CAPITOLO

5

The Augustan Age: Coffee Houses and Couplets

"At ev'ry word a reputation dies." — Alexander Pope, The Rape of the Lock, III.16

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe Britain under Queen Anne and the first Hanoverians: the Union of 1707, Whigs and Tories, credit and the South Sea Bubble, and the culture of the coffee houses.
2. I can explain neoclassicism and analyse Pope's heroic couplets, including the mock-heroic devices of *The Rape of the Lock*.
3. I can explain what a periodical essay is and read a passage of *The Spectator* in its context.
4. I can use nominalisation and a formal register to write clear academic sentences.
5. I can make polite small talk and write an opinion column in the voice of a persona.
6. I can compare Pope with Parini and explain Newton's discovery of the dispersion of light.

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English 4 · Parte II · Reason and Satire · versione 1.0
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A dark, crowded room near the Royal Exchange in London, around 1712. The air smells of coffee, tobacco and wet coats. At one table two merchants discuss the price of sugar; at another a ship's captain reads out the news from Lisbon; near the window a young man in a borrowed wig reads that morning's *Spectator* aloud to his friends, and they laugh. For a penny or two anyone who looked respectable could come in, sit down, read the papers and join the conversation.

This chapter follows the age of Queen Anne and the first Hanoverian kings, when England and Scotland became one kingdom, the City of London learned to live on credit, and a new public of readers met in coffee houses. Its writers called it "Augustan": they wanted order, reason and polish, and they found them in the heroic couplet of Alexander Pope and in the short, elegant essays of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. For a liceo scientifico the age has one more hero: Isaac Newton, whose light, Pope said, ended the long night of nature.

5.1 History and Society: Union, Credit and the Coffee House

In chapter 4 you followed the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Bill of Rights of 1689: Parliament now met every year and the king could no longer rule without it. The decades that followed were less dramatic but just as decisive. Britain became a united kingdom, a great trading power and, in its capital, a society of readers (Figura 5.1).

5.1.1 Queen Anne and the Union (1702–1714)

When William III died in 1702, the crown passed to **Anne**, the younger daughter of James II. She was a Protestant, and she would be the last Stuart monarch: none of her children outlived her. Parliament had already prepared for this in the **Act of Settlement** (1701), which gave the succession to Sophia of Hanover, a granddaughter of James I, and her Protestant heirs, and excluded Catholics from the throne for ever.

Anne's reign was a reign of war. In the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) Britain and its allies fought Louis XIV of France; the Duke of Marlborough won a famous victory at Blenheim, in Bavaria, in 1704. At the Peace of Utrecht (1713) Britain gained Gibraltar, Minorca, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and the *asiento*, the right to supply enslaved Africans to the Spanish colonies in America — a trade you will meet again in chapters 6 and 9.

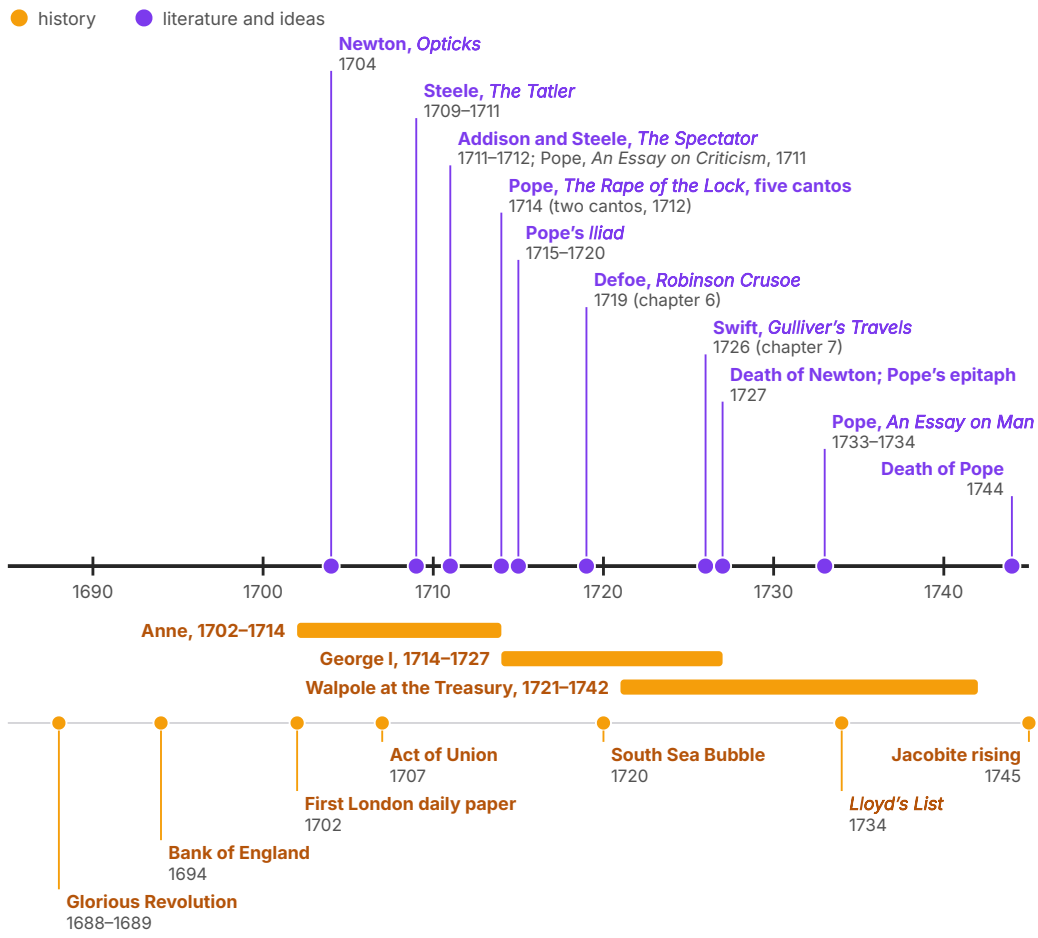

Figura 5.1 The Augustan age, 1688–1745 (proportional time axis, ticks every 10 years). Amber: history; violet: literature and ideas. Bars show reigns and periods of office; the chapters in brackets are later chapters of this book.

The most lasting event of the reign happened at home. Since 1603 England and Scotland had shared a king but kept two parliaments (English 3, chapter 14). The Acts of Union, passed by both parliaments, created on 1 May 1707 a single **Kingdom of Great Britain** with one parliament at Westminster, to which Scotland sent 45 members of the Commons and 16 peers. Scotland kept its own law, its own Presbyterian Church and its own universities; in exchange it gained free trade with England and its colonies. Many Scots opposed the Union, and some still debate it today; but Edinburgh and Glasgow would soon become centres of trade and of the Scottish Enlightenment.

5.1.2 The Hanoverians, Whigs and Tories

Sophia of Hanover died a few weeks before Anne, so in August 1714 the crown went to her son, the Elector of Hanover, who became **George I** (1714–1727). A German prince who spent long periods in Hanover, he left much of the daily work of government to his ministers. The Catholic Stuarts — the son and later the grandson of James II — did not give up. Their supporters, the **Jacobites** (from *Jacobus*, Latin for James), rose in arms in 1715 and again in 1745 (chapter 8), and failed both times.

Politics was now a contest between two parties whose names began as insults in the crisis of 1679–1681, when Parliament argued about excluding the Catholic James from the succession. A **Whig** (probably from *whiggamore*, a Scottish rebel) was, broadly, a supporter of Parliament, of the Protestant succession, of religious toleration for Protestant dissenters and of trade; a **Tory** (from an Irish word for an outlaw) stood for the Crown, the Church of England and the landed gentry, and some Tories were suspected of sympathy for the Stuarts. In Anne's last years, from 1710 to 1714, a Tory ministry led by Robert Harley made the Peace of Utrecht, with Swift among its pamphleteers (on Swift, see chapter 7). Under the Hanoverians the Whigs held power for decades. Their greatest leader, **Robert Walpole**, was First Lord of the Treasury from 1721 to 1742, and in 1735 he moved into 10 Downing Street, still the official home of the head of government. Walpole is *conventionally* called the first prime minister: in his day "prime minister" was a hostile nickname, and the title had no legal existence until the twentieth century.

