

Psychology Summer Tasks



Welcome to psychology!

Below are four tasks you need to complete before you first lesson. Email hmathews@bwsgirls.org if you need any help. Please complete the tasks below. The whole booklet should take about 2-3 hours total. The optional reading/ watching is optional. Be assured you are not expected to know any Psychology before starting the course. The aim of this work is simply to get you thinking like a psychologist.

Psychological approaches

Did you know there are different types of psychologist? Different psychologists try to understand human behaviour from different angles.

Read the case study below and answer the questions in task one.

Case study "K"

K has been arrested for starting a fight with a stranger in pub. He has got into trouble with the police for fighting strangers before. K is an 18 year old male. His friends think he is really cool for getting into these fights and he has a lot respect among his peers.

When asked about why he gets into these fights he says it is because he can tell when people want to cause him harm just from the way they look at him so he gets the first punch in first. He is always drunk when he gets in these fights.

K comes from a violent family where is Dad and older brother also often get into fights with others and with family members in the home. K's Dad is often aggressive and violent to K. K insists that he loves his father and is not upset with this treatment: he either does not acknowledge it happens or downplays it. His hospital records show that he suffered unexplained head injuries when he was as a child.

K's mother abandoned him when he and his brother was two years old. She occasionally unexpectedly comes round to see him every couple of years and sends him a birthday card every year. He does not know where she lives or how to contact her.

He has, so far, never faced a serious punishment for these fights.

Task one Read about at least three psychology approaches below. For each one a) Summarise the main idea in your own words b) Explain how that approach might explain K's behaviour c) Identify one strength or weakness of that explanation.

- Cognitive
- Behaviourist
- Social influence Biological
- Psychodynamic

Use the textbook or this resource to help

<https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/reference/knowledge-organisers-approaches> (refer only to the key assumptions)



Psychological theories

During your A Level in psychology you are doing to learn what psychologists believes about human behaviour. For example:

- That our everyday decisions are the result of pressure to conform to others
- That eyewitnesses to crime have inaccurate memories
- That being deprived of parents or caregivers when a child is young affects development

Psychological research

These psychologists claim that these conclusions are not based on their personal experience or subjective opinion. It (usually) comes from what we call empirical evidence, which is what research studies are all about. They conduct research studies to test their theories.

However there are flaws to every piece of research. Unlike in Biology and Chemistry we cannot control every part of our experiments because we are dealing with humans which makes it hard to be robustly scientific. So an important part of your A Level in psychology will be understanding the research on which psychological ideas are based upon and evaluating it to see it is strong enough to draw the conclusions while recognising that no research will ever be strong enough to “prove” anything. We instead use words like “suggest” or “support”.

There are different types of research that we will have a go at class. Please have a go at the following two pieces of research before our first lesson together.

Task two: Take part in self report research

The first type of research method is self report. This is where research participants answer questions either in a questionnaire or an interview.

Complete this personality questionnaire <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/IPIP-BFFM/>

Then answer the following questions

- a) Did you answer honestly?
- b) Did any questions feel vague?
- c) Would your answers change depending on mood?
- d) What problems might psychologist face when using self report methods?
-) ologists face when using self-report methods?



Task three: Conduct an observation

Observe how often people check their phones in a 10-minute period in a café/public place.

- a) Create a tally chart of the different types of phone use you might expect to see
- b) Find another person to be your co-observer. Explain to them the procedure and how to use your tally chart.
- c) Both of you go to your selected public place and watch the same people for the same period of time. Do not talk to each other during the observation. Make your notes independently.
- d) After your observation, compare your tally charts. Were they the same or different? How come?

Keep both set of results and bring to your first psychology lesson.

Debates

Psychology is comparatively quite a new discipline: about 100 years old where the other sciences are much older. This is one reason why there is quite a lot of disagreement within the subject.

Some big questions that are still up for debate in psychology today are:

- a) Are humans shaped by nature (their biology) or nurture (their environment), both or neither or an interaction of the two?
- b) What is the most useful type of evidence? For example if you wanted to show a headteacher how stressed students are would you want to present information on the amount of stress hormone in their bodies (quantitative data), or a summary of what was said in interviews with students explaining how they are feeling? (qualitative data)

Task four: Debates in psychology

As you progress for the course you will learn lots of information that could support either side of the arguments above. For now I would like to know your initial opinion.

Please answer question to a) and b) above using any arguments to back up your thoughts. You can use information you already know and/or you can look up information.

