

# Can't We Just Print More Money?

## Worksheet for Lesson Three: Analysis and critical evaluation of a text



### Refer to Chapter Four: *Why am I richer than my great-great grandma?*

#### Activity 1

##### Extract

Imagine you have invented a time machine. Unfortunately, this time machine has very limited functionality. Instead of taking you somewhere interesting – to Londinium at the height of the Roman Empire, or Liverpool for an early Beatles gig – it has dumped you in Britain in the mid-1970s.

Your new environment is not glamorous. At every turn you see questionable fashion choices – flares, platform shoes, the odd mullet. The radio is playing T. Rex. Most restaurants seem to be serving prawn cocktail, pineapple on sticks and little else, and as you get used to your surroundings, you realise it's even more disappointing than you first thought. When you start talking to the people around you, you discover that more than half of households don't own a car, and for most people a holiday abroad is a rare treat – if it's affordable at all.

You soon discover, *Back to the Future*-style, that getting back into the 2020s is harder than it seems. So you decide to settle in. As you get used to life in the 1970s, you get a job in an office, but this too proves a disappointment. It's not just the horrors of working life – a world where almost all the bosses are men, you have to write on clunky typewriters and it's perfectly acceptable for the managers to go and sink three pints every lunchtime – it's the money. Your first payslip is disconcertingly small. In

1977, the average household earned less than half of the sum earned in 2020, in today's money. The country is defined by a sense of hardship: the newspapers have dubbed the UK 'the sick man of Europe', and almost a quarter of the population are living below the poverty line.

So much for the 1970s, you think. But if you did manage to kick-start your time machine and go back even further, things wouldn't be any better. If you travelled to 1900, the average worker would have been earning the equivalent of £75 a week in today's money; if you went back to 1800, the sum would be £25. The further back you go, the worse off everyone becomes.

In fact, life in the twenty-first century is arguably much better than in the 1970s, 1900s or 1800s. Greater wealth has led to many improvements in quality of life; higher income has led to greater life expectancy, better access to improved education and more job security. Since 1970, the average lifespan in Britain has increased by ten years.

So even if you did manage to build a time machine, you may well be best off staying put, and not just to avoid the mullets.

What explains these differences in wealth and quality of life across generations? The answer is economic growth. Broadly speaking – and with some notable exceptions – your quality of life is bound up with the level of growth: whether the economy is growing, shrinking or stagnating. And the general trajectory of the economy over the last 200 years has been to increase in size.

**Check your understanding:**

1. List four things you learn about life in the 1970s.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What do we learn about the wages people earned in the 1970s?

.....

.....

.....

3. How does this compare with 1900 and 1800?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Activity 2

### Exploring the perspective of two writers in our time machine

*In the extract from *Hard Times*, published in 1854, the writer Charles Dickens presents a fictional town – Coketown – in which the impact of rapid industrialisation and growth in the 1800s is described in vivid detail. Working with a partner explore the language of the extract using the question prompts below:*

1. What do you notice about the colours that Dickens uses in the extract – what do they suggest to you about the town?
2. What metaphor is used in the second paragraph and what does it make you imagine?
3. How does Dickens describe the factories? What techniques does he use?
4. How does he present the lives of the factory workers?
5. What do you understand by the final sentence? What does it reveal about Dickens' point of view of the increased industrialisation and growth in the 1800s?

### **Activity 3**

*Over eighty years later, the writer George Orwell wrote about a real industrial city in the north of England. Still working with a partner, explore the language of this extract using the question prompts below.*

1. Identify the different adjectives Orwell uses in this extract. What impression do they create of the city?
2. How are people's homes presented here?
3. What is implied by the colours he highlights and the use of phrases such as 'rosy with sulphur' and 'serrated flames'?
4. What imagery is used in the second paragraph to describe the factories? How does this create an impact and effect on our senses?