5.1.3 Money, credit and a bubble

Wars cost money, and the new state learned to borrow it. The **Bank of England** was founded in 1694 to lend to the government of William III, and the national debt grew with every war. Investors bought shares in trading companies and lent to the state in exchange for interest — a world of paper, trust and risk. In 1720 it went spectacularly wrong. The **South Sea Bubble** began when the South Sea Company, founded in 1711 to trade with Spanish America, offered to take over part of the national debt. Its shares rose from about £130 in January 1720 to about £1,000 in the summer; thousands of people, from servants to dukes, rushed to buy; then confidence broke, and by the end of the year the shares had fallen below £200. Fortunes were lost, and the episode made *bubble* the usual English name for a speculative boom. Walpole's reputation was made by the way he managed the crisis.

5.1.4 The coffee houses

The first coffee house in London opened in 1652. By the reign of Anne there were hundreds of them, although contemporary estimates vary widely. Coffee came from the Ottoman Empire and from Yemen, tea from China through the East India Company, and the sugar that sweetened them from Caribbean plantations worked by enslaved people. A **coffee house** was a public

room where, for the price of a dish of coffee, men of different ranks could sit together, read the newspapers provided by the owner and talk. Some people called them "penny universities".

Each coffee house had its own public. Merchants and ship-owners met at **Lloyd's**, opened by Edward Lloyd in Tower Street by 1688 and moved to Lombard Street in 1691; there they collected shipping news and insured ships and cargoes, and from 1734 the house published *Lloyd's List*. Lloyd's of London, the insurance market, still carries his name. Dealers in shares met at **Jonathan's** in Exchange Alley, where a list of share prices was published from 1698 — one of the roots of the London Stock Exchange. Writers met at **Will's** in Covent Garden, where Dryden had held court, and later at **Button's**, the favourite of Addison; Fellows of the Royal Society met at the **Grecian**.

Not everyone approved. In 1674 a satirical pamphlet, *The Women's Petition against Coffee*, complained that men wasted their days there, and at the end of 1675 Charles II ordered the coffee houses closed as places where "false" and "scandalous" reports were spread; the order was withdrawn within days. The coffee houses were also mostly male spaces: women ran some of them, but respectable women drank tea at home, at the **tea-table**, which became the female centre of conversation and gossip.

What made this culture possible was print. In 1695 Parliament let the Licensing Act lapse, and books and papers no longer needed a licence before publication — half a century after Milton's *Areopagitica* (chapter 3). The first London daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared on 11 March 1702; in 1712 a Stamp Act taxed every newspaper. A new **reading public** was born: merchants, shopkeepers, lawyers, clergymen and, increasingly, women, who wanted news, opinions and advice on how to live.

5.1.5 Why "Augustan"?

The Roman emperor Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) was remembered as the ruler who brought peace after civil war, and whose age produced Virgil, Horace and Ovid; he boasted, according to Suetonius, that he had found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble. After the civil wars of the seventeenth century, English writers liked to see their own time as a new Augustan age of peace, order and polished poetry, rebuilt — like London after the Fire — in a classical style. The label **Augustan** is used, especially by later critics, for the literature of about 1690 to 1745, from Dryden to the death of Pope. It could also be ironic: George II's full name was George Augustus, and in 1737 Pope addressed a satire to him as "Augustus".

DA RICORDARE

1702–1714 Queen Anne, the last Stuart · **1707** Acts of Union: the Kingdom of Great Britain · **1714** George I: the House of Hanover · **1720** the South Sea Bubble · **1721–1742** Walpole, conventionally "the first prime minister" · **coffee houses**: news, business, politics and literature for the price of a coffee · **Augustan** = an age that took Augustus's Rome as its model (a label, used mostly by later critics).

5.2 Literature: Pope and the Periodical Essay

5.2.1 Neoclassicism

The literary taste of the age is called **neoclassicism** (*neoclassicismo*): the belief that the writers of Greece and Rome had discovered the best way to write, and that a modern poet should imitate them, follow their rules and aim at order, clarity and reason. Its key ideas were three. **Nature** meant not mountains and forests but general human nature, the same in every age: "First follow Nature", Pope told critics. **Reason** and good sense controlled imagination. **Decorum** (*decoro, convenienza*) required that style suit subject: a high style for kings and heroes, a low style for ordinary life.

Neoclassical writers liked public, social forms — the verse essay, the satire, the epistle, the translation — and they believed that a poem should say well what everybody already feels. Pope's famous definition of wit is neoclassical in every word: "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd" (*An Essay on Criticism*, ll. 297–298). Their favourite metre was the **heroic couplet** (English 3, chapter 6): two rhymed lines of iambic pentameter, each couplet usually closed by a full stop, often divided by a caesura into balanced halves.

5.2.2 Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Pope was born in London in 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution, to a Catholic family. As a Catholic he could not attend a university, vote or hold public office, and his family moved to Binfield, in Windsor Forest, where he largely educated himself by reading the classics. An illness in childhood, probably tuberculosis of the spine, left him very short and often in pain. He became the most admired poet of his age and one of the first English writers to grow rich from his writing alone, mostly thanks to his translations of Homer, sold in advance by **subscription** (readers paid for the volumes before they were printed): the *Iliad* (1715–1720) and, with two collaborators, the *Odyssey* (1725–1726). From 1719 he lived in a villa at Twickenham, on the Thames, with a famous grotto.

His major works span thirty years. *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), written in his early twenties, is a poem in heroic couplets on how to judge poetry, modelled on Horace's *Ars poetica* and on Boileau's *L'Art poétique* (1674). *The Rape of the Lock* (1712; five cantos 1714) is his masterpiece of comedy. *The Dunciad* (1728; enlarged 1743) attacks bad writers and the commercial world of hack writing, known as Grub Street after a London street where many of them lived. *An Essay on Man* (1733–1734) is a philosophical poem that sets out, in an echo of Milton's "justify the ways of God to men" (chapter 3), to "vindicate the ways of God to Man" (I.16). He also wrote an epitaph intended for Isaac Newton, who died in 1727 (T1).

5.2.3 The mock-heroic: *The Rape of the Lock*

The poem began with a real quarrel. Lord Petre cut a lock of hair from the head of Arabella Fermor, a young Catholic lady, and the two families were offended. A friend of Pope's, John Caryll, asked him to write a poem that would make them laugh and make peace. In 1712 Pope published a first version in two cantos; in 1714 he expanded it to five cantos, adding the sylphs. Belinda (Arabella) wakes, dresses for the day, sails up the Thames to Hampton Court, wins a game of cards and drinks coffee; the Baron cuts her lock with a pair of scissors; a battle follows; and the lock, lost in the confusion, rises to the sky as a new star.

This is a **mock-heroic** (*poema eroicomico*) poem: it tells a trivial story in the grand style and with the conventions of the epic — the invocation (chapter 3), the arming of the hero, divine intervention, battles, a descent to the underworld. The supernatural beings of an epic are called its **machinery**: Pope's machinery is a crowd of tiny **sylphs**, airy spirits who guard Belinda's honour and her petticoat (Figura 5.2). The effect works in two directions. The epic style makes the fashionable world look small and silly; but the poem also loves what it mocks — the silver, the china, the light on the Thames.

