

Look at the bar charts, question and sample answer and do the exercises to improve your writing skills.

Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–h next to the numbers 1–8.

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------|----|--|
| 1..... | a genre | a. | a chart, graph, diagram, picture or other illustration in a scientific or academic book or document |
| 2..... | fairly | b. | a style of book or film with a certain set of characteristics |
| 3..... | a figure | c. | a description of something by dividing it into smaller, separate parts |
| 4..... | to differ widely | d. | more than average; less than 'very' |
| 5..... | a breakdown | e. | to prefer a particular thing |
| 6..... | progressively | f. | promisingly; often used at the start of a sentence to show that the thing you are going to mention is good news and it makes you feel confident or hopeful |
| 7..... | encouragingly | g. | to be very different |
| 8..... | to favour something | h. | increasingly, more and more |

Exam question

The charts show information about the reading habits of UK teenagers. Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features. Make comparisons where relevant.

Figure 1: Teenagers' favourite fiction genres by gender (United Kingdom, 2016)

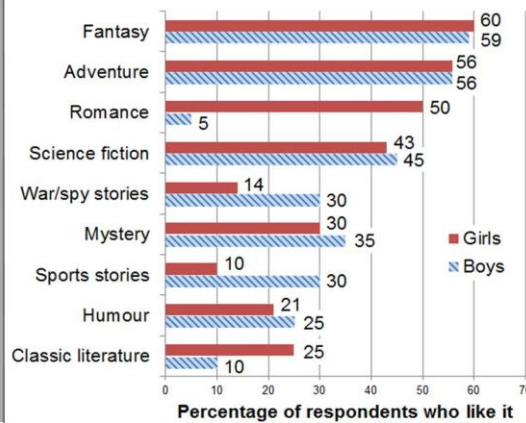
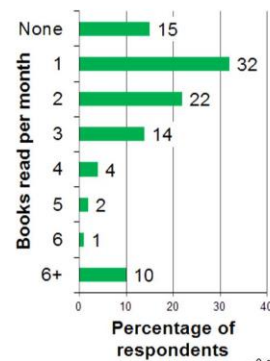


Figure 2: Number of books read monthly by young people aged 13 to 19 in the United Kingdom (2016)



The charts show information about young people's reading habits in the UK in 2016. The first gives a breakdown of girls' and boys' preferred fiction genres and the second tells us the number of books read per month.

Overall, it is clear that British boys and girls both liked reading many different genres. Several genres appealed equally to both sexes, but boys and girls had different tastes in some types of story. With regard to how much they read, the vast majority of young people read at least one book a month, but the actual number differed widely from person to person.

Looking at Figure 1 more closely, we can see that fantasy and adventure were the most favoured genres. They were enjoyed by more than half of all male and female respondents (56 to 60%). Science fiction was also liked by a fairly equal number of both sexes. However, other genres showed clear differences in readership. The third most preferred genre for girls was romance, but this was by far the least popular genre with boys, with just five per cent saying they liked it. Classic literature also had a mainly female readership. The reverse situation was found with war/spy stories and sports stories, which were two to three times more read by boys than by girls.

Encouragingly, Figure 2 shows that about 85% of young people in the UK read regularly. Most of them (32%) read only one book a month, but a fairly large number read two or three books. After that, the number of readers became progressively smaller, falling to only one per cent who read six books per month. However, what stands out here is how many young people read more than six books: a surprisingly large ten per cent.

Top Tips for writing

1. Check the wording of the question. If it asks you to summarise or describe the data, you just need to select the most significant points and report them. You don't need to interpret them or give reasons for them unless the question asks you to explain or comment on the data.
2. Start by stating what the topic of the data is and who, where and when it relates to. Then, summarise the main features. (Alternatively, the summary can be your final paragraph.)
3. Use words and phrases to connect one idea to another and to change the topic smoothly when you introduce a new point.
4. Make direct comparisons in the data. Point out similarities and differences between different groups.
5. You can use adverbs to express an opinion about what you are describing.

1. Check your understanding: true or false

Circle *True* or *False* for these sentences.

- | | | | |
|----|--|-------------|--------------|
| 1. | The data is for British teenagers in the year 2017. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 2. | Overall, boys and girls displayed very similar reading habits. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 3. | Girls liked science fiction slightly more than boys did. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 4. | Humour was more popular than classic literature. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 5. | Fifteen per cent of the survey respondents did not read regularly. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 6. | Eleven per cent of respondents read more than six books per month. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |

2. Check your writing: reordering

Write the words in the correct order to make sentences.

- war and spy stories | Boys | girls do. | read | considerably more than
.....
- boys do. | slightly more than | like | fantasy stories | Girls
.....
- genre | for boys. | Romance | the least | is | popular
.....
- like war stories | girls. | Boys | twice | more than | as much as
.....
- girls' | is | romance. | favourite type of book | Overall, | third
.....
- as | is not | for girls. | nearly as enjoyable | Classic literature | for boys
.....
- Adventure | as | fantasy. | as | is almost | well liked
.....
- adventure | is fantasy, | with | second. | a close | coming | The most popular genre
.....

3. Check your writing: multiple selection

Circle the adverbs which can complete these sentences. In each sentence, two adverbs are possible.

- Nearly / Almost / Fairly as many books were sold in the last quarter as the first.
- The company's profits this year and last year were not exactly / just / quite the same.
- Interestingly / Surprisingly / Dramatically, the graph shows a very different picture for 2016.
- Slightly / About / Approximately one third of the population take a holiday in the late summer.
- Many / Much / Considerably more people watch football than tennis.
- We can see that the sales figures were reasonably / fairly / almost high in November.
- The figures for boys and girls in 2014 are remarkably / greatly / surprisingly similar, given that they were very different in 2013.
- The products were given completely / much / considerably higher ratings the following year.

4. Check your writing: gap fill

Complete the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first, using the word given in brackets. You should write two or three words.

- Starr Stores is not nearly as busy as the Central Shopping Centre.
The Central Shopping Centre is _____ Starr Stores. (much)
- More people chose to holiday in Europe rather than North America that year.
More people chose to holiday in Europe _____ North America that year. (opposed)
- Action films are much more successful than westerns.
Westerns are not very successful _____ action films. (with)
- The figures were a little lower in 2015.
The figures were _____ high in 2015. (quite)
- Social activities were preferred by 25 per cent of the teenagers.
Social activities were preferred by _____ the teenagers. (a)
- This amount was double that of the previous year.
This amount was _____ as that of the previous year. (as)
- The food in Betty's Café is a lot less expensive than in Fish Bites.
The food in Betty's Café is _____ expensive as in Fish Bites. (nowhere)
- The number of customers in 2013 was much lower than in any other year.
The number of customers in 2013 was _____ lowest. (far)

Discussion

How much do you read, and what genres are your favourites?