

# TO READ OR NOT TO READ

Text Type: Debate  
Suggested finishing time: 25 mins

## Let's Think!

1. Do you prefer books to films?
2. Does reading give you a different experience than watching films?

### Motion: Films should be considered a better form of entertainment than books

#### Introduction:

Technological advances have made possible films that are now flooding our cinemas with computer graphics and visual effects, which they brought about. While some think that, to a great extent, films have replaced books as the better form of entertainment for spare time, some stick to the view that stories are better told in print than in moving pictures, despite marketing campaigns that keep putting forward the opposite view. Below are the selected arguments posed by Audrey Au and Nicholas Law, the former representing the Affirmative Team and the latter representing the Negative Team.

#### Affirmative's arguments, presented by Audrey Au:

I have two arguments for the view that moving pictures are superior to words on the printed page. The first one is that, in films, plots are visualised and therefore much easier to follow. While descriptions of scenes and feelings in narrative fiction tend to go on for pages, the same ideas can be concisely (and as richly) expressed in a few shots on the silver screen. That's why a 500-page novel can be condensed into a two-hour film, despite the likelihood of some relatively insignificant details being left out. This means the same materials can, through film-viewing, be absorbed in a much shorter period of time than through book-reading, not to mention more effortlessly. Another difficulty that often worsens the reading experience is when the author uses a lot of jargon, like terms in scientific theories. In this case, one would probably find oneself lost in the maze of what is being said, which definitely hinders one's comprehension and progress. Imagine reading a science fiction novel involving a great load of conceptual ideas that you do not understand. This can be frustrating. With films, however, such difficulties could often be eliminated by the inherently visual nature of the medium: a skilful filmmaker can always find the right images to explain concepts in accessible ways. Because of this and of film-viewing's status as a passive activity, which it has by nature, it seems perfectly reasonable to say it is less demanding than reading.

Another argument that I'd like to set forth is that films are much more visually appealing than books, especially considering that special effects techniques have become much more advanced and sophisticated in today's world. Many unlikely events, such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis and magic, can appear frighteningly realistic right before our eyes with the use of special effects. Are words able to depict vividly these scenes? Sure, they can do the job. But when it comes to sensory experience, films would do an incredible job. For all the above reasons, films outdo books as a greater form of entertainment.

#### STEAM

Intellectual property refers to intangible creations of the mind. Books, films, music, artworks and product names are examples of intellectual property.

## Negative's arguments, presented by Nicholas Law:

First of all, I'd like to shift everyone's attention to the centrality of the word 'entertainment' in the motion. It ought to remind us our debate is exclusively about whether films succeed in bringing at least as much enjoyment as books, and vice versa. With that in mind, let's set aside as irrelevant the question whether it takes weeks of concentration to finish a book or 2 hours of absent-mindedness to finish a film. 35

Now, I disagree that films are the more enjoyable of the two. As both an avid filmgoer and reader, I value details and depth in a piece of artistic work, film or novel, as part and parcel of its capacity to delight. And it is indisputable that a story spanning 700 pages is packed with details, which give depth to the story. In comparison, the impracticality and undesirability of a 20-hour-long film make the same quality impossible in a film. Why? Because many details would fail to make it to the final cut or must be altered to fit in the 1.6 hours that are the average running time allotted to films. 40

Consider the *Harry Potter* series. Each book of the series has hundreds of pages and needs days of devoted reading to finish. Due to the mentioned limitation, many specifics, however important they may seem, failed to make their way to the film adaptations. For this reason, characters and plots that are originally complex and developed may turn out simpler and more superficial. This can be a severe blow to a film's depth. In the light of such omission of details and its unavoidable effect on a narrative, it seems rather unconvincing to say that books are inferior to films in terms of the ability to bring enjoyment. 45