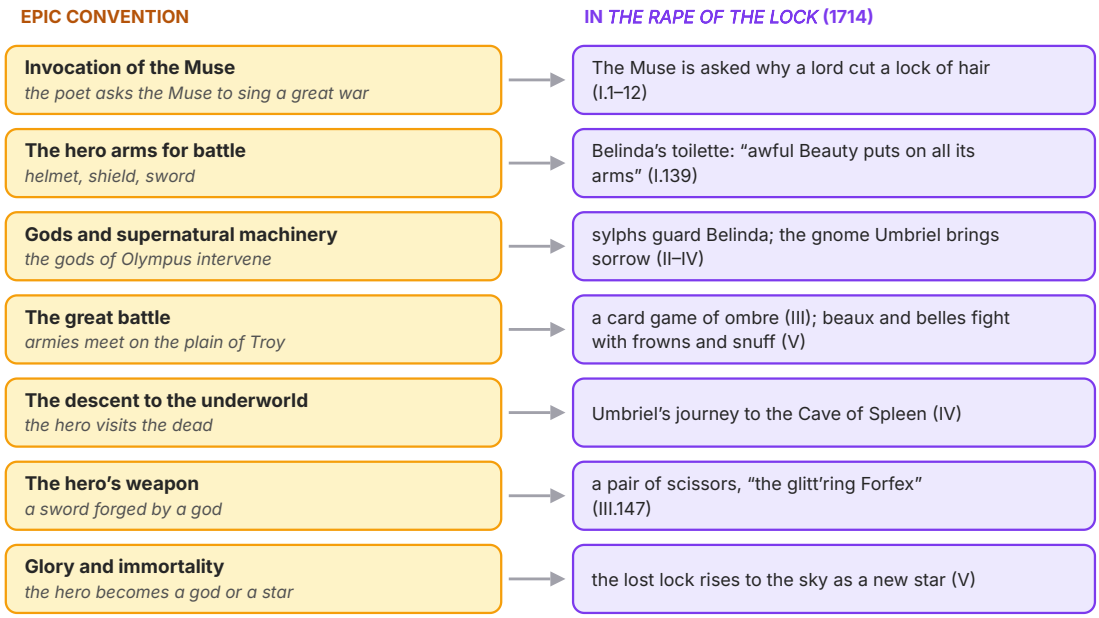

Figura 5.2 How the mock-heroic works: epic conventions (left) and their trivial equivalents in *The Rape of the Lock* (right), with canto and line references to the 1714 text.

Two devices carry much of the comedy. In **zeugma** (*zeugma*) one verb governs two objects of very different weight, so that the serious and the trivial are placed side by side: Belinda may

"stain her honour or her new brocade" (II.107), and Queen Anne at Hampton Court "Dost sometimes counsel take — and sometimes Tea" (III.8). In **bathos** (*caduta di tono, anticlimax*) the style falls suddenly from high to low, as in the list of objects on Belinda's dressing table: "Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux" (I.138) — where the Bible lies among the make-up and the love letters.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «*The Rape of the Lock* parla di una violenza sessuale.» → ✓ Qui *rape* ha il senso antico, dal latino *rapere*: **il ratto**, il furto con la forza (come nel «ratto delle Sabine»). Il titolo italiano corrente è infatti *Il ricciolo rapito*: la «vittima» è una ciocca di capelli.

✗ «Pope prende in giro l'epica.» → ✓ Il bersaglio della satira è la società elegante che dà troppa importanza alle cose piccole; l'epica (Omero, Virgilio, che Pope traduceva e ammirava) resta il modello alto con cui misurarla.

5.2.4 The periodical essay: *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*

The coffee houses needed something to read, and the most original prose of the age was written for them. The **periodical essay** (*saggio periodico*) was an essay short enough to read over a cup of coffee, on manners, morals, taste or ideas, printed on a single sheet and sold for a penny. **Richard Steele** (1672–1729), an Irish-born soldier and playwright, started *The Tatler* in April 1709; it appeared three times a week, on the days the post left London, until January 1711. Steele wrote as "Isaac Bickerstaff", an elderly astrologer, and dated his pieces from different coffee houses according to the subject: news from one, poetry from Will's, learning from the Grecian.

With his school friend **Joseph Addison** (1672–1719), a scholar, poet and Whig politician, Steele then launched *The Spectator*, published every day except Sunday from 1 March 1711 to 6 December 1712 — 555 numbers, later collected in volumes and read for more than a century. Its narrator, **Mr Spectator**, is a persona (English 3, chapter 6): a silent, curious gentleman who observes the life of London without taking part in it. He belongs to a club whose members represent the nation: Sir Roger de Coverley, a kind and old-fashioned Tory squire from the country; Sir Andrew Freeport, a Whig merchant; a soldier, Captain Sentry; a man of fashion, Will Honeycomb; a lawyer and a clergyman. Through their conversations, real readers saw their own society — and learned to laugh at its follies instead of fighting over them.

Addison's aim, as he wrote in No. 10 (T3), was to "enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality". The essays taught politeness, moderation and good taste to a public that was growing faster than its manners, and their clear, balanced prose became a model of English style: Samuel Johnson later advised anyone who wanted a good English style to give "his days and nights to the volumes of Addison".

IN SINTESI

Augustan literature at a glance. *Taste*: neoclassicism — imitation of the classics, Nature as general human nature, reason, decorum. *Verse*: the heroic couplet, closed and balanced, with antithesis and caesura. *Genres*: verse essay (*An Essay on Criticism*, *An Essay on Man*), mock-heroic (*The Rape of the Lock*), satire (*The Dunciad*), translation (Pope's Homer), periodical essay (*The Tatler*, *The Spectator*). *Devices of the mock-heroic*: epic machinery, zeugma, bathos. *Audience*: a new public of readers in coffee houses and at tea-tables.

5.3 Texts: Couplets, a Lock and a Paper

Pope's poems are printed from T. M. Parrott's edition (*The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, 1906, Project Gutenberg eBook #9800), which keeps the spelling and the elisions of Pope's own editions (*dang'rous*, *ev'n*); the epitaph on Newton is printed as Samuel Johnson quotes it in his *Life of Pope* (1781); the *Spectator* follows Henry Morley's edition (1891, Project Gutenberg eBook #12030). Apostrophes and dashes are typeset; nothing else is changed.

5.3.1 T1 · Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* and an epitaph for Newton

Context. In this part of the *Essay* Pope explains why critics so often judge badly: pride, and a little knowledge mistaken for a lot. Sixteen years later, when Newton died, he wrote a two-line epitaph that sums up how his age saw the scientist.

Tabella 5.1 T1a — *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), ll. 215–218

A little learning is a dang'rous thing;	215
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.	
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,	
And drinking largely sobers us again.	

Tabella 5.2 T1b — "Epitaph. Intended for Sir Isaac Newton, in Westminster-Abbey" (written after Newton's death in 1727): the English couplet that follows a Latin inscription

Nature, and Nature's laws, lay hid in night:
God said, *Let Newton be!* And all was light.

Glosses. *learning*: knowledge gained by study · *Pierian spring*: a spring in Pieria, in Greece, sacred to the Muses, so the source of knowledge and poetry · *draught* /drɑːft/: a mouthful of a drink · *intoxicate*: make drunk · *largely*: in large quantities · *sobers*: makes sober, clear-headed again · *lay hid*: was hidden (old past participle *hid*).

Analysis

Form. Each text is made of heroic couplets: iambic pentameter rhyming in pairs (*thing / spring*, *brain / again*, *night / light*). Each couplet is closed — it ends with a full stop and contains a complete thought — so that it can be remembered and quoted like a proverb, which is exactly what happened: "A little learning is a dangerous thing" is still used today, usually with *learning* changed to *knowledge*.

Language. The *Essay* couplets are built on a paradox: a little drinking makes you drunk, a lot makes you sober. The metaphor of drinking runs through all four lines (*drink, taste, draughts, intoxicate, drinking, sobers*), and antithesis balances *deep / shallow* and *intoxicate / sobers* across the caesura. The epitaph is a joke of the highest seriousness: its second line echoes Genesis 1:3 in the King James Bible (chapter 1), "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light", so that Newton becomes the light of a new creation. A Latin text stood above it ("Isaac Newton, whom Time, Nature and Heaven declare immortal, this marble confesses mortal", translation by the editors). Note the title: *intended*. The monument built in Westminster Abbey in 1731 carries a different Latin inscription.

1. According to T1a, why is a little learning "dangerous"? What is the cure?
2. Find two pairs of opposites in T1a and say where the caesura falls in each line.
3. In T1b, what does "night" stand for, and what does "light" stand for?
4. Why might Pope have chosen a phrase from Genesis for a scientist? Is the epitaph religious, scientific, or both?
5. Do you agree with Pope that a little knowledge is worse than none? Think of the internet.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Reading a heroic couplet: "There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, / And drinking largely sobers us again."

