s sake” (l. 19), this technique is very close to interior monologue, which results in the reader gaining an insight into Vanessa’s emotional state of mind, especially into her frustration over her daughter.
- Vanessa takes it for granted that her “plump” (l. 15) daughter and her friends are eating “junk food” (l. 18). She also reflects on the fact that Bella is neither clever nor a good girl. These two aspects show that her daughter is a disappointment to her. In her thoughts Vanessa mentions that Bella is a mystery to her as she is not interested in “discos or parties or boys or money or music or whatever they were meant to be interested in” (ll. 16/17). Thus, it becomes clear that Vanessa has very precise ideas about the interests a young girl should have; she wants her to show an interest in what most girls of her age are interested in and is convinced that this is what all teenagers are “meant” (l. 17) to do. She wants her daughter to go with the mainstream and shows no interest in finding out about the reasons for her daughter’s behaviour.
- Furthermore, Vanessa has accepted the fact that Bella is out all night with her friend – at least this is what Bella tells her mother – while Vanessa does not even remember the friend’s name properly. She seems to blame her daughter alone for the fact that their relationship is not close at all.
- The relationship with her son Finbar is not close either. The impression is conveyed that Vanessa is even afraid of him to a certain degree and thus avoids going into his room. The question she asks herself: “... what was his mother meant to make him go to the gym, eat more potatoes?” (ll. 22/23) is a rhetorical question; she herself has made it clear in her mind that she cannot do anything about this disturbed relationship, either. With this thought she accuses her conscience.
- When her thoughts wander to her husband, she secretly decides that she married him “because he was rich and because she felt he would make few demands on her” (ll. 27/28). This shows that she was calculating and planned from the beginning to marry for her husband’s wealth. However, she realizes that her plans have not worked out as well as expected, due to “the narrowness of her husband’s life or the peripheral sliver of what would be set aside to her” (ll. 29/30). Again, she blames others for her feeling of discontent and avoids all self-critique. She concedes that her husband treats her politely and gives her precious gifts on birthdays or anniversaries and takes her out to expensive dinners, but she does not appreciate these gifts at all. This makes her appear ungrateful, especially when considering the fact that she married him because of his wealth.
- The description of her unhappiness is juxtaposed with the plan she had concerning her own life, which was “being left alone and being independent” (l. 33). Furthermore, it is mentioned that the books she reads and the movies she has cannot make up for the solitude she feels. A simile is used when the narrator informs the reader about her thought that “It [her solitude] was like the sea; it never stopped” (ll. 35), the adjective “relentless, remorseless” (ll. 35) used when describing her feeling of solitude emphasizes her bitterness about it.
- The descriptions are a description of John Veals and his interests and dislikes. Even though it is not mentioned directly, it becomes clear that he is described from his wife’s point of view. Mainly facts are mentioned, so the reader is likely to believe that this portrayal of him is true; however, some information might be withheld from his wife who spends most of her time alone at home. According to the information given, John is merely interested in making money even though he already has accumulated a wealth that he could never spend in his lifetime. The hyperbole that it would perhaps take him “two thousand lifetimes” (l. 47) to spend all his money emphasizes how rich he is on the one hand and how frustrated his wife is on the other hand.

- In conclusion, a detailed picture of a very wealthy, modern family is given, described from the wife's point of view. On the one hand, the wife had always wanted to be rich and mix with wealthy people and thus married a very successful business man to be able to afford a luxurious lifestyle, which she has actually achieved and which she thinks her daughter should also be able to afford. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the family members do not at all live together happily, but are rather separated from each other: the father spends most of his time at work and even continues working when he arrives home, the son does not want to be disturbed in his room, the daughter seems to escape to her friend. Vanessa reflects on the fact that she is very lonely, but does not feel responsible for what has gone wrong and either puts the blame on other family members or simply thinks that nothing can be done about the whole situation. Rather than reaching out to her children and trying to connect with them, she shows a lack of empathy. She lets her children do their own thing and assumes there is nothing she can do to improve her relationship with them. The impact on the reader is that they get an insight into an utterly lonely woman and a dysfunctional family, so that the question is raised whether wealth and a modern lifestyle might be responsible for this unhappiness and frustration.

Erfüllung Aufgabe 3a)

Die Schülerinnen und Schüler sollten abwägen: Einerseits ist es angenehm, sehr reich zu sein. Positiv ist grundsätzlich auch, dass Vanessa ihr (wahrscheinliches) Ziel mit der Heirat umgesetzt hat. Im Prinzip hat sie das, was sie sich gewünscht hat. Sie muss feststellen, dass sie dennoch unglücklich und sehr einsam ist, was selbstverständlich nicht erstrebenswert ist. Die Frage sollte diskutiert werden, inwieweit sie selbst dafür verantwortlich ist oder vielleicht allgemein die Werte der heutigen Zeit fragwürdig sind: so viel zu arbeiten, so viel Geld wie möglich anzusammeln, insbesondere als Mittel für eine bestimmte Lebensform führen, zu der unbedingt viel Geld als Grundlage (fürs Ausgehen) notwendig ist, oberflächliche Vergnügen wie Shoppen als Lebensinhalt zu sehen, was (zwangsläufig) zu Frustrationen, distanzierten, gestörten Beziehungen und schließlich zu Einsamkeit führt.

Individuelle Begründung.

Erfüllung Aufgabe 3b)

Es ist zu erwarten, dass Bella sich negativ über ihre Mutter und deren Vorstellungen von einem angenehmen, erstrebenswertem Leben äußert; dass sie sehr genau weiß, wie kritisch ihre Mutter ihr gegenüber eingestellt ist und dass sie sich kritisiert und missachtet fühlt; wahrscheinlich hat sie auch mitbekommen, dass ihre Mutter sehr viel Alkohol konsumiert, um ihre Einsamkeit zu kompensieren. Wahrscheinlich werden die Freunde versuchen, sie zu trösten; vermutlich wird sie ihr beipflichten.