

# Practicing for an Oxford Interview

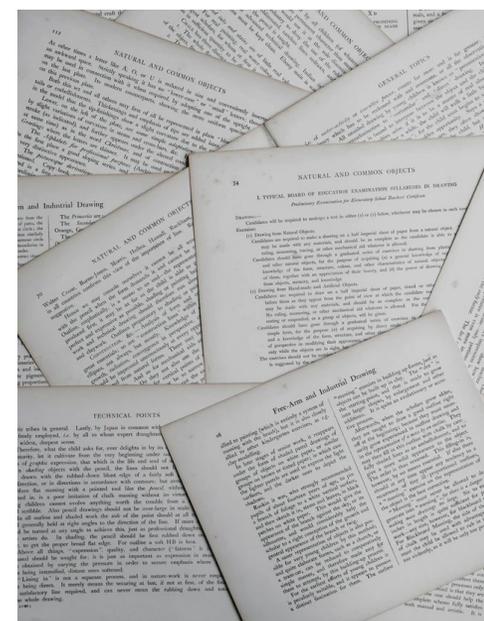
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Wadham College, University of Oxford



- Before some interviews, you might be given a resource to look at
- During some interviews, you might be given a resource to look at

# Unseen material





Objects



Art



Video



Text

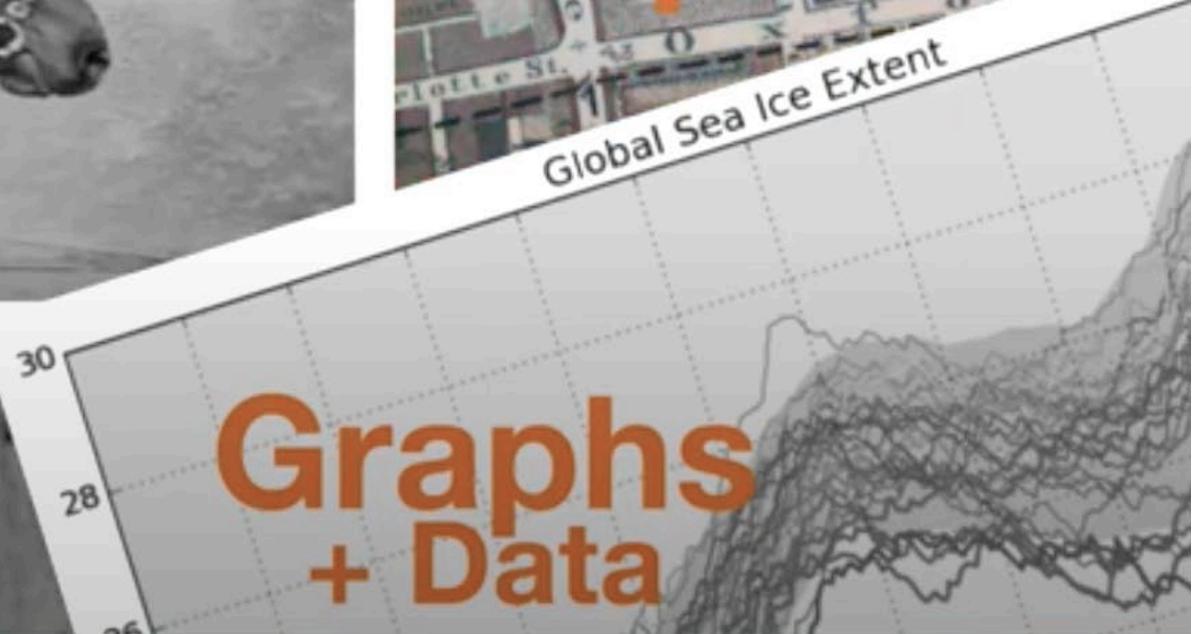
Maps



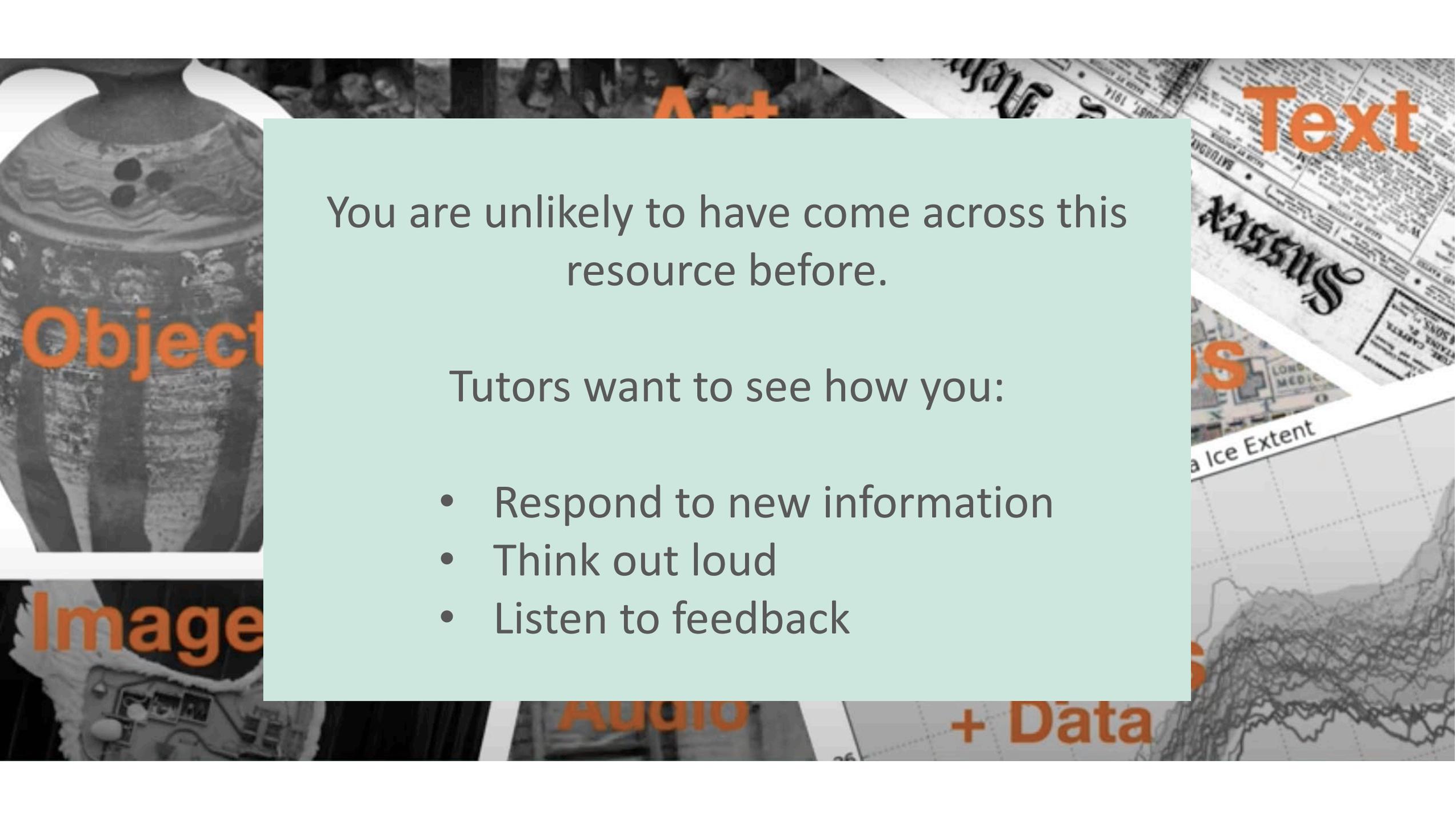
Images



Audio



Graphs + Data

The background is a collage of various images and text. On the left, there's a grayscale image of a classical vase with the word 'Object' in orange. Above it, the word 'Art' is visible. On the right, there's a newspaper clipping with the word 'Text' in orange. Below that, a map shows 'Ice Extent' with the word 'Image' in orange. At the bottom, there's a grayscale image of a person's face with the word 'Audio' in orange, and a plus sign followed by the word 'Data' in orange.

You are unlikely to have come across this resource before.

Tutors want to see how you:

- Respond to new information
- Think out loud
- Listen to feedback

# INTERVIEWS

“Interviews tell us important things about a candidate which are not captured by grades or test scores.