1. **Metre.** Mark the stresses in capitals: *there SHAL-low DRAUGHTS in-TOX-i-CATE the BRAIN* — ten syllables, five stresses, iambic pentameter.
2. **Rhyme and closure.** *brain / again* rhyme (in Pope's pronunciation, and still in much of Britain); the full stop closes the thought.
3. **Balance.** The two lines answer each other: *shallow draughts* ↔ *drinking largely*, *intoxicate* ↔ *sobers*. This is antithesis, the favourite figure of the couplet.
4. **Meaning.** A superficial reader becomes arrogant ("drunk"); deep study makes us humble ("sober"). The form imitates the idea: the clear, controlled couplet is itself the sobriety it recommends.

5.3.2 T2 · Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* I.1–12

Context. The opening of the poem in the five-canto version of 1714. Like Homer and Virgil, the poet announces his subject and asks a Muse to explain its causes — but his war is about a curl of hair.

Tabella 5.3 T2 — *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), Canto I, ll. 1–12

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,	
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,	
I sing — This verse to CARYL, Muse! is due:	
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:	
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,	5
If She inspire, and He approve my lays.	
Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel	
A well-bred Lord t' assault a gentle Belle?	
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,	
Could make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?	10
In tasks so bold, can little men engage,	
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?	

Glosses. *dire*: terrible · *am'rous*: amorous, of love · *springs*: arises · *Caryl*: John Caryll, Pope's friend, who suggested the poem · *vouchsafe*: condescend, agree (with a touch of pride) · *slight*: small, unimportant · *lays*: songs, poems · *well-bred*: well brought up, of good family · *Belle*: a beautiful, fashionable young woman · *engage*: take part · *bosoms*: hearts, breasts · *Rage*: anger, fury (the first word of Homer's *Iliad* is *mênin*, "wrath").

Analysis

Form. Six closed heroic couplets. Lines 1–2 are perfectly balanced: *What dire offence / What mighty contests* and *am'rous causes / trivial things*; the rhyme *springs / things* already contains the joke, since the "mighty contests" rise from *trivial things*. Then come two questions to the Goddess, built as a chiasmus (a crossed pattern, A–B / B–A): *a Lord… assault a gentle Belle / a gentle Belle reject a Lord*.

Meaning. Every move belongs to the epic. *I sing* is the epic poet's first person, as in Virgil's *arma virumque cano* ("I sing of arms and the man"). The final question parodies Virgil's amazement at the anger of the goddess Juno, *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (*Aeneid* I.11: "Is there

such anger in heavenly minds?"): Pope's "soft bosoms" are the hearts of fashionable ladies. Line 5 sums up the mock-heroic in one antithesis: *Slight is the subject, but not so the praise*. The poem is small; the art is not.

1. Which words in lines 1–2 belong to the epic, and which to everyday life?
2. Find the invocation: whom does the poet address, and what does he ask?
3. Who are "She" and "He" in line 6?
4. Explain the chiasmus in lines 8 and 10. Why is it funny that the two questions mirror each other?
5. Read the passage aloud with exaggerated seriousness. Where does the comedy come from: the words or the subject?

5.3.3 T3 · Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* No. 10 (12 March 1711)

Context. Eleven days after the first number, Mr Spectator thanks his readers and explains what his paper is for.

Tabella 5.4 T3 — *The Spectator* No. 10, Monday 12 March 1711 (Addison), from the first two paragraphs; omissions marked […]. The capital letters are those of the edition.

> My Publisher tells me, that there are already Three Thousand of them distributed every Day: So that if I allow Twenty Readers to every Paper, which I look upon as a modest Computation, I may reckon about Threescore thousand Disciples in *London* and *Westminster* […]. For which Reasons I shall endeavour to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality, that my Readers may, if possible, both Ways find their account in the Speculation of the Day. […] It was said of *Socrates*, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee-houses.

> I would therefore in a very particular Manner recommend these my Speculations to all well-regulated Families, that set apart an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butter; and would earnestly advise them for their Good to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage.

Glosses. *them*: copies of the paper · *computation*: calculation · *threescore*: sixty (a *score* is twenty) · *disciples*: followers, pupils · *find their account in*: get some profit from · *speculation*: here, an essay, the result of observing (Latin *speculari*, to observe) · *closets*: small private studies · *well-regulated*: well-ordered · *tea equipage*: the tea set — cups, pot, sugar bowl.

Analysis

Style. Addison's sentences are long but never confused: each is built on pairs and balance, like a couplet in prose. *Enliven Morality with Wit, and… temper Wit with Morality* is a chiasmus; *Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges* (places of private and academic learning) are set against *Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee-houses* (places of social life). The capital letters on nouns were a printing habit of the time, not a sign of emphasis.

Meaning. This is the programme of the periodical essay. Philosophy — knowledge, ethics, taste — is no longer for scholars alone: it must reach the public where the public is. The last sentence is wonderfully modest and ironic at once: the paper is to be served with breakfast, like the bread and butter, a part of the tea set. Mr Spectator turns reading into a daily social habit — as a newspaper, a podcast or a news app does today.

1. How many readers does Mr Spectator claim, and how does he calculate them? Is his estimate really "modest"?
2. What did Socrates do, according to the text, and what does Mr Spectator want to do?
3. List the places where philosophy lived before and the places where it will live now. What do the two lists say about the new public?
4. Why is it ironic to recommend a moral paper as "a Part of the Tea Equipage"?

5.4 Language: Nominalisation and Formal Register

Compare two sentences about the same event. *Lots of people bought South Sea shares because they thought prices would keep going up, and when they didn't, loads of them lost everything.* — *The widespread expectation of rising prices led to massive investment in South Sea shares, and their collapse caused heavy losses.* The first is how we speak; the second is how history books, scientific papers and formal essays are written. The difference lies in two things: more nouns, and a different register. Both are B2 skills for your essays — and for any text you will write at university.

5.4.1 From verbs and adjectives to nouns

Nominalisation (*nominalizzazione*) means expressing as a noun what could be expressed as a verb or an adjective: *Newton discovered* → *Newton's discovery*; *the shares were popular* → *the popularity of the shares*. The action becomes a "thing" that can be the subject or object of a new sentence, so the writer can pack more information into fewer clauses and connect ideas with verbs such as *lead to, result in, cause, contribute to, follow* (Tabella 5.5, Figura 5.3).

Tabella 5.5 Nominalisation: what changes

Change	How	Examples
verb → noun	*-tion / -sion*, *-ment*, *-al*, *-ure*, *-ance / -ence*, no change	*publish → publication, invest → investment, refuse → refusal, fail → failure, appear → appearance, collapse → (the) collapse, grow → growth*
adjective → noun	*-ity*, *-ness*, *-ance / -ence*, *-dom*, irregular	*popular → popularity, polite → politeness, important → importance, free → freedom, wise → wisdom, long → length, true → truth*
subject or object → possessive or *of*	*X's* + noun; noun + *of* + X	*Newton discovered… → Newton's discovery of…; they printed the paper → the printing of the paper*
adverb → adjective	the adverb becomes a pre-modifier	*rapidly grew → a rapid growth; carefully read → a careful reading*
clause linker → verb or preposition	*because, so, after → lead to, result in, due to, following*	*Prices rose, so people panicked → The rise in prices led to panic.*

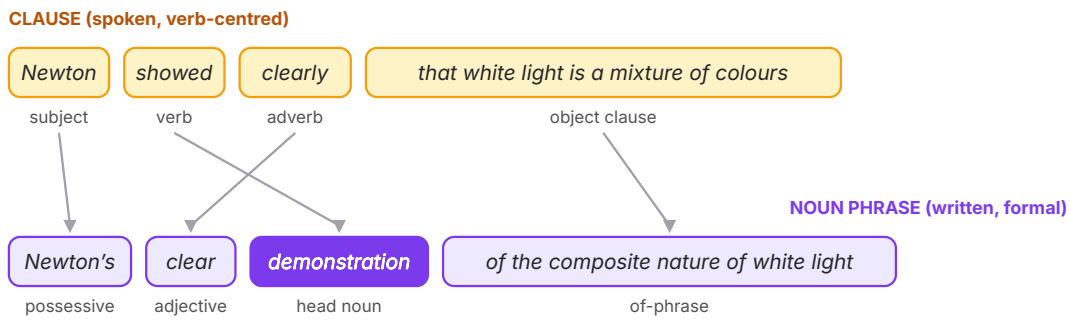

Figura 5.3 Nominalisation: each part of a clause (amber) becomes part of a noun phrase (violet). The verb becomes the head noun, the subject a possessive, the adverb an adjective, the object an *of*-phrase.