Besides, books don't limit readers' imagination as much as films, since they depict rather than display. For example, how a soldier looks would, of course, depend largely on how he's described on the page; but it depends on how that description is pictured by the readers as well. Moreover, a story's readers are active participants in its main characters' lives: they experience everything that happens to a fighter against evil, a private detective or even a stray cat looking for home. The possibilities are endless. Isn't that more fun than passively reacting as an outsider to a series of events that unfold on a screen? Lastly, reading encourages discussions because the same story may be interpreted by one reader in one way, and by another reader in another way. For this reason, book clubs exist to turn reading into a social experience. Taking all these into account, I assert books outshine films. 60

~900 words

### More to Take Away

The influence of Shakespeare, widely considered the greatest writer in the English language, extends not only to linguistics and literature, but also to pop culture and theatre. It is popularly said that the film *The Lion King* was inspired by Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*.

### Looking into Grammar

'Despite' and 'in spite of' are used to show concession. They are followed by a noun, a noun phrase or a gerund, but not by a sentence.

- ✓ Despite **having pledged not to gamble** (✓ his pledge of not gambling; ✗ he pledged not to gamble) again, he resumed doing so before long.

? Underline a concessive clause in Audrey's arguments.

## Part A Multiple Choice Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the debate. Choose the best answer by blackening the appropriate circle.



1. The first paragraph \_\_\_\_\_ that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. states...marketing campaigns changed the entertainment industry
- B. implies...books should not be compared to films
- C. indicates...there are conflicting views on the motion
- D. argues...technological development leads to new art forms

1 Pay attention to the subtle differences between the verbs.

2. Audrey thought that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. graphic descriptions in books are ineffective
- B. books are supposed to be read by those familiar with jargon
- C. investment of time in reading is not worthwhile
- D. visualising a plot is good for easier comprehension

3. In line 27, the word 'sophisticated' means \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. highly developed
- B. simple
- C. economically attractive
- D. popularised

4. Which of the following may Nicholas judge as relevant to the debate?

- A. the average budget for a film
- B. one's perception of pleasure
- C. the public's exposure to books
- D. one's reading speed

5. According to Nicholas, which of the following is NOT true?

- A. Film adaptations are not particularly faithful to the original works in terms of details.
- B. Films' plots may be simplified.
- C. A thick novel is supposed to have richer content than a thin one.
- D. Films shorter than 96 minutes lack depth.

6. Based on what Nicholas said, which of the following kills the imagination of filmgoers?

- A. altered narratives
- B. the omission of details
- C. presence of actors and actresses
- D. length of films

6 The answer may not be explicitly stated.



7. In general, the arguments posed by Audrey and Nicholas were delivered in an \_\_\_\_\_ tone.

- A. informal
- B. aggressive
- C. objective
- D. ironic

8. In the debate, Audrey and Nicholas emphasised \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ respectively.

- A. visual representation...richness in detail
- B. special effects in films...numbers of pages of books
- C. difficulties in reading...importance of details
- D. the popularity of films...the existence of book clubs



Self-evaluation  
Checklist

Please scan the QR code on P.6 to access the checklist for evaluating your own reading progress.

## Part B Pre-HKDSE Questions

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the debate. For questions 1 and 2, answer in complete sentences.

1 A summary should be concise and focused on key ideas.



1. Summarise the main ideas of paragraphs 2 and 6 respectively in your own words.

Paragraph 2 : \_\_\_\_\_

Paragraph 6 : \_\_\_\_\_

2. In line 48, what does the word ‘This’ refer to?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Look for words in the debate that are similar in meaning to the following:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| (i) interrupts ( <i>v.</i> )             | _____ (para. 1-2) |
| (ii) naturally, innately ( <i>adv.</i> ) | _____ (para. 2-3) |
| (iii) beyond doubt ( <i>adj.</i> )       | _____ (para. 4-5) |
| (iv) exact details ( <i>n.</i> )         | _____ (para. 4-5) |
| (v) beat ( <i>v.</i> )                   | _____ (para. 5-6) |