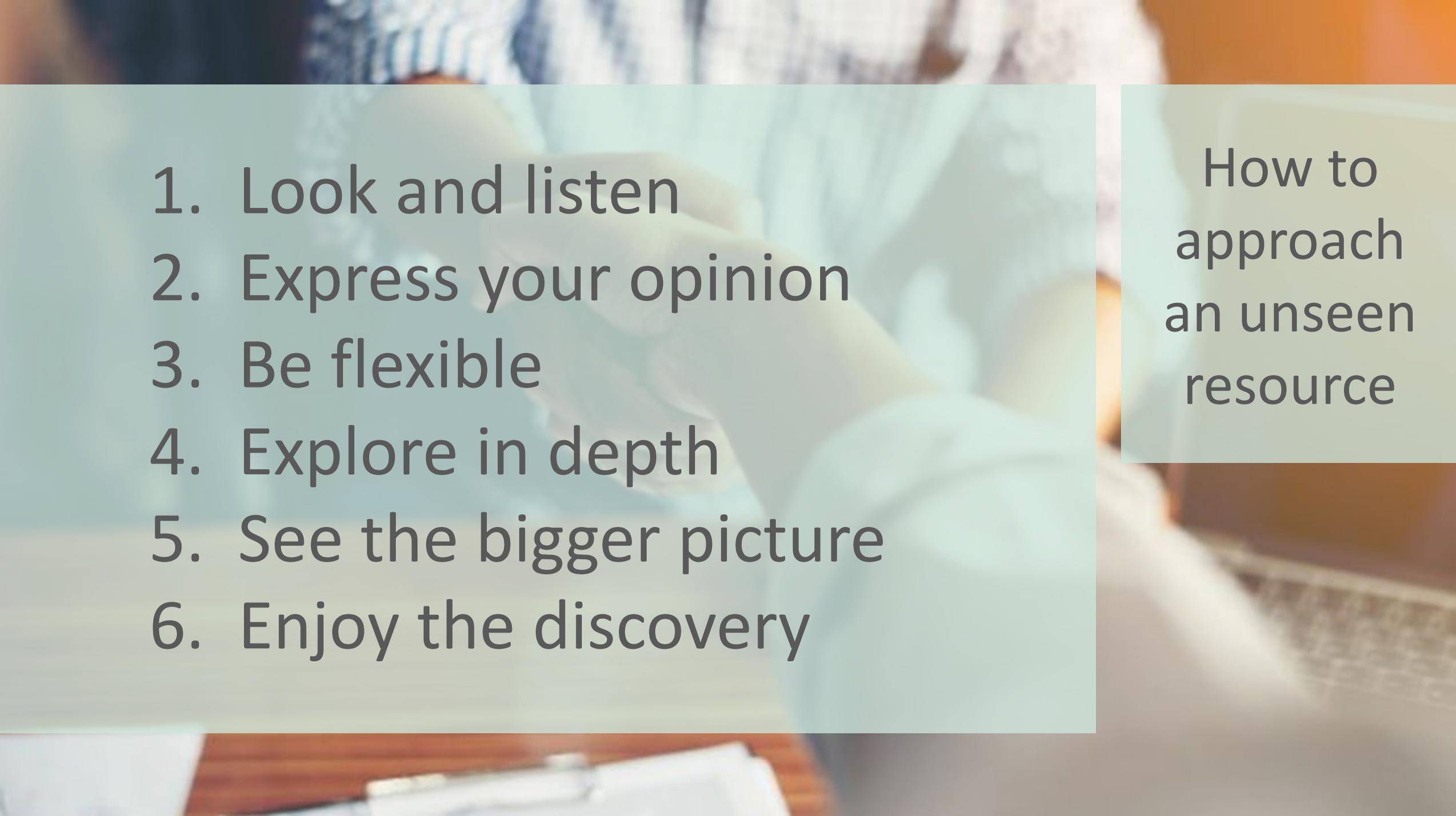
We can **see how candidates think**, rather than merely parrot information.”

The following presentation will take you through two examples of unseen resources:

- A MAP RESOURCE (slides 8-16)
- A TEXT EXTRACT (slides 17-27)

Resources for these activities  
are available at:

[www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/schools/resources](http://www.wadham.ox.ac.uk/schools/resources)

- 
1. Look and listen
  2. Express your opinion
  3. Be flexible
  4. Explore in depth
  5. See the bigger picture
  6. Enjoy the discovery

How to  
approach  
an unseen  
resource

# MAP RESOURCE

# MAP RESOURCE

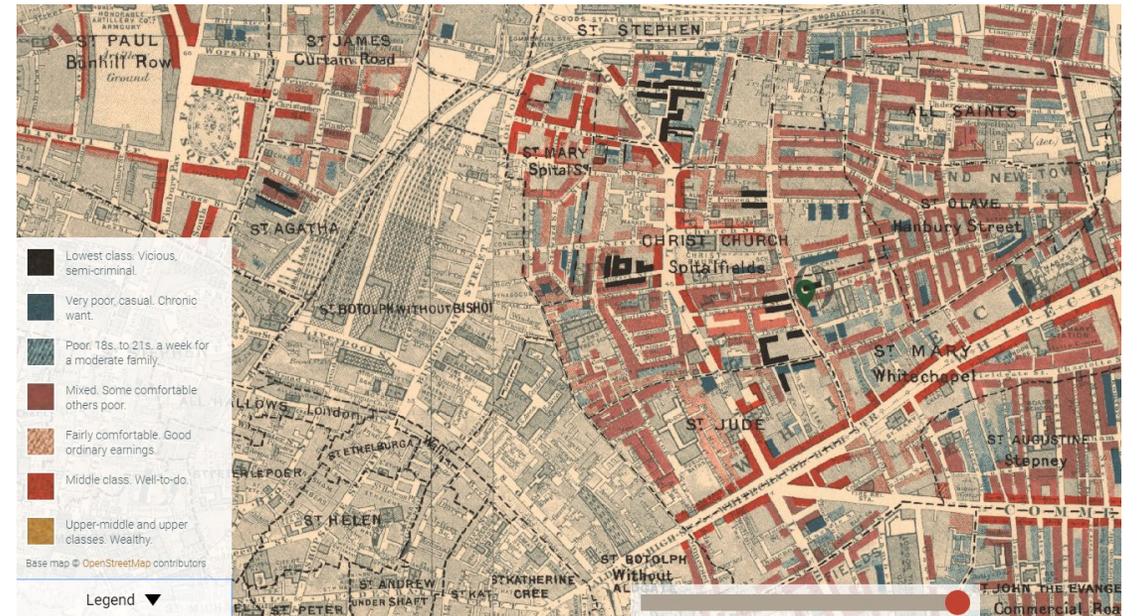


- Look at the map resource

## 1. Look and Listen

- Start simple- how would you describe it?

- Map
- Colour coding
- Place names
- Type of area
- Time period
- Categories



- Take your time

## 2. Express your Opinion

- What strikes you about the categories?
- How do you think the map was made?