Nominalised nouns combine with particular verbs and prepositions, and these collocations must be learned: *make a discovery / a decision / an attempt*, *carry out an experiment / an investigation*, *reach a conclusion / an agreement*, *give an explanation*, *conduct research*; *an increase / a rise / a fall / a growth* ***in*** something (*a rise in prices*), but *an increase* ***of*** an amount (*an increase of 20%*).

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

La nominalizzazione. Si trasforma un verbo o un aggettivo in un nome: *Newton discovered…* → *Newton's discovery of…* (la scoperta di Newton). Il soggetto diventa un genitivo sassone o un complemento con *of*; l'avverbio diventa aggettivo (*grew rapidly* → *a rapid growth*); la congiunzione diventa un verbo «di collegamento» (*so* → *led to*; *because* → *was due to*). È tipica dello scritto formale, accademico e scientifico.

Confronto con l'italiano. Anche l'italiano formale nominalizza molto: *la scoperta della gravità*, *l'aumento dei prezzi*, *in seguito al crollo delle azioni*. Attenzione però alle preposizioni: *l'aumento **dei** prezzi* = *the rise **in** prices*, non ✗ *of prices*. E l'inglese, più dell'italiano, preferisce nomi brevi e frasi chiare: il «burocratese» (*effettuare la verifica* invece di *verificare*) è un difetto in entrambe le lingue.

5.4.2 Building a formal noun phrase

A formal noun phrase grows around its **head noun**. Words before the head are **pre-modification**: determiners, adjectives and other nouns (*the first London daily newspaper*). Words after it are **post-modification**: an *of*-phrase, another prepositional phrase, a participle or a relative clause (*a paper **for** the coffee-house public*, *a reader **living** in the City*, *the essays **that Addison wrote***). English pre-modifies much more freely than Italian: *a two-canto poem* = *un poema in due canti*; *the 1720 stock-market crash* = *il crollo della Borsa del 1720*. Remember that a noun used as a modifier is singular: ✓ *a five-canto poem*, ✗ *a five-cantos poem*.

5.4.3 Formal and informal register

Register (*registro*) is the variety of language that suits a situation: who is writing to whom, about what, and through which medium. You met formal and informal letters and emails in English 2 and 3; at B2 you must be able to move along the whole scale, the register cline of Figura 5.4, and to keep one register consistently through a text. Tabella 5.6 lists the main signals.

Tabella 5.6 Informal and formal register: the main signals

	Informal (spoken style)	Formal (written style)
Verbs	phrasal verbs: *find out, put up with, set up, go up, look into, cut down on*	**Latinate verbs** (from Latin, often through French): *discover, tolerate, establish, increase, investigate, reduce* (chapter 10 develops this)
Grammar	contractions (*didn't, it's*); active verbs with *you, we, people*; short clauses joined by *and, but, so*	full forms; impersonal and passive structures (*it is often argued that…*); nominalisation; subordination
Vocabulary	vague words: *stuff, things, a lot of, loads of, pretty*	precise words: *items, factors, a considerable number of, many, fairly*
Tone	direct questions, exclamations, humour	statements, hedging (chapter 4), measured evaluation

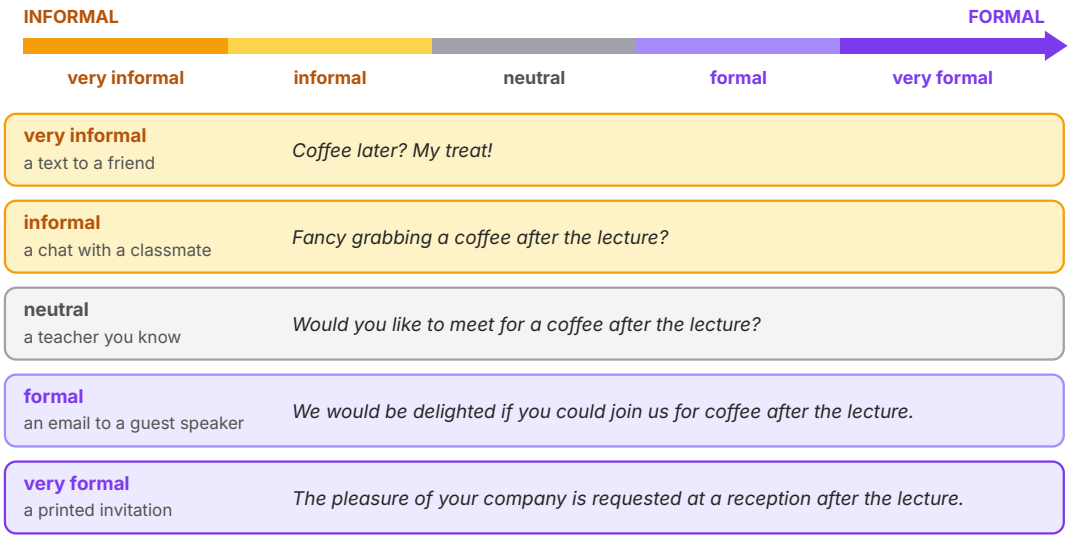

Figura 5.4 A register cline: the same invitation, from a text message to a printed card. Formality is a scale, not a switch.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Il registro formale. In inglese il registro si riconosce soprattutto da tre segnali: (1) i **verbi** — *phrasal verbs* nel parlato (*find out*), verbi di origine latina nello scritto formale (*discover*); (2) la **grammatica** — niente contrazioni, molte forme impersonali e passive, molti nomi; (3) il **lessico** — parole precise invece di *stuff*, *things*, *a lot of*.

Confronto con l'italiano. Per un italiano il registro formale inglese è spesso più facile del colloquiale: *discover, tolerate, establish* assomigliano a *scoprire, tollerare, stabilire*. Il rischio è l'opposto: usare parole troppo «latine» in un contesto informale (✗ *Shall we commence the film?* → ✓ *Shall we start the film?*). Il *Lei* di cortesia non esiste: la cortesia inglese passa per forme indirette (*Would you mind...? I was wondering if...*).

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *The discover of the cell...* → ✓ *The* ***discovery*** *of the cell...* (il nome di *discover* è *discovery*; *discoverer* è chi scopre).

✗ *An increase of prices...* → ✓ *An increase* ***in*** *prices...* (ma: *an increase* ***of*** *10%*).

✗ *They did a decision.* → ✓ *They* ***made*** *a decision.* Allo stesso modo: *carry out* (non ✗ *do*) *an experiment* nello scritto formale; *reach* (non ✗ *arrive at* in tutti i casi) *an agreement*.

✗ *In the essay I'm gonna show that Pope didn't like the aristocracy.* → ✓ *This essay will show that Pope's satire targets the aristocracy.*

5.4.4 When nominalisation goes too far

Nouns make a text dense, and density has a limit. Compare *The South Sea Company share price collapse investigation report publication delay* with *The report on why the South Sea shares collapsed was published late.* The second is longer but clear. Good formal writing nominalises the key ideas and keeps real verbs for the actions: in Addison's sentences there are many nouns, but there is always a strong verb that moves the sentence forward (*brought, dwell, recommend*).

