

# Chapitre 1

## L'épreuve de synthèse

## I. Centrale

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L'épreuve à Centrale « sera une épreuve de synthèse de documents d'une durée de 4 heures. Quelques documents en langue étrangère (au minimum trois) seront proposés aux candidats qui devront en rédiger une synthèse, dans la langue étrangère choisie. Les documents proposés se rapporteront à un thème commun pouvant intéresser le citoyen du monde (questions politiques, sociales, environnementales, etc.). Aucune connaissance historique, politique ou sociologique spécialisée ne sera nécessaire pour comprendre ces documents. Une lecture régulière de la presse non spécialisée sera suffisante pour appréhender le thème abordé et les documents proposés.

La synthèse devra faire apparaître les arguments clefs de chaque article et faire émerger les lignes de force sans introduire de biais. Le but est de réaliser un exposé objectif des idées présentées par chaque document, de façon que le lecteur de la synthèse puisse se faire sa propre opinion du sujet, sans avoir à consulter les documents originaux. Les candidats ne devront donc en aucun cas introduire de commentaire personnel.

La forme de la synthèse est totalement libre. En particulier, il n'est pas demandé de respecter la structure des documents proposés, ni de citer les auteurs ou les ouvrages d'origine, sauf bien sûr si cela permet d'apporter un éclairage particulier au propos. Le jury considère toutefois qu'une bonne synthèse doit commencer en introduisant la problématique retenue. L'utilisation littérale d'extraits des documents proposés est à proscrire, si toutefois les candidats souhaitent citer un passage, ils doivent suivre pour cela les règles habituelles (par exemple, l'utilisation de guillemets).

Il est attendu du travail demandé qu'il restitue les éléments clefs contenus dans les documents proposés et qu'il montre comment ceux-ci se complètent, se renforcent, s'opposent, etc. La confrontation des points de vue proposés dans les différents documents est un élément essentiel de la synthèse. »

« Les candidats devront donner un titre à leur synthèse. Il est attendu de ce titre qu'il soit informatif et précis. En effet, son rôle n'est pas d'inciter le lecteur à lire le reste du document mais d'indiquer le plus clairement possible le thème abordé. »

<http://www.concours-centrale-supelec.fr/CentraleSupelec/MultiY/LVcrit/>

Le sujet commun aux filières MP, PC et PSI est distinct de celui de la filière TSI et requiert une maîtrise plus fine de la compréhension de la

langue. Les documents proposés dans chaque sujet correspondent à la préparation suivie par les candidats en fonction de leur filière. La longueur de la synthèse demandée peut donc aussi être inférieure pour la filière TSI.

## **2. e3a**

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L'épreuve à e3a de langue vivante (3 h) est une « synthèse de documents (2-3 *documents*, articles, graphiques, etc.). C'est la rédaction, dans la langue choisie par le candidat, d'une synthèse de plusieurs documents. Il s'agira de *documents d'actualité* au sens large du terme (textes, images, statistiques...), reliés par *une thématique commune*. Les candidats ne seront pas invités à donner leur avis (*ni opinion, ni commentaire*) sur les documents, mais à les synthétiser en *environ 400 mots* dans une *langue aussi riche et claire* que possible, en *montrant les points de convergence ou de divergence émergeant de la confrontation de ces documents*. »

<http://www.e3a.fr/spip.php?rubrique29>

## **Chapitre 2**

### **Aborder les différents types de document**

# I. Un article de presse

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## a. Analysing press articles

- **Step 1:** study the paratext  
Newspaper or magazine and maybe its usual political stand, date, title (eye-catching, puzzling, ordinary)
- **Step 2:** first reading  
“Listen to” the text so as to get the gist (central issue, key point/theme/argument/facts) and deduce whether it is a news report or an editorial or a column
- **Step 3:** further reading(s)
  - Underline the key pieces of information using a highlighter for instance but do not over-highlight! Dismiss examples, proper nouns (except if the person is well-known and mentioning him/her relevant), trivial remarks, digressions...
  - Sort out this treasure-trove of information using the following notions: facts, causes, (positive/negative) consequences, problems, solutions, goals, arguments for/against, (dis)agreement, opinions, supporters/opponents, implications for the future, comparison, opposition, victims/beneficiaries...
- **Step 4:** spot style, tone, bias  
Warning!! Do not interpret, do not add anything!  
The English-speaking press
  - The British quality press
    - *The Financial Times* – a business daily
    - *The Times* – owner: Rupert Murdoch; right-wing
    - *The Daily Telegraph* – right-wing, very conservative
    - *The Guardian* – left-wing
    - *The Independent* – fiercely independent
    - *The Economist* – weekly magazine; liberal, right-wing
  - The American press
    - *The New York Times* – somewhat pro-Democrat, well-educated readership