Classification	Colour	
Lowest class. Vicious, semi-criminal.	Black	
Very poor, casual. Chronic want.	Dark blue	
Poor. 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family.	Light blue	
Mixed. Some comfortable others poor.	Purple	
Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.	Pink	
Middle class. Well-to-do.	Red	
Upper-middle and upper classes. Wealthy.	Yellow	

## 3. Be flexible

- The map is from Charles Booth's London Poverty Map & Police notebooks, 1898
- An early example of social cartography, each street is coloured to indicate the income and social class of its inhabitants.
- Social investigators accompanied policemen on their beats across London, and recorded their own impressions of each street and the comments of the policemen.
- The City of London was not included because it did not house any significant number of residents so is uncoloured.
- The map is separated using the parishes of the area e.g. St Jude's, St James, All Saints, St Bartholomew

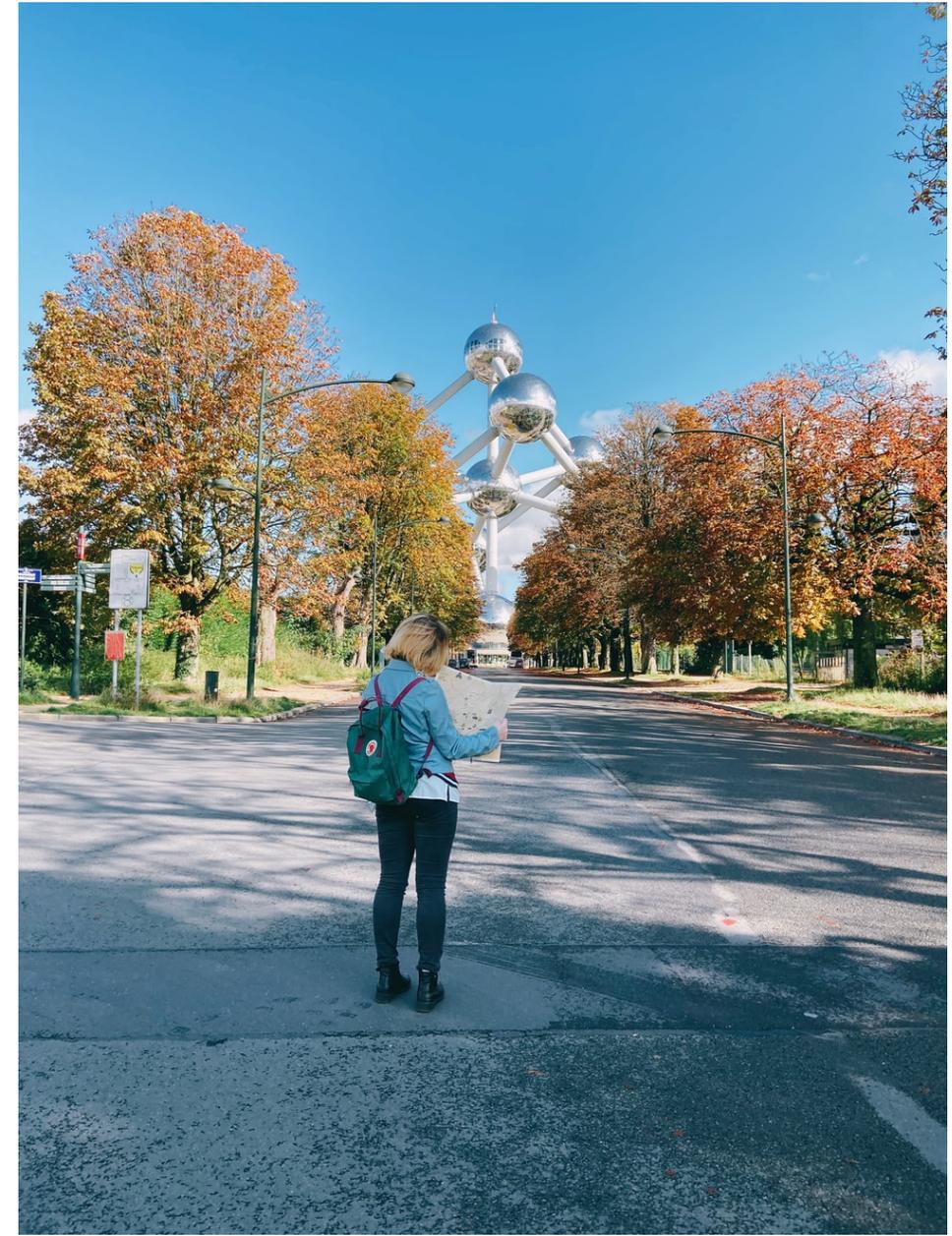




# MAP RESOURCE

## 5. See the bigger picture

- What can these maps tell us...
  - ...about the time periods?
  - ...about poverty?
  - ...about the area?
- What questions does it raise?





