

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.

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

Research at least three of the following approaches in psychology and write a few sentences about the approach and then write about how Ks behaviour would be explained from this point of view

- Cognitive
- Behaviourist
- Social
- Biological
- Psychodynamic

Psychological theories

During your A Level in psychology you are going to learn what psychologists believe 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://www.humanmetrics.com/personality>
- Then type your 4 letter code (e.g. INFP) into google and read descriptions about your personality
- Write one paragraph on whether you think this accurately describes your personality and what about the questionnaire will have caused the accuracy or inaccuracies.



Task three: Conduct an observation

Some researchers believe that when we are being truthful, our eyes consistently look one way (e.g. to the left) but when we make things up they consistently look another (e.g. upwards) and another way when we are trying to remember something (e.g. downwards).

- Find two people to assist you with this task: one to observe with you and one to be the participant. Do not tell the participant the aim of the study, just tell them it is for a psychology project and will involve answer a few quick questions. Ensure they are your age or older.
- Write a list of 10 questions that won't cause offense or embarrassment.
- Explain to your co-observer that you are going to ask the participant these questions and that rather than write down the answer, ask them to write down which direction the participant look in. Remind them not to tell the participants the true aim of the study!
- Run the observation with both you and the co-observer writing separate observations of which way the person looked for each questions.
- Keep both of your 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?
- 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, or a summary of what was said in interviews with students explaining how they are feeling?

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.

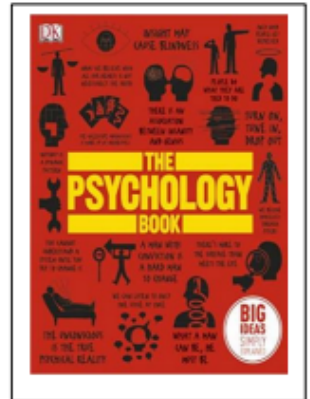
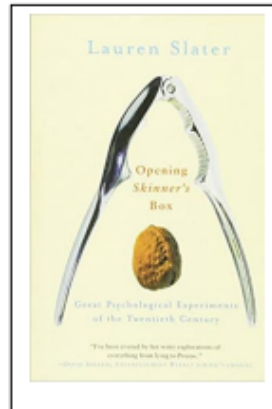
Write at least one small paragraph (about 5 lines) for each. Write more if you wish!

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!

Online courses

Complete one (or more) of the following free courses:

This one is through the open university. It takes around 3 hours to complete.

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/investigating-psychology/content-section-overview-0>

Or complete one of the Future learn courses (try the 'Introduction to Psychology' one to start)

<https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/psychology-and-mental-health/courses/psychology>

or Seneca learning has summer prep courses including an introduction to Psychology and A level tasters:

<https://app.senecalearning.com/classroom/course/1b7f46e7-060b-4cf7-922b-1829a0013079>

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

- Steven Pinker – Human nature and the blank slate
- 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:



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.

Podcasts:

- BBC Radio 4's 'All in the mind'
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxx9/episodes/player>
- The British Psychological Society has a list of interesting podcasts
<https://digest.bps.org.uk/2007/03/11/psychology-podcasts-a-clickable>



Museum Trips

The Science Museum

Exhibitions cover all areas of science and technology, including Psychology. Includes online exhibits and a learning area. *Exhibition Rd, SW7 2DD.*

The Freud Museum.

Step into the world of Sigmund Freud, and see his iconic couch. *20 Maresfield Gardens, NW3 5SX.*

The Wellcome Collection.

Explores the connections between medicine, life and art in the past, present and future. Exhibitions constantly change. *183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.*

The Museum of the Mind

The Bethlem Museum of the Mind records the lives and experience and celebrates the achievements of people with mental health problems. *Bethlem Royal Hospital, Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 3BX.*

Psychologists on Twitter

David Buss –Prolific Evolutionary Psychologist.

@ProfDavidBuss

Ben Goldacre –GP, and campaigner for better media communication of science, and popular scientific communicator.

@bangoldacre

Richard Wiseman –Magician turned Psychologist!

@RichardWiseman

Elizabeth Loftus –Memory researcher and founder of 'false memory' theory.

@eloftus1

Philip Zimbardo –Conducted the Stanford Prison Experiment.

@PhilZimbardo

The Beck Institute –Centre for developing cognitive therapies.

@BeckInstitute

David Eagleman –Neuroscientist who had his own series on the BBC.

@DavidEagleman

Michael Mosely –Very popular science communicator and founder of the 5:2 diet.

@DrMichaelMosely

Derren Brown –Magician with an interest in all things psychological!

@DerrenBrown

Stephen Pinker –Cognitive scientist, wrote 'the Blank Slate'.

@sapinker

Martin Seligman –Founded the area of Positive Psychology.

@MartinEPSeligma and @PositiveNewsUK

Mark Griffiths –Researches the psychology of Addiction.

@DrMarkGriffiths

Daniel Kahneman –Author of *Thinking: Fast and Slow*, and founder of 'pop psychology'.

@DanielKahneman