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

From notes to a formal sentence. Notes: *coffee houses spread fast after 1660 → more people read the papers → politics changed.*

1. Turn the actions into nouns: *spread fast → the rapid spread*; *more people read → a growth in readership*; *politics changed → a change in political life*.
2. Choose linking verbs: *led to*, *contributed to*.
3. Build the sentence: *The rapid spread of coffee houses after 1660 led to a growth in newspaper readership, which in turn contributed to a change in political life.*
4. Check: one subject (*the rapid spread…*), real verbs (*led to, contributed to*), no contractions, no vague words. Formal and clear.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Switching register. Practise moving one message along the cline. Take a simple piece of news — *the library will close early on Friday* — and write it three times: as a message to a friend (*Heads up: library shuts at 3 on Fri!*), as an email to a teacher (*I wanted to let you know that the library will close early on Friday*), and as a public notice (*Please note that the library will close at 3 p.m. on Friday*). Underline what changes: verbs, contractions, nouns, politeness. Do the same in Italian (a WhatsApp message, an email to the headteacher, an official *avviso*) and in Latin translation, where choosing the right register for Cicero or for Plautus is half the work.

5.5 Skills: Columns and Conversation

5.5.1 Vocabulary: society, fashion and the press

Tabella 5.7 collects words for the society of the coffee houses — and of today's media. Many of them are still the vocabulary of journalism: an *editor* still decides what goes in a paper, and a *column* is still a regular article signed by the same writer.

Tabella 5.7 Society, fashion and the press

Word	Meaning	Example
gossip (n./v.)	chatter about other people's private lives	*At ev'ry word a reputation dies*: Pope's portrait of gossip at Hampton Court.
fashionable (adj.)	popular in a particular period	Coffee was **fashionable** before tea became cheaper.
reputation (n.)	the opinion people have of someone	A single article could ruin a **reputation**.
manners (n. pl.)	polite ways of behaving	The *Spectator* set out to improve the nation's **manners**.
periodical (n./adj.)	a paper or magazine published at regular intervals	*The Tatler* was a **periodical** published three times a week.
readership (n.)	the readers of a paper, as a group	Addison estimated his **readership** at sixty thousand.
subscriber (n.)	someone who pays in advance to receive something	Pope's *Iliad* was paid for by **subscribers**.
editor (n.)	the person who decides what a paper publishes	The **editor** rejected the letter as too rude.
column (n.)	a regular article by the same writer	She writes a weekly **column** on food.
wit (n.)	quick, clever humour (English 3, chapter 12)	His **wit** made the moral lesson enjoyable.

Word formation: clipping

Clipping (*accorciamento*) is the creation of a short word by cutting part of a longer one, without changing its meaning: *examination* → *exam*. It is one of the commonest ways English makes informal words, and the age of the coffee houses was full of them. In *The Tatler* No. 230 (28 September 1710), in a paper usually attributed to Swift (chapter 7), the writer complains that fashionable speakers pronounce "the first syllable in a word that has many", and dismiss the rest, and gives as examples *phizz* (physiognomy, face), *hipps* (hypochondria, low spirits), *mobb*, *poz.* (positive) and *rep.* (reputation). Most disappeared; one won. *Mob* comes from the Latin *mobile vulgus*, "the fickle crowd", and is now a normal English word.

- **Back clipping** (the end is cut): *exam(ination), lab(oratory), gym(nasium), maths (mathematics), ad(vertisement), fan* (probably from *fan(atic)*).
- **Fore clipping** (the beginning is cut): *(tele)phone, (omni)bus, (aero)plane*.
- **Middle clipping** (only the middle survives): *(in)flu(enza)*; with a change of spelling, *fridge* (refrigerator).

Italian clips too, usually from the end: *bici, moto, foto, frigo, prof, cinema* (from *cinematografo*). Clipped words often start as slang and become neutral (*bus, phone*), but some stay informal: write *examination* or *exam* as you like, but write *advertisement*, not *ad*, in a formal essay.

5.5.2 Reading: The Link Coffee House

Before you read. Where do people in your town meet to talk about books, politics or news? Is a group chat a modern coffee house?

The Link Reading Club Blog · Announcements

Welcome to the Link Coffee House! Every Friday from now until June, this blog will publish a new column. Here is how the idea was born, and how you can take part.

It started, like most good ideas, with an argument. At our last video call, Callum said that nobody under eighty reads newspaper columns any more. Sam disagreed (Sam always disagrees with Callum, it is part of their friendship), and Giulia pointed out that in Turin her dad reads two every morning and then reads them aloud to anyone still at the table, whether they want it or not. "That's exactly what Addison wanted," said Sam, who had just written an A-level essay on *The Spectator*. "A paper served with breakfast, like the bread and butter."

That evening, Mrs Hill and Prof.ssa Rossi agreed to an experiment. For the rest of the year, our two classes will run their own periodical: the **Link Spectator**. The rules are short. Each column must be written by a *persona*, not by the real author: an invented character with a name, an age, a voice and some strong opinions. The topic must be light, but it must be treated with absolute seriousness. Every column is between 200 and 250 words. And, as in Addison's paper, nobody real may be laughed at: we satirise habits, not people.

The personas are already arriving. Giulia has invented *Signora Moka*, a retired chemistry teacher from Turin who judges every café by the temperature of its cups. Aoife, writing from Galway, has created *The Weather Correspondent*, who reports on Irish rain with the gravity of a war reporter. Marta has promised a column by *Professor Pi*, who believes every problem in life can be solved with a diagram; nobody has seen the column yet, because Marta has lost her notes twice. Sam's persona, *Mr Overdue*, is a library book that has not been returned for three years and has opinions about everyone who has borrowed it.

Callum, who started the argument, has agreed to be the editor. He has made a timetable, a style guide and a spreadsheet of deadlines, and he says that if anyone misses one, he will write the column himself, in the voice of a very disappointed spreadsheet.

Why do it? Partly because it is fun. But also because writing in someone else's voice is a serious exercise. You have to choose words that the persona would use, keep a register for 250 words, and make your reader smile while saying something true. Pope said that true wit is "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd". That is our aim: to say what everybody thinks, but better.

So: grab a coffee, or a tea, or a hot chocolate, and read the first column on Friday. Comments are welcome — politely, please. This is a coffee house, not a battlefield.

— Giulia and Sam, for the Link Reading Club

After you read. 1 What started the idea of the Link Spectator? 2 List the four rules for the columns. 3 What do you learn about the characters of Callum and Marta from the text? 4 Which persona would you most like to read, and why? 5 Find three formal and three informal expressions in the post, and say why the writers mix them.

5.5.3 Speaking: polite conversation and small talk

Small talk (*conversazione di circostanza*) is light, polite conversation with people you do not know well: at a reception, a school open day, a conference coffee break, or a host family's dinner. Its topics are safe (the event, the place, travel, the weather, studies); its purpose is not information but connection. At B2 you are expected to open a conversation, keep it going by showing interest and asking follow-up questions, take and give turns politely, and close it without being abrupt. Indirect questions and softeners make you sound polite (Tabella 5.8).

Tabella 5.8 Useful language — polite conversation and small talk

Function	Phrases
Opening	*Excuse me, is anyone sitting here? · Lovely venue, isn't it? · I don't think we've met — I'm… · Are you here for the talk too?*
Asking politely	*Do you happen to know…? · I was wondering whether… · Would you mind telling me…? · May I ask what you're studying?*
Showing interest	*Really? That sounds fascinating. · How did you get into that? · I couldn't help noticing your… · So what was that like?*
Taking a turn	*That reminds me… · Speaking of…, · If I could just add something… · Sorry, I interrupted you — go on.*
Closing	*It's been lovely talking to you. · I'd better go and find my teacher. · I hope you enjoy the rest of the evening. · Perhaps we'll meet at the next one.*

1. **Task 1 (pairs, 3 minutes).** You are at the reception after a public lecture on Newton at a museum. Student A is an Italian exchange student; student B is a local university student. Start a conversation, find two things you have in common, and close it politely. Use at least one phrase from each row of the table.
2. **Task 2 (groups of three).** A host has to introduce two guests to each other and keep the conversation going. Swap roles twice. Afterwards, discuss: which topics are safe for small talk in Britain and in Italy? Are any topics safe in one country and not in the other (money, age, politics, football)?

