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Explication d'un texte extrait du programme

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Explication de texte

Jackson, Brian, "How the poorest live: education", *New Society*, February 1st, 1973, pp. 157-59 in Veronica Lelaidier, *English Education To-day*, Paris, Hachette, 1974.

Explication de faits de langue

Le candidat proposera une analyse linguistique des segments soulignés dans le texte.

The poor, or perhaps we should say the poorest, are roughly one in ten of the population, though often in school they are one in every six or seven children. In school, we don't see all the poor. We don't see the old: very few schools indeed use their costly and frequently empty buildings as old people's centres. Schools are for children, as cars are for salesmen, or as park benches are for old men.

We do not see gypsy children, for example. There are 6,000 of them – that is to say, as many children as you will find at Eton, Harrow, Ampleforth, Dulwich, Roedean, Giggleswick, Marlborough, Gordonstoun and the Friends' School, Saffron Walden. Very few appear in school, and only rare schools try to win them in. Eighty four per cent of these children have no access to a lavatory, 67 per cent have no tap water. And in counties like Yorkshire, a quarter live in the cramped horse-drawn caravans other children gaze at in story books. Of course, they have the merry greenwood and the hard shoulder of the M1... and ringworm, shortened lives, rheumatic pains, a rat-a-tat life of rebuff.

What we do see in school are the several million children of the unemployed, concentrated in the classrooms of the old coalfields, mills and docklands. We also see the children of the low-paid in areas like East Anglia where the agricultural workers are held down to a £14.60 minimum. And in the decaying housing near the centres of all our big cities, we see large numbers of children, trapped in poverty, because of the size of their family, the lack of one parent, or the weight of the poverty over the generations: splitting open the seams and cracks in personalities, foreshortening the sense of the possible.

Poor children are diverse. I've suggested six diversities, and there are others...

What opportunities does school offer the poor?

The answer is: hardly any, I won't insult readers by spelling it out, for every social survey since the war has shown that wherever education is selective – streaming, 11 plus, GCE for the minority, entry to higher education – it is the poor child whom the machine spews out. The attack on institutional selectivity has been shrewd and aggressive and moderately successful over the last decade. But perhaps we need to be quicker to halt and challenge laissez-faire selectivity. It is by no means enough to pin SHOP OPEN on the door – like the Open University or the new nursery education on demand. That simply selects people according to their degree of educational awareness, and their hopeful sense that they can master the social terrain. Only pugnacious, pop-punchy selling can bust through to the poor in one generation. It would need to be even

more punchy than *Sesame Street*, where American research shows that, once again, the main children to benefit are those who are watching TV in homes that are used to seizing opportunities for achievement. Only new roots and new structures can change education across the generations.

45 Not only is education irrelevant to the poor, and nasty medicine when
at last you do take a sip, but expensive too. I've suggested before that
the poor, through taxation, fund a multi-million pound industry which
produces goods for export to the middle class only. That's true; but
perhaps a remote fact when you pay 10p in tax for a pint of bitter, and on
50 the TV above the bar glance at the latest row about student grants or
university finance. What bites home is the 8 am tax. "Need m'dinner
money, mum." "Got to take some money for cookery, mum." "School trip,
mum, can I go?" "My school uniform, mum; plimsolls for gym, mum;
switched teams, need a new football shirt, mum; collection for school
55 funds today, mum."

That's real cash. Tweaked out of a thin purse. A purse that to a child
(could you deny him?) is naturally like the jug of milk in the fairy tale that
never drained one drop dry. Looked at from the staff's point of view,
every item makes good sense. (Though not those foolish, expensive and
60 divisive trips to Paris, Vienna, or wherever else the teacher wants to visit.)
That extra 20p to pay for the angel cake in domestic science is more
keenly felt than any oration on speech day. So often the teacher
innocently radiates middle class costs and wants.