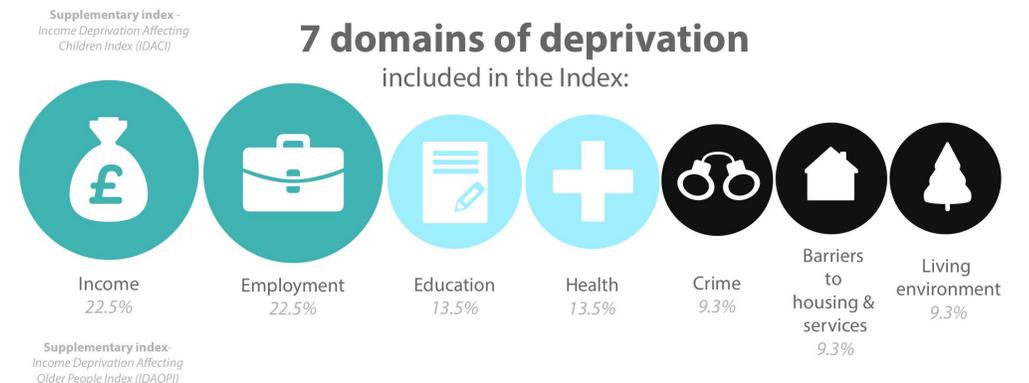
## 6. Enjoy the discovery

- It isn't about right or wrong answers
- Does it link to any knowledge you have?
- Does it make you want to find out anything else?



# Finding out more...

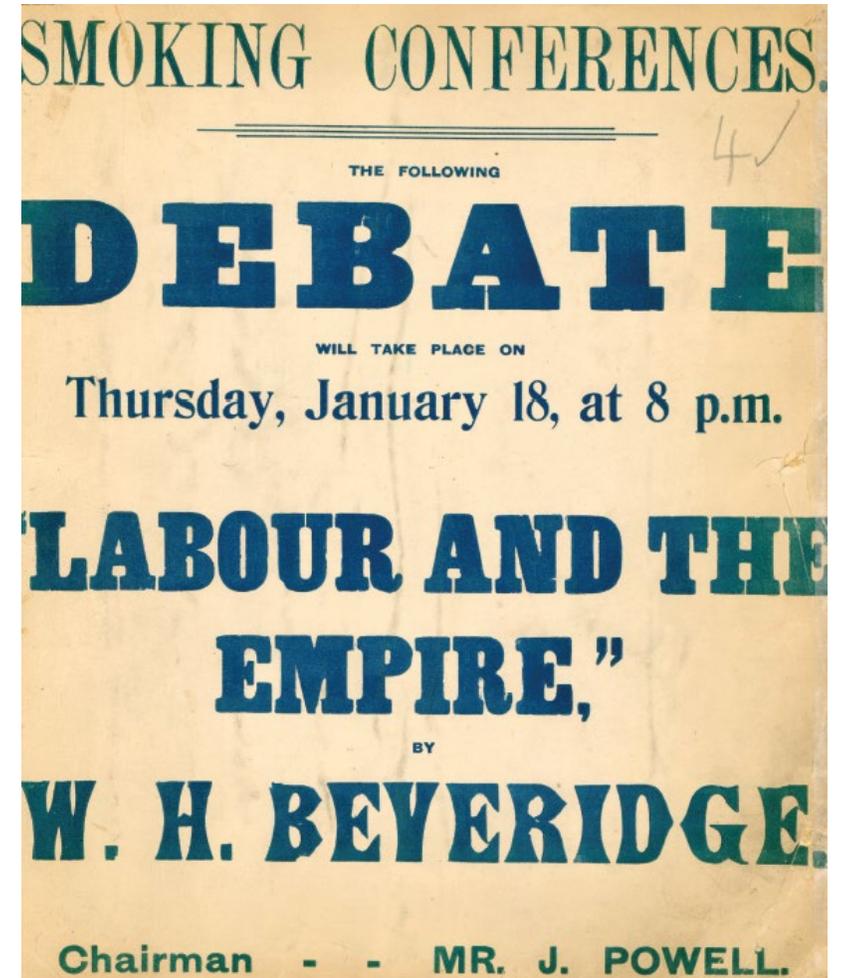
- Charles Booth's London  
[booth.lse.ac.uk/](http://booth.lse.ac.uk/)
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation  
[dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/  
imd/idmap.html](http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html)



## Extension

Can you apply these skills to another unseen artefact? Remember to:

1. Look and listen
2. Express your opinion
3. Be flexible
4. Explore in depth
5. See the bigger picture
6. Enjoy the discovery



TEXT  
EXTRACT

Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), translated by Michael Hofmann

Rosenthaler Platz<sup>1</sup> is abuzz.

Weather changeable, bright, just below zero. An anticyclone over Germany continues to determine the outlook. An area of low pressure is moving slowly south over a broad front. Daytime temperatures will be a bit colder than recently. Now the prospects for Berlin and surroundings.

Tram 68 via Rosenthaler Platz: Wittenau, Nordbahnhof, Heilanstalt, Weddingplatz, Stettiner Bahnhof, Rosenthaler Platz, Alexanderplatz, Strausberger Platz, Bahnhof Frankfurter Allee, Lichtenberg, Herzberge Asylum. The three Berlin mass-transport firms, tram, rail (under- and overground) and omnibuses, form a single fare grouping. Standard adult fare is 20 pfennigs, half fare 10, children receive a reduction until the end of their fourteenth year, as do full-time students, trainees, war invalids, handicapped men and women with a permit from the local benefit office. Get to know your network. During the winter months, no ingress or egress through the front doors, 39 seats, 5918, to stop the conveyance pull the cord in a timely fashion, no conversation with the driver, getting on and off the moving vehicle is hazardous.