5.5.4 Writing: an opinion column with a persona

An opinion column at B2 is a short, signed article in which a writer gives a personal view on a topic. In this task the column is written by a **persona**: an invented voice whose character shapes every sentence. Unlike the newspaper article of English 3, which reports and informs, the column is driven by the persona: a light topic is treated with mock seriousness, the voice is consistent, and the reader recognises a truth behind the joke.

Tabella 5.9 Model text — an opinion column with a persona (218 words, title and signature excluded)

The Link Spectator · Mr Overdue writes
On the Shameful Neglect of Library Books
I am a library book. I was printed before you were born, I am bound in respectable blue cloth, and for three years I have lived under a bed in Bristol, between a football boot and a family of socks. I write today not for myself, but for all my companions in exile.
It is a truth that no reader will admit: borrowing is easy, returning is not. The decision to borrow is made in a moment of enthusiasm; the return requires planning, a bag and, above all, memory. As a result, thousands of us spend our best years on bedside tables, in car boots and, in one tragic case I know of, inside a fridge.
I am told that young people prefer screens. I do not believe it. I have been opened eleven times in three years, usually at chapter one, and always at two in the morning. That is not indifference; it is love without commitment.
I propose, therefore, a modest reform. Every borrower should keep a list of the books in their room, with the date of borrowing. Every library should send not a fine, which only frightens us, but a polite letter, which makes us feel missed. And every reader should ask, once a month: where are my books, and what are they thinking?
I remain, in the dark, your obedient servant, *Mr Overdue*

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing the model.

1. **The persona** is established in the first sentence and never dropped: a proud, old-fashioned book with the voice of an 18th-century gentleman (*respectable blue cloth, your obedient servant*).
2. **A light topic, treated seriously**: unreturned library books become an "exile" and a "tragic case". The mock-heroic tone of Pope, in prose.
3. **Structure**: title → the persona introduces himself → the problem, with causes and effects → an objection answered (*young people prefer screens*) → a proposal → a signature in character.
4. **Language**: nominalisation where the column reasons (*the decision to borrow, the return requires planning*), short sentences for jokes (*I do not believe it.*), an echo of a famous novel opening that you will meet in chapter 14 (*It is a truth…*), formal connectors (*As a result, therefore*).
5. **The point behind the joke**: we start books and do not finish them; kindness works better than punishment.

Checklist. ✓ a title and a persona with a name and a clear voice · ✓ a light topic treated with mock seriousness · ✓ a clear structure: situation, problem, argument, proposal or conclusion · ✓ one register kept throughout (the persona's) · ✓ at least two nominalisations and two formal connectors · ✓ a real point behind the humour · ✓ no real people laughed at · ✓ 200–250 words.

Task. Write a column for the *Link Spectator* (200–250 words) in the voice of a persona you invent. Choose: a) a school vending machine writes about the students who use it; b) a grandmother who has just discovered video calls writes about modern manners; c) a pigeon in a city square writes about tourists. **Research (TIC).** Read one number of *The Spectator* on Project Gutenberg (eBook #12030, for example No. 2, which introduces the Club) and note one technique you can borrow. Check that the edition is a reliable one: who edited it, and when?

5.6 Connections: a Young Lord, an Academy and a Prism

5.6.1 Pope and Parini: two mock-heroic satires

Fifty years after *The Rape of the Lock*, an Italian poet turned the mock-heroic against the same target: the idle, elegant aristocracy. **Giuseppe Parini** (1729–1799), a priest who worked as tutor in noble Milanese houses, published *Il Mattino* in 1763 and *Il Mezzogiorno* in 1765; two further parts, *Il Vespro* and *La Notte*, were left unfinished and appeared after his death, and the whole is known as *Il Giorno*. The narrator is a tutor who teaches a "Giovin Signore" how to spend his empty day, with the solemnity of a master of epic or didactic poetry:

Tabella 5.10 Giuseppe Parini, *Il Mattino* (Milano, 1763), ll. 1–4 and 7, text of the Wikisource edition, checked against a second Wikisource text; omission marked […]

Giovin Signore, o a te scenda per lungo	
di magnanimi lombi ordine il sangue	
purissimo celeste, o in te del sangue	
emendino il difetto i compri onori […]	
me Precettor d'amabil rito ascolta.	7

("Young lord, whether your most pure, heavenly blood comes down to you through a long line of noble ancestors, or whether purchased honours correct the defect of your blood […], listen to me, the teacher of a pleasant ritual." Translation by the editors.)

The two poems share the method: epic solemnity applied to toilettes, breakfasts and visits, and an irony that never states its judgement openly. Even the young lord's heavenly blood may be bought — "i compri onori", a dig at families who bought their titles. But there are differences. Pope writes in rhymed, closed couplets; Parini in *endecasillabi sciolti*, the Italian equivalent of blank verse. Pope laughs with a society he belongs to, and his satire is affectionate; Parini, a man of modest origins writing in the age of the Enlightenment, is harsher: behind the idle lord he shows the servants, the poor and the useless privilege of birth.

5.6.2 Arcadia and an Italian *Spectator*

Italian literature had its own Augustan reaction. In Rome, on 5 October 1690, a group of poets founded the **Accademia dell'Arcadia**, named after the Greek land of shepherds. Against the excesses of the Baroque and of Marino's conceits (chapter 2), the Arcadians wanted simplicity, clarity, good taste and the imitation of the classics — a programme very close to English neoclassicism. Members took pastoral names, and the academy spread through Italy; Pietro Metastasio, the greatest librettist of the century, was one of them. In England, Pope's first published poems were also pastorals (1709).

The periodical essay travelled too. In Venice, where the Caffè Florian had opened in Piazza San Marco in 1720, Gasparo Gozzi published *L'Osservatore veneto* (1761), openly modelled on *The Spectator*: an observer, short essays, portraits of types and a gentle moral aim. A few years later, in Milan, the Verri brothers' *Il Caffè* (chapter 9) would take its very name from the coffee house.

5.6.3 Newton's light

When Pope wrote that God said "Let Newton be! and all was light", he probably had gravity in mind first; but the line fits his work on light just as well, and literally. In the 1660s Newton passed a beam of sunlight through a glass prism and saw on the wall a band of colours, a **spectrum**

(*spettro*). He concluded that white light is not pure and simple, as most philosophers believed, but a mixture of rays of different colours, which glass bends — **refraction** (*rifrazione*) — by slightly different amounts. Violet is bent most, red least, so the colours separate: this is **dispersion** (*dispersione*) (Figura 5.5). In his *experimentum crucis* ("crucial experiment") he isolated one colour and sent it through a second prism: it was bent again, but not split further. He published his theory in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in 1672 and, in full, in *Opticks* (1704), written in English. Poets loved the idea: James Thomson's poem "To the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton" (1727) describes the colours one by one.

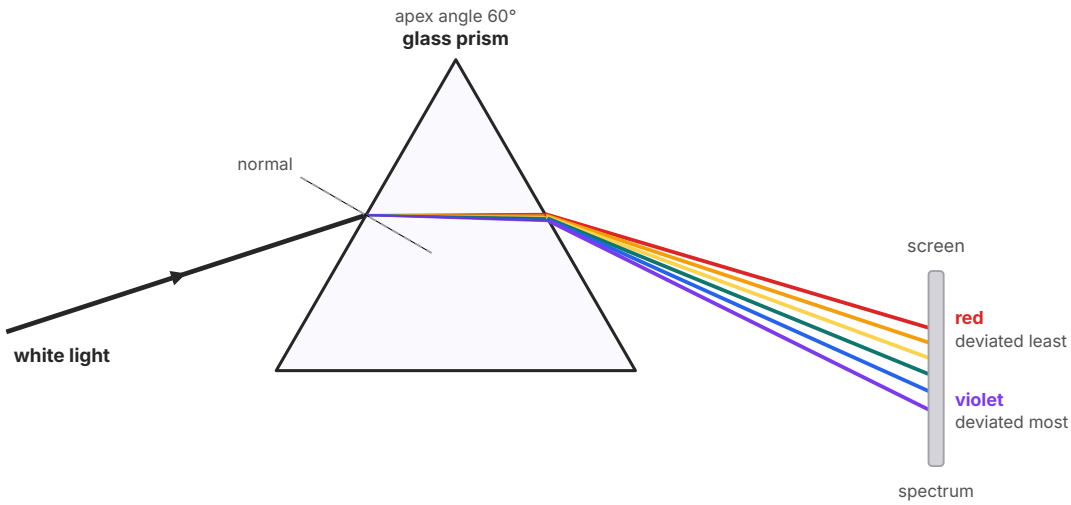

Figura 5.5 Dispersion of white light by a glass prism (simplified; the angles between the colours are exaggerated about six times for clarity). For crown glass, n ≈ 1.514 for red and 1.532 for violet (as in the Collegamenti box); with light entering at 48° to the normal, a 60° prism deviates red by about 38.4° and violet by about 40.1°.

