



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vasa övningsskola**  
**IB Entrance Exam**  
**English**  
**Example I**

**Read the following text carefully and answer the questions below.**

**‘Cleansing the stock’ and other ways governments talk about human beings**

**Those in power don’t speak of ‘people’ or ‘killing’ – it helps them do their job. And we are picking up their dehumanising euphemisms**

To blot people out of existence first you must blot them from your mind. Then you can persuade yourself that what you are doing is moral and necessary. Today this isn’t difficult. Those who act without compassion can draw upon a system of thought and language whose purpose is to shield them – and blind us – to the consequences.

The contention by Lord Freud, a minister in the UK’s Department of Work and Pensions, that disabled people are “not worth the full wage” isn’t the worst thing he’s alleged to have said. I say “alleged” because what my ears tell me is contested by Hansard, the official parliamentary record. During a debate in the House of Lords, he appeared to describe the changing number of disabled people likely to receive the employment and support allowance as a “bulge of, effectively, stock”. After a furious response by the people he was talking about, this was transcribed by Hansard as “stopped”, rendering the sentence meaningless. I’ve listened to the word several times on the parliamentary video. Like others, I struggle to hear it as anything but “stock”. [...]

Human beings – by which I mean those anthropoid creatures who do not necessarily receive social security – often live in families. But benefit claimants live in “benefit units”, defined by the government as “an adult plus their spouse (if applicable) plus any dependent children living in the household”. On the bright side, if you die while on a government work programme, you’ll be officially declared a “completer”. Which must be a relief.

A dehumanising system requires a dehumanising language. So familiar and pervasive has this language become that it has soaked almost unnoticed into our lives. Those who do have jobs are also described by the function they deliver to capital. These days they are widely known as “human resources”. [...]

Those who kill for a living employ similar terms. Israeli military commanders described the massacre of 2,100 Palestinians, most of whom were civilians (including 500 children), in Gaza this summer as “mowing the lawn”. It’s not original. Seeking to justify Barack Obama’s drone war in Pakistan (which has so far killed 2,300 people, only 4% of whom have since been named as members of al-Qaida), Obama’s counter-terrorism adviser Bruce Riedel explained that “you’ve got to mow the lawn all the time. The minute you stop mowing, the grass is going to grow back.” The director of the CIA, John Brennan, claimed that with “surgical precision” his drones “eliminate the cancerous tumour called an al-Qaida terrorist while limiting damage to the tissue around it”. Those who operate the drones describe their victims as bug splats. [...]

Terms such as these are designed to replace mental images of death and mutilation with images of something else. Others, such as “collateral damage” (dead or wounded civilians), “kinetic activity” (shooting and bombing), “compounds” (homes) and “extraordinary rendition”

(kidnapping and torture by states), are intended to prevent the formation of any mental pictures at all. If you can't see what is being discussed, you will struggle to grasp the implications. The clearest example is "neutralising", which neutralises the act of killing it describes.

I doubt many people could kill and wound if their language accurately represented what they were doing. It is notable that those who are most enthusiastic about waging war are the least able to describe what they are talking about without resorting to metaphor and euphemism. Few people have nightmares about squashing insects or mowing the lawn.

The media, instead of challenging public figures to say kill when they mean kill, and people when they mean people, repeats these evasions. Uncontested, their sanitised, trivialised, belittling terms seep into our own mouths, until we also talk about "operatives" or "human capital" or "illegal aliens" without stopping to consider how those words resonate and what they permit us not to see. I wouldn't be surprised if there are dehumanising metaphors in this article that I have failed to spot.

If we wish to reclaim public life from the small number of people who have captured it, we must also reclaim the language in which it is expressed. To know what we are talking about: this, in more than one sense, is the task of those who want a better world.

Adapted from an opinion column by George Monbiot (*The Guardian* Tuesday 21 Oct 2014)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/21/cleansing-stock-doublespeak-people-killing>

1. Which words or ideas do the following euphemisms/metaphors substitute for (according to the text)? 8p

- a) Stock \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Benefit units \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Completer \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Human resources \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Mowing the lawn \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Cancerous tumour \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Bug splats \_\_\_\_\_
- h) Neutralising \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text? 6x2p=12p

- a) Monbiot is critical of the way politicians use language. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) According to him, the media are not guilty of using dehumanising language. \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Military euphemisms are very rare. \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Barack Obama does not approve of the use of euphemisms. \_\_\_\_\_
- e) According to John Brennan, drones should be used in order to avoid unnecessary deaths. \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Quite a few people have nightmares about killing insects. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What are the correct definitions for the underlined words? 10p

- a) Persuade 1 the quality, condition, or fact of being exact and accurate
- b) Contention 2 to cause people to do or believe something
- c) Benefit 3 an act of killing a lot of people
- d) Pervasive 4 a suggestion of something that is made without saying it directly
- e) Massacre 5 to continue to have a powerful effect or value
- f) Precision 6 to make something seem less important than it really is
- g) Implication 7 the money given by the government to people in need
- h) Trivialise 8 to take something into your possession, especially by force
- i) Resonate 9 a point advanced or maintained in a debate or argument
- j) Capture 10 present or noticeable in every part of a thing or place

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j

4. The importance of media literacy in today's world! 30p

Write **a speech** (of 150-250 words) in which you advise your fellow students on the importance of being a critical consumer of media (e.g. newspapers and magazines, Internet, social media, TV, radio, film, books, games...) Give tips and real-life examples! You can also refer to Monbiot's column (above) or the picture of two British tabloid covers (below).

Spot the Difference