In the middle of Rosenthaler Platz a man with a couple of yellow parcels jumps off the 41 and is almost run over by a taxicab, the traffic policeman watches him scamper away, a ticket inspector turns up, inspector and policeman shake hands: that fellow and his parcels had a bit of a lucky break.

Fruit liqueurs at wholesale prices, Dr Bergell, solicitor and notary, Lukutate, the Indian specific for the rejuvenation of elephants,<sup>2</sup> Fromms Akt,<sup>3</sup> the best rubber sponge, what do people need so many rubber sponges for.

The principal thoroughfare leading away from the square on the north side is Brunnenstrasse, the premises of AEG are on the left, just before Humboldtstr. AEG is a colossal enterprise which, according to the 1928 telephone book, comprises: Electrical Light and Power Plants, Central Administration NW 40, Friedrich Karl Ufer, 2-4, Local Network North 4488, General Management, Janitors and Maintenance,

<sup>1</sup> A square in the centre of Berlin, northwest of Alexanderplatz (Platz is the German for square).

<sup>2</sup> Lukutate was a supposedly rejuvenating medicine that was immensely well-marketed in the 1920s. It was not certified by medical practitioners, so is a nostrum – an ineffectual potion or elixir.

<sup>3</sup> A famous brand of contraceptive (condom).

- Read the Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* extract

## 1. Look and Listen

- Start simple:
  - How is this text composed? e.g. How do we know where we are? Is there a focus on any one particular event or character?
  - Look at the grammar and syntax e.g. past or present tense, use of auxiliary verbs, aspect, voice
  - Anything you aren't sure about and there are footnotes for some unfamiliar vocabulary

## 2. Express your Opinion

- What effect does reading this text have? Is it clear? It is confusing?
- Think about how the imagery or choice of particular words creates and particularises the meaning.
- You don't need to know lots of technical terms
- Highlight quotes that support your opinion

### 3. Be flexible

- Don't try to guess the author or the date – this isn't what the interviewer will be interested in
- Don't make guesses about meanings or 'themes' based on individual words or images picked out and isolated from the meaning of a whole sentence
- Be prepared to back up the points you make with quotes

#### 4. Explore in depth

- Look out for the little words that you might skip over in a rush (e.g. negatives, pronouns).
- Why do you think the author included so much information?
- Can you identify the different elements of the text? What kinds of objects/places/events do we have?

5. See the bigger picture

- What can the extract tell us...
  - ...about the city?
  - ...about the issues of the time?
  - ...about our own cultures?
- What questions does it raise?
  - Why is the description impersonal?
  - What is the author's view of authority? morals? class?



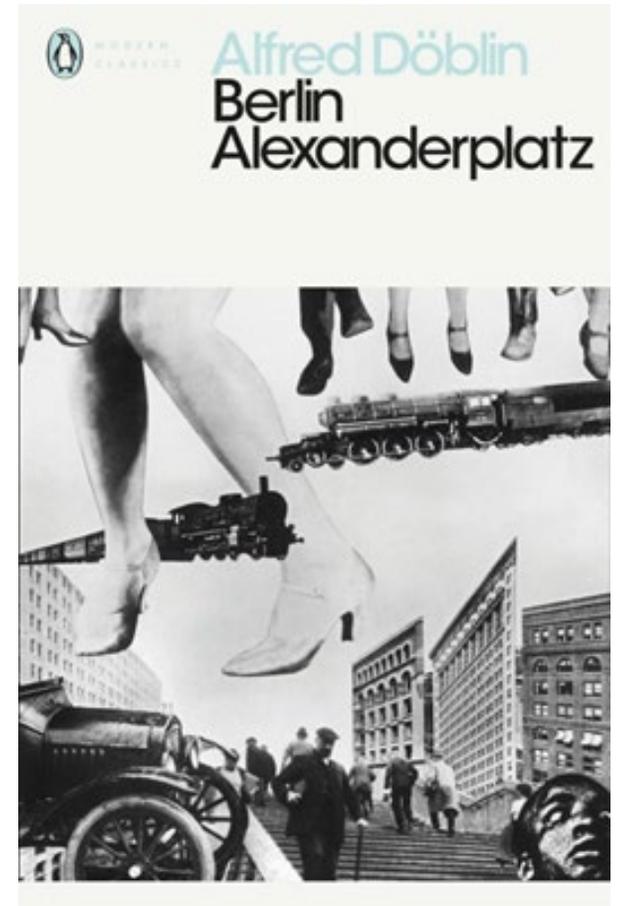
## 6. Enjoy the discovery

- It isn't about right or wrong answers
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- Does it make you want to find out anything else?