4. Read each of the following quotes and use an adjective to describe the tone in which it is delivered.

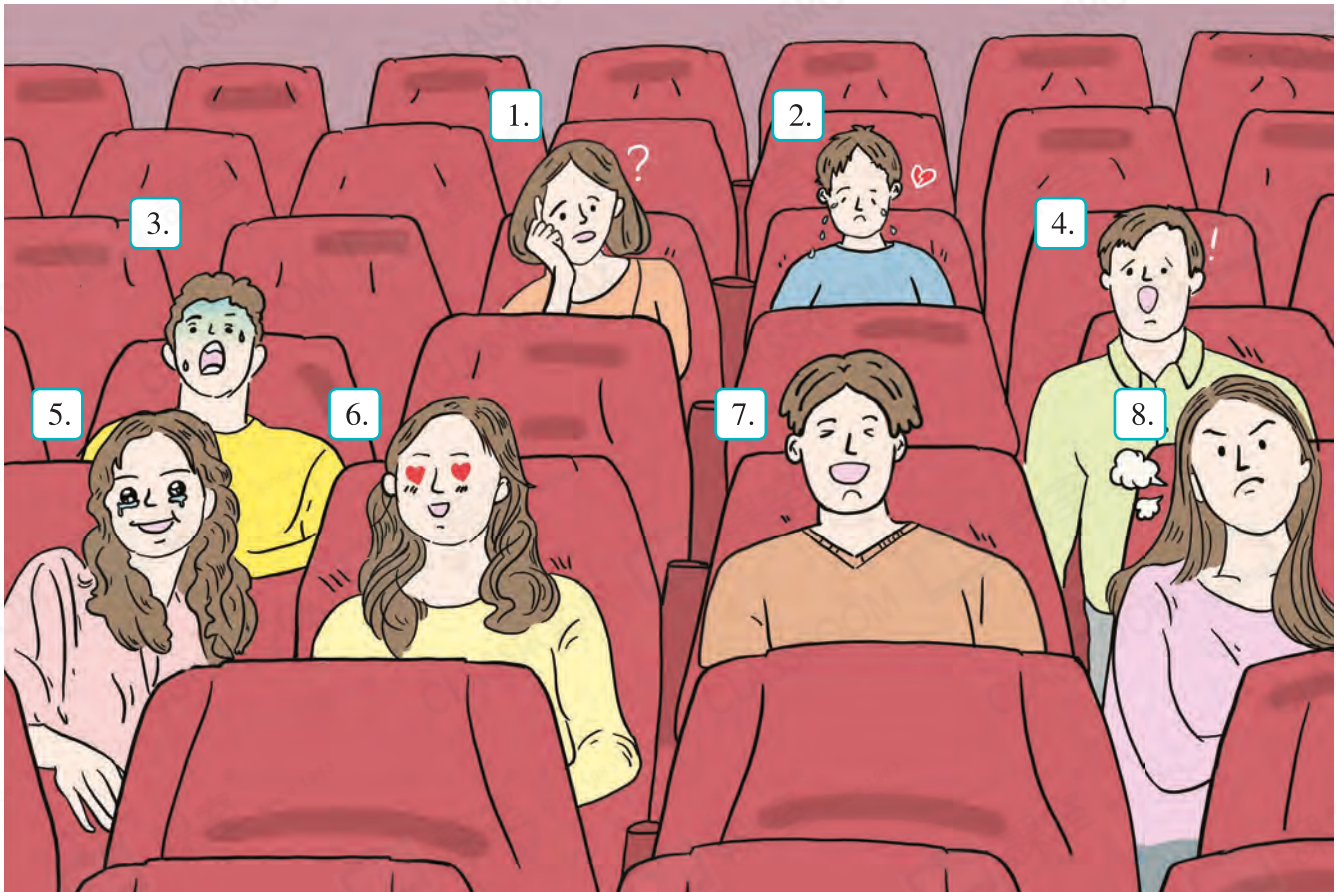
Quote	Tone
(i) ‘I’m glad that filmmakers turn novels into films. We can taste the same story twice! What’s bad about it?’	grateful
(ii) ‘Comparing films with books is like comparing apples with oranges. They shine in their own ways, don’t they?’	
(iii) ‘Where’s the scene where Professor Snape did that magic spell? It was in the book! That’s such a turnoff!’	
(iv) ‘Don’t make me laugh. When will books manage to strike us visually as greatly as films? Perhaps a few centuries later. Ha-ha!’	

