



A modern constitution

Tony Blair became the leader of the British Labour Party in 1994 and set about speeding up the modernisation of the party. The following extract is taken from his first speech as leader to the party conference.



Exam task

- a Comment on the techniques and the language the speaker uses.
- b You have been asked to prepare a speech about an issue where improvement can come about only through change. It can be a global, a national or a local issue. Write the opening of your speech (around 120 words), using some of the techniques you have commented on in your answer to a.

A belief in society. Working together. Solidarity. Cooperation. Partnership. These are our words.

We are the party of the individual because we are the party of community.

Our task is to apply our values to the modern world. It is time to break out of the past and break through with a clear and radical and modern vision for Britain.

Today's politics is about the search for security in a changing world. We must build the strong and active society that can provide it.

That is our project for Britain.

Market forces cannot educate us or equip us for this world of rapid technological and economic change.

We must do it together.

We cannot buy our way to a safe society. We must work for it together.

We cannot purchase an option on whether we grow old. We must plan for it together.

We cannot protect the ordinary against the abuse of power by leaving them to it, we must protect each other.

That is our insight.

The people of this country are not looking to us for a revolution. They want us to make a start.

I want you with me in that task. I want you with me. Head and heart.

Because this can only be done together.

Leaders lead, but in the end people govern ...

We are not going to win despite our beliefs. We will only win because of them ...

We should win because of what we believe.

The task of renewing our nation is not one for the faint hearted, or the world weary, or the cynical. It is not a task for those afraid of hard choices, for those with complacent views, or those seeking a comfortable life ...

We have changed. We were right to change. Parties that do not change die, and this party is a living movement not an historical monument. If the world changes, and we don't, then we become of no use to the world. Our principles cease being principles.

Change is an important part of gaining the nation's trust ...

Are we not right to reach out and touch the people in this way, to show them that politics is not some game ... played out over screeds of paper in wintry meeting rooms, but a real and meaningful part of their lives?

Let us say what we mean and mean what we say.

Not just what we are against. But what we are for. No more ditching. No more dumping. Stop saying what we don't mean. And start saying what we do mean, what we stand by, what we stand for ...

We are proud of our beliefs. So let's state them. And in terms that people will identify with in every workplace, every home, every family, every community in our country. And let this party's determination to change be the symbol of the trust they can place in us to change the country.

That is our hope. Not just to promise change – but to achieve it.

Tony Blair *The Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches*

3 Ann and Ben

The following passage is taken from a novel in which the main character, Alice, is critically ill after a suicide attempt. Her parents, Ann and Ben, make the journey to her bedside as quickly as possible.

Exam task

- a In the style of the original passage, continue the story (around 120 words).
b Write a commentary comparing your style and language with the original.

Ann and Ben take a taxi from the station. It's an uneven journey, the taxi travelling swiftly at first, tarmac rumbling beneath them; then they hit a traffic jam where they sit for what feels like ages, the engine churning over, the back of the cab filling with sour fumes, the red meter flicking. Ann sits bolt upright, the tendons in her neck visible beneath her skin, staring out of the windscreen ... Ben shifts in the leather seat. His clothes have wrinkled under him during the train journey. He hardly ever comes to London and always forgets how brash he finds it. He cranes his neck out of the window to see the obstruction, and the whitish, level light of the street makes his eyes smart. The sun ... seems harshly bright, picking out people's outlines, making the colours in their clothes shout. He feels the heavy air around his head churn and a cyclist whizzes past, his face obscured by a pollution mask and mirrored visor, the tread of his wheels crunching as he weaves in and out of the stationary cars. Ben brings his head back into the cab and winds up the window. He will never understand why Alice left Scotland to come here.

They could have taken the tube. Maybe it would have been quicker. But the tube to both him and Ann is a fearsome thing: a horrible machine into which you get sucked, dragged down by crowds and escalators, spat out onto blackened platforms where trains arrive and leave with alarming speed, and all you have to find your way is a map of tangled, coloured wires and strange-sounding names. In his breast pocket is the address of the hospital and the name of the doctor. They dictated it to him down the phone that morning. He puts his hand to the pocket, listening out for the crack of the paper to reassure himself, and as he does so, the taxi eases its way into a moving lane of traffic.

They begin speeding through streets, almost without stopping. Ben gets the sensation they are heading uphill. Fragments of shouts, conversations, music, car horns are snatched from the air and whirled into the cab ...

The hospital is large and grey, crouched on a hill. Even before they get out of the taxi, when Ben is still counting change into the man's hand, he can hear the muted roar of its workings – air-conditioning, electrical generators, incinerators. Going up the steps, they hold hands like they did when they were first engaged. Ben is holding a roll of newspaper unnaturally high against his chest. In it, the heads of some late-flowering yellow roses nod to the rhythm of his walk.

Maggie O'Farrell *After You'd Gone*