## *Finding out more...*

- The extract is from Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929)
- Alexanderplatz is a square in Berlin, Germany
- In 1929, Berlin is a rapidly changing city



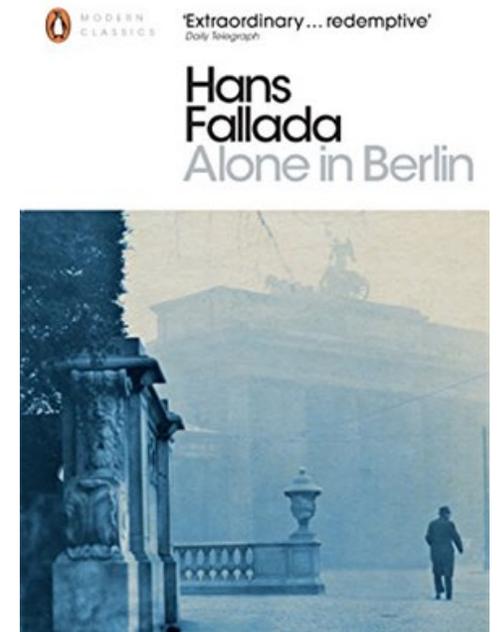
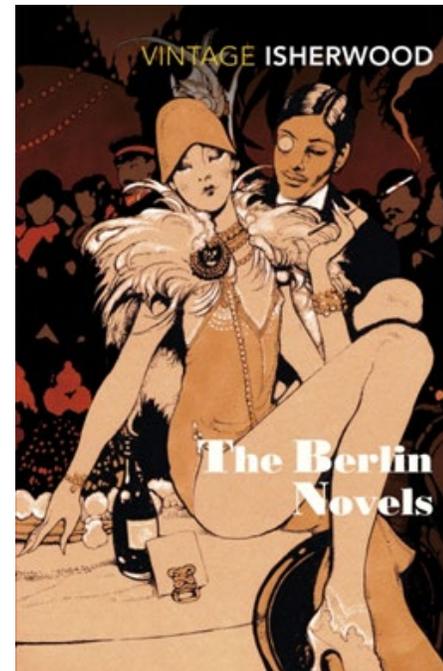
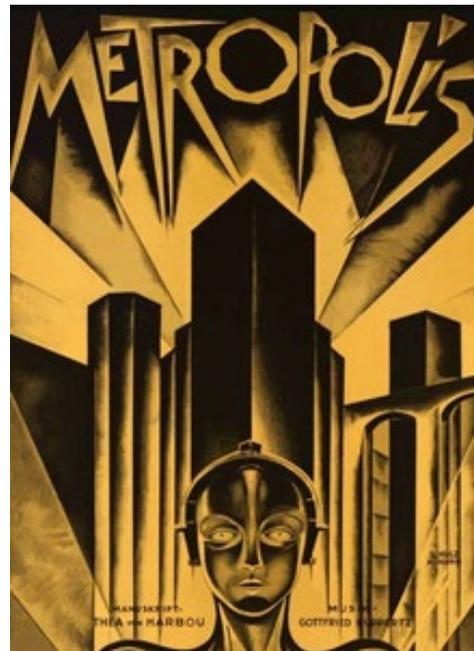
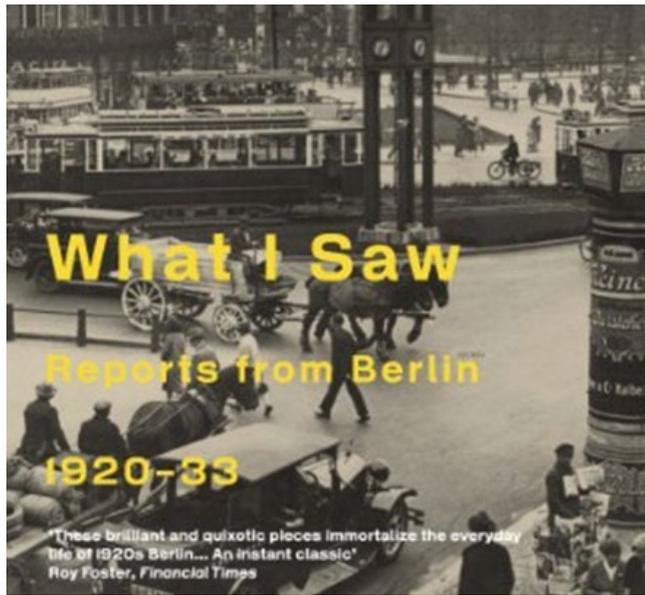
## *Finding out more...*

- The publisher changed the name to be 'Berlin Alexanderplatz: The Story of Franz Biberkopf'
  - Why do you think Döblin simply wanted to title the book 'Berlin Alexanderplatz' instead?
- This extract highlights the diverse activities taking place in the square
  - What techniques does it use to do this?