4 Pay attention to words that hint at each speaker’s emotion or personal judgment.

## Part C Vocabulary Bank

Label the facial expressions below with the words related to emotions from the word box.

smitten      astonished      touched      enraged  
horror-struck      heartbroken      perplexed      overjoyed



1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

### Word Craft

#### Vice versa (Refer to P.31.)

Foreign expressions make up an integral part of the English language. Many of them are used both in writing and in everyday speech.

**e.g.** de facto (=actual; in reality)  
al fresco (=outside)  
carpe diem (=seize the day)

## Part D Crossword Puzzle

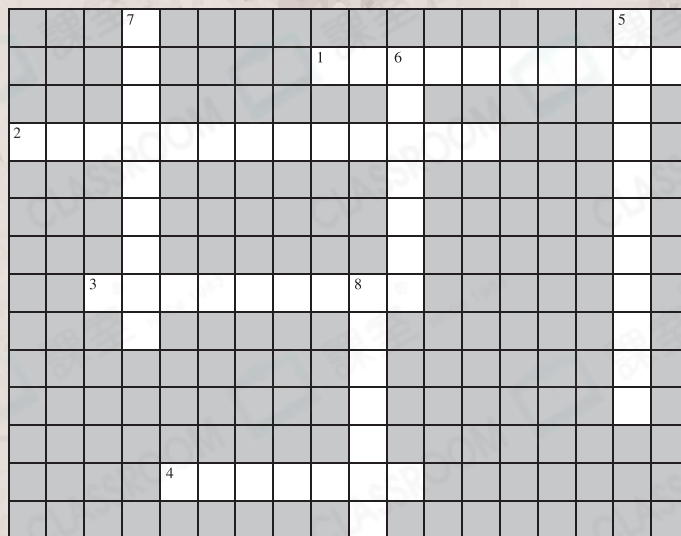
Complete the crossword puzzle below with the appropriate adjectives introduced on the previous page.

### ACROSS:

1. She prayed before the cross, hoping that her benign tumour would not turn into a cancerous one. The next day, she was \_\_\_\_\_ to find that the tumour had vanished altogether.
2. I have never met someone who is as brave as John. He didn't give the slightest impression that he was intimidated as the robber took out a gun and pointed it at his forehead, while I was \_\_\_\_\_ and wet myself.
3. Despite the many discoveries about the novel virus, its complexity and unpredictability still leave scientists and doctors around the world feeling \_\_\_\_\_ and helpless.
4. Aurora lives in two worlds, the real one and the imaginary one in her head. That's why she gets instantly \_\_\_\_\_ whenever she sees an actor murmuring words of affection in an actress's ear in any film. Ha-ha!

### DOWN:

5. Napoleon had been my best companion since my birth, and there has not been a day when I haven't hugged him. I've always seen him as more than a pet. Now, without him, I am nothing but a \_\_\_\_\_ man who lives alone.
6. Although Nick is a seasoned traveller, he is still sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ by the warm hospitality of complete strangers who would treat him as one of their own.
7. It was that very moment when her son, whom she hadn't seen in more than a decade, appeared by the side of her bed that she started crying and laughing, clearly \_\_\_\_\_ at the fact that her son had survived the war.
8. During the pandemic, Bryant put on an \_\_\_\_\_ expression every time Christopher coughed without wearing a mask or covering his mouth, as a silent protest against his pal's appalling sense of hygiene.



### Let's Discuss!

1. Do you agree that books are not as popular as they used to be because of films?
2. Have you ever read a book and then watched its film adaptation? If so, which was better? Share your thoughts.