- *The International Herald Tribune* – the international version of *The New York Times*
- *The Washington Post* – liberal
- *USA Today* – nicknamed as “McPaper”
- *Time* – very American-like weekly magazine
- *Newsweek* – weekly magazine (60% text, 40% pictures)
- *US News & World Report* – conservative, pro-Republican

## b. Exercising with an article – File 1, doc 1

- **Step 1**  
A left-wing British newspaper  
2008  
A witty headline
- **Step 2**  
A news report  
The Chinese and South African policies about/ban on plastic bags – why? how? do they work?
- **Step 3**  
*Highlight the key information/words in the article (File1, doc1), then very briefly sum up each part of it.*

### Handling plastics

Adapted from *The Guardian*, February 2008

While **China**, a world emerging superpower, is facing more and more environmental hazards, the mere issue of plastic bags may seem irrelevant, but aesthetics is not the key point. When discarded, **plastic bags are a burden on waterways, sewers, and soil.**

So, as one of its new year’s resolutions, **China** has pledged to put a stop to its 30bn-a-day habit, and to **ban** the use of free and flimsy plastic bags by introducing **charges**. As of June this year, plastic bags must be paid for, and they will be banned from all public transport, airports and scenic places. *China’s policy/ban & charge & the problems caused by plastic bags (pollution) as the origin of them.*

The thing is, **plastic is terrific**. Why? Its **multiple possible uses, its durability, its being waterproof, practical and truly cheap** are among its appealing advantages. But these benefits can turn out to be **doubled-edged** as with the case in point of the sheer **persistence** of plastic bags. *Positive & negative sides of plastic.*

**The thicker they are, the longer it takes plastic bags to break down** – up to a millennium. Their burning leads to **toxic gases** being released while the **stagnant pools** they create are the ideal ground for **malaria** to thrive in mosquitoes; and should **animals** consume them, which they well might, that is a cause of **suffocation or indigestion**. *Many negative sides of plastic*

**Better waste management in Europe than in the developing world** makes the threat of plastic bags less material there. *European vs developing world handling of the problem.* China's situation is perhaps better reflected by experiences in African places. [...]

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reckons **the South African ban** to be effective *Example of South Africa's ban & its means* – South Africans used to consume some eight billion plastic bags on a yearly basis. **Below-30-micron-thick bags have been totally banned** as they can easily blow away and turn out to be hard to recycle. There is **less littering consequently** now. **A charge** is in place and if people do not comply with the ban, penalties are really tough: **finances and even prison sentences**.

**Before regulation** was introduced in South Africa, the cost of producing, delivering and distributing plastic bags was concealed in food prices, so even if **customers** did not want a bag, they **would pay for it**. **Now they can choose** to pay and have a bag or not to pay – and UNEP reports that consumers have therefore benefited from **lower food prices**. *South African past situation and money perks of the ban.*

**Nonetheless, consumers are still more prone to choosing plastic bags** than paper ones or boxes. It seems that we are **addicted**. *But addiction to plastic bags.* What remains to be seen is **whether China can get rid of the habit, or find a truly fantastic – and biodegradable – plastic bag**. *Two options: giving up or biodegradable bags*

- **Step 4**

Pretty factual though doubtful at the end about China's case whereas praising the South African policy

## 2. Un dessin humoristique

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### a. Analysing cartoons

- **Step 1:** rack your brains to recall relevant words and phrases
  - a) about this particular cartoon
  - b) about visual items and their locations (*in the foreground / middle ground / background; in the top/bottom left/right-hand corner; at the top/bottom; on the side/edge; on the right/left*)
- **Step 2:** study the cartoon very carefully as nothing is left to chance. Spot
  - a) size (small, large, blown up, shrunk)
  - b) labelling (what, what for)
  - c) speech bubbles (who, what, what for)
  - d) symbols (what, what for)
  - e) zooming (hierarchy of the elements)
  - f) facial expression
  - g) angle (sloping up or down, straight on, from behind, front on, on top or below)
  - h) tone (satirical, humorous, ironic, amusing...)

[www.vcestudyguides.com/guides/language-analysis/10-things-to-look-for-in-cartoons](http://www.vcestudyguides.com/guides/language-analysis/10-things-to-look-for-in-cartoons)

- **Step 3:** contextualisation
 

As the cartoon is attached to a file, it must draw upon a point raised by it.

  - Does it support or oppose a point?
  - Does it focus on the past, present or future?
  - Which aspect and/or person of the file does it relate to?
  - Does it give further information?
- **Step 4:** interpretation (*use modal auxiliaries to qualify it*)
  - The message
  - The cartoonist's stand