# Finding out more...

- Other texts about Berlin



## *Finding out more...*

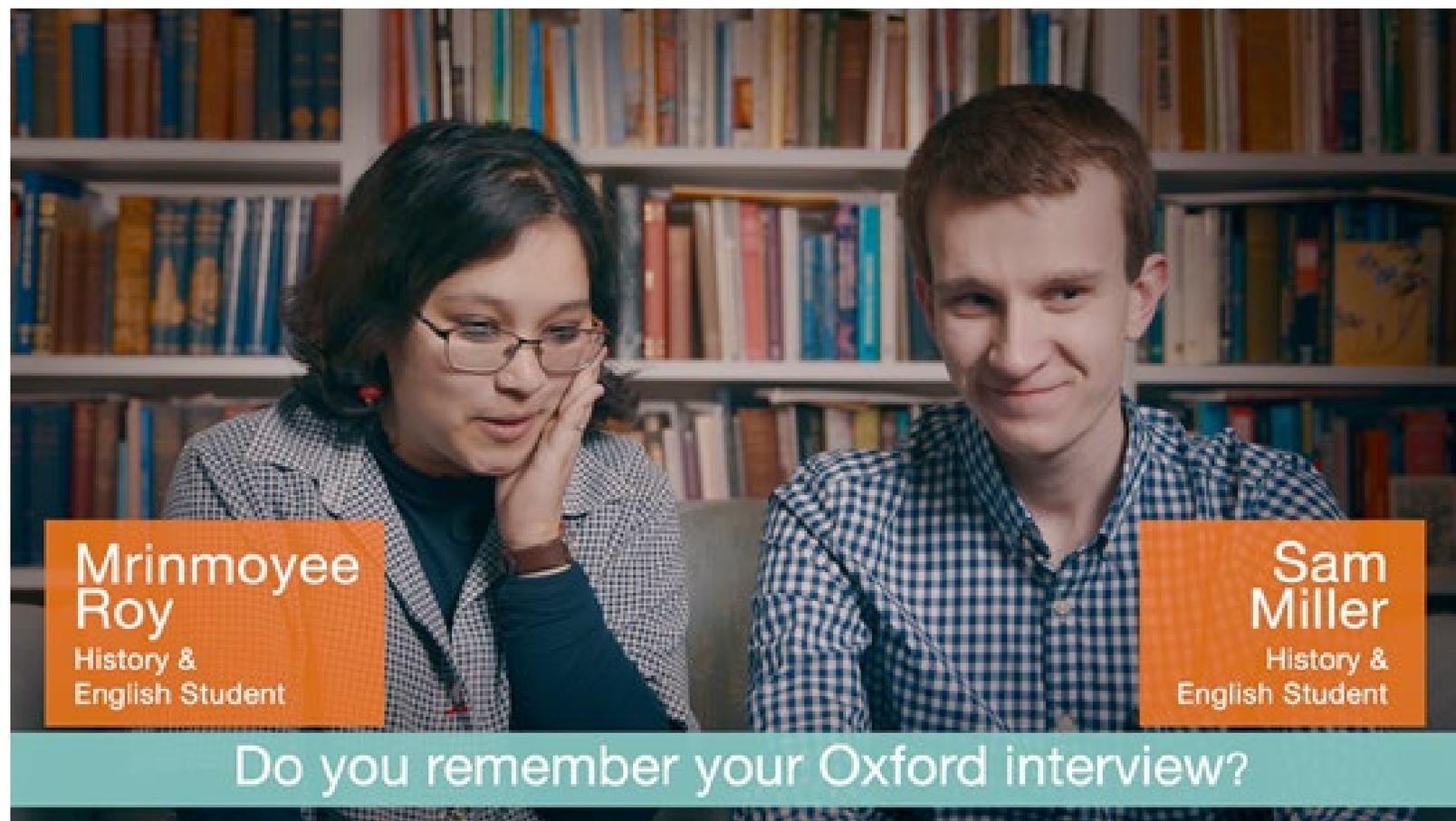
- [London Review of Books](#) and [Literary Review](#)
- Faculty of English [resources](#) and English [Mock interview](#)
- Close Reading resources:
  - [University of York](#)
  - [University of Cambridge](#)
  - [Harvard University](#)

### Poetry ideas:

- Poetry Daily's '[Today's Poem](#)' for ten minutes each day
- [The Guardian's Saturday Poems](#) for ten minutes each day
- Carol Rumen's '[Poem of the Week](#)' series on the *Guardian* website. Compare your own thoughts on the poem with Rumen's reading.
- Poetry Foundation have a collection of '[Core Learning Poems](#)'



# Our students' advice



# Interviews: True or False?

1. The interview is the most important part of the Oxford admissions process.
2. Interviews test students' ability to recall facts from their wider reading.
3. Interviewers at Oxford are more interested in seeing how you think than whether you get the right answer.
4. Applicants who are invited to interview at Oxford all have the same number of interviews.
5. Successful candidates memorize what they have read before their interview so that they can pull specific examples in the interview.
6. The Oxford interview mimics the learning style at Oxford.

# Interviews: True or False?

**FALSE**

1. The interview is the most important part of the Oxford admissions process.

**FALSE**

2. Interviews test students' ability to recall facts from their wider reading.

**TRUE**

3. Interviewers at Oxford are more interested in seeing how you think than whether you get the right answer.

**FALSE**

4. Applicants who are invited to interview at Oxford all have the same number of interviews.

**FALSE**

5. Successful candidates memorize what they have read before their interview so that they can pull specific examples in the interview.

**TRUE**

6. The Oxford interview mimics the learning style at Oxford.