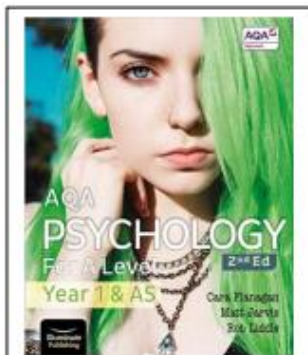
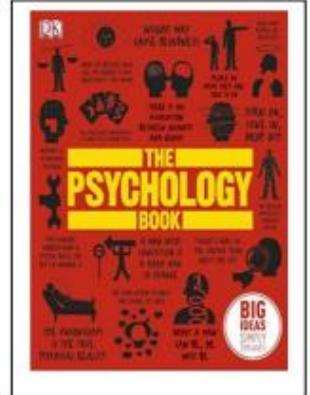
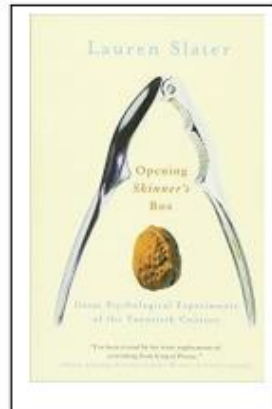
Write at least one small paragraph (about 5 lines) for each. Write more if you wish!

Psychology optional extras

Recommended introductory reading

If you want to read a really interesting book which documents of the most significant studies conducted in Psychology try **'Opening skinner's box' by Lauren Slater**. Her book takes many of the most famous studies in Psychology and investigates the authors and how the studies were done. A really engaging read.

Alternatively try **'The Psychology Book' by Richard Benson**, a stimulated guide to over 100 Ideas and studies including the collective unconscious, the "selfish" gene, false memory, psychiatric disorders, and autism



The class **textbook** we will be using is 'AQA Psychology for A Level year 1 & AS Student Book' by Cara Flanagan et al. (2020) which is published by illuminate. You might consider purchasing this and pre-reading the first topics we will be studying: Approaches and Attachment. The RRP is £26.99 but if you look around you might be able to find it cheaper!

There are different editions: any will do. Edition 3 is the latest version but any edition will be fine.

Online psychology

YouTube

- Psyboost
- Bear it in mind
- The psychology podcast
- The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos

Spotify / Apple

- The psychology of your 20s
- The Psych files
- PsychCrunch
- Speaking of Psychology

BBC sounds

- Mind changers
- Deeply human
- All in the Mind
- Made of stronger stuff

Watch List:

Netflix

There are some really great Psychology series on Netflix (1) Babies (2) The Mind, Explained (3) 100 humans, life's questions, answered, (4) Babies (5) Mindhunter

- Oliver Sacks – What hallucination reveals about our minds
- Philip Zimbardo – The psychology of evil
- Scott Fraser – why eyewitnesses get it wrong
- Andrew Solomon – The struggle of mental health,
- Elyn Saks – A tale of mental illness from the inside
- Read Montague – what we're learning from 5000 brains.
- Ben Ambridge - 10 myths about Psychology, debunked.
- Jon Ronson - Strange answers to the psychopath test
- Ben Goldacre - Battling Bad Science
- Keith Barry – Brain magic
- Carol Dweck - The power of believing that you can improve



Movie recommendations:



- Inside Out
- The Social Dilemma
- Three Identical Strangers
- The Mind Explained

We need to talk about Kevin (2011)

Based on the novel by Lionel Shriver (which you could read instead), the film focuses on the mother of Kevin who is struggling to come to terms with her son and the mass school shooting that he has committed. An interesting consideration of nature vs nurture.

Girl, Interrupted (1999)

Based on writer Susanna Kaysen's account of her 18 month stay at a mental hospital in the 1960s. This film questions what it means to be sane.

As good as it gets (1997)

Looks at what life is like when you live with OCD.

The Stanford Prison Experiment (2015)

Film that is based on Philip Zimbardo's research, which you will be studying in year 12. Twenty-four male students were selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoners and guards in a mock prison situated in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975)

A criminal pleads insanity after getting into trouble again and once in the mental institution rebels against the oppressive nurse and rallies up the scared patients. An interesting consideration of what it means to be sane vs insane and a historical insight into life in a mental institution in the 1960s.

Good Will Hunting (1997)

Will Hunting, a janitor at M.I.T., has a gift for mathematics, but needs help from a psychologist to find direction in his life. Considers the impact of attachment problems in later life.

Memento (2000)

A man with total memory loss creates a strange system to help him remember things; so he can hunt for the murderer of his wife without his short-term memory loss being an obstacle.

12 Angry Men (1957)

A jury member holds out in his attempt to prevent a miscarriage of justice by forcing his colleagues to reconsider the evidence. Demonstrates the qualities necessary for persuasion and influence which is considered within the field of Social psychology.