COLLEGAMENTI

Physics: why a prism makes a spectrum. When light passes from air into glass it slows down and changes direction. Snell's law describes the change: $n_1 \sin i = n_2 \sin r$, where i and r are the angles to the normal and n is the refractive index (air ≈ 1). The index of glass is slightly different for each colour. Example: light strikes glass at $i = 45°$. For red, $n = 1.514$, so $\sin r = \sin 45° / 1.514 = 0.467$ and $r = 27.8°$; for violet, $n = 1.532$, so $\sin r = 0.462$ and $r = 27.5°$. Violet is turned from its path by 17.5°, red by 17.2°: a difference of only a third of a degree. The second face of the prism bends the light again and increases the gap (in Figura 5.5 the total deviations differ by about 1.6°), and a screen a few metres away shows a band of colour. Newton named seven colours — red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet — partly by analogy with the seven notes of the musical scale; the spectrum itself is continuous. The same dispersion, in drops of water, makes the rainbow.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Was the coffee house really open to all? In a famous study (1962) the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas described the coffee houses, clubs and periodicals of eighteenth-century England as the birth of a "public sphere": a space where private people met as equals and used reason to discuss public matters, and from which modern public opinion grew. Historians have since qualified the picture. Coffee houses were open in principle, but women were largely excluded, the poor could not afford the time, and much talk was gossip, business or party propaganda rather than rational debate. Others reply that the ideal mattered even when practice fell short — that Addison's readers learned, at least, that a civil argument was better than a sword. The debate is still open; and it returns every time someone asks whether social media are a coffee house or a battlefield.

SINTESI

- Queen Anne (1702–1714) was the last Stuart; the Act of Settlement (1701) gave the crown to the Protestant House of Hanover, and George I succeeded in 1714. Jacobite risings in 1715 and 1745 failed.
- The Acts of Union created the Kingdom of Great Britain on 1 May 1707, with one parliament at Westminster; Scotland kept its law, Church and universities.
- Whigs (Parliament, trade, Protestant succession) and Tories (Crown, Church, land) began as insults; Robert Walpole, First Lord of the Treasury 1721–1742, is conventionally the first prime minister.
- A financial revolution: the Bank of England (1694), the national debt, share trading — and the South Sea Bubble of 1720.
- Coffee houses were centres of news, business (Lloyd's, Jonathan's), politics and literature; the end of licensing (1695) and the first daily paper (1702) created a new reading public.
- "Augustan": an age that saw itself, and was later seen, as a new age of Augustus — order, peace, polish. Its taste was **neoclassicism**: imitation of the classics, Nature, reason, decorum.
- Alexander Pope (1688–1744), a Catholic, perfected the closed heroic couplet: *An Essay on Criticism* (1711), *The Rape of the Lock* (1714), the Homer translations, *The Dunciad*, *An Essay on Man*.
- The **mock-heroic** treats a trivial subject with epic conventions — invocation, arming, machinery (the sylphs), battle; zeugma and bathos join the great and the small.
- The **periodical essay**: Steele's *Tatler* (1709–1711) and Addison and Steele's *Spectator* (1711–1712), with Mr Spectator and his Club, brought "Philosophy… to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee-houses".
- **Nominalisation** turns verbs and adjectives into nouns (*the discovery of, a rise in*); formal register prefers Latinate verbs, full forms, impersonal structures and precise words.
- Clipping makes short words (*mob, exam, phone, flu*); small talk keeps a conversation polite with indirect questions and follow-ups; a column speaks through a persona.
- Parini's *Il Giorno* (1763–1765) is an Italian mock-heroic satire of the idle nobility; Arcadia (1690) and Gozzi's *Osservatore* (1761) parallel English neoclassicism and the *Spectator*; Newton's *Opticks* (1704) explained colour as the dispersion of white light.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● The Acts of Union of 1707…
   - **A.** united England and Ireland in one kingdom
   - **B.** created the Kingdom of Great Britain, with one parliament at Westminster
   - **C.** abolished Scots law and the Church of Scotland
   - **D.** gave the crown to the House of Hanover

2. ● Robert Walpole is called the first prime minister "conventionally" because…
   - **A.** he was never First Lord of the Treasury
   - **B.** George I gave him the title officially in 1721
   - **C.** he lived at 10 Downing Street only after 1742
   - **D.** in his time "prime minister" was an unofficial, originally hostile name with no legal existence

3. ● Lloyd's coffee house is remembered today because…
   - **A.** merchants and ship-owners met there to insure ships and cargoes
   - **B.** Addison and Steele wrote *The Spectator* there
   - **C.** the first London daily newspaper was printed there
   - **D.** the Royal Society held its official meetings there

4. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Anne was the first Hanoverian monarch. b The South Sea Company's shares collapsed in 1720. c After 1695 books no longer needed a licence before publication. d Pope studied at Oxford. e *The Spectator* came out every day, Sunday included. f The first version of *The Rape of the Lock* had two cantos.

5. ●● Match each author with a work and its date. Authors: Pope · Steele · Addison and Steele · Newton. Works: *The Tatler* · *Opticks* · *An Essay on Criticism* · *The Spectator* · *The Rape of the Lock* (five cantos) · *An Essay on Man*. Dates: 1704 · 1709 · 1711 · 1711 · 1714 · 1733–1734.

6. ●● Explain these terms in your own words, with an example from the chapter: a neoclassicism · b decorum · c mock-heroic · d machinery · e zeugma · f periodical essay.

7. ●●● Short answer (50–70 words). Why were the coffee houses important for the literature of the Augustan age?

Text Analysis

8. ● In T1a, the "Pierian spring" stands for…
   - **A.** a fashionable spa where the rich drank mineral water
   - **B.** wine, which makes people drunk
   - **C.** knowledge and poetry, the gift of the Muses
   - **D.** the river Thames at Twickenham

9. ● T1a. a What happens to someone who “drinks” only a little? b What does Pope advise? c Which word in l. 218 is the opposite of *intoxicate*? d Rewrite Pope’s advice as a modern proverb of your own.

10. ●● Scansion. Copy l. 215 of T1a, “A little learning is a dang’rous thing”, and write the stressed syllables in CAPITALS. How many syllables would the line have with *dangerous* in full, and why does Pope write *dang’rous*?

11. ●● T2. a Which words in ll. 1–3 announce an epic subject? b Whom does the poet address, and with which names? c Find two antitheses. d Which line imitates Virgil’s question about the anger of Juno?

12. ●● Paraphrase ll. 7–12 of T2 into modern English.

13. ●● T3. a How many copies are distributed every day? b How many readers does Mr Spectator reckon, and how? c Where will philosophy “dwell” from now on? d What does he advise families to do with the paper? e Assume that London and Westminster had about 600,000 inhabitants: what fraction of them would his readers be?

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (about 80 words): How does Pope make a trivial event sound important in T2? Use one short quotation.

Language

15. ● The war led to a sharp rise ___ the price of bread.
    - **A.** of
    - **B.** at
    - **C.** in
    - **D.** on

16. ● Which sentence is the most formal?
    - **A.** Loads of people got into coffee back then.
    - **B.** Coffee caught on fast among Londoners.
    - **C.** Coffee became really popular in London.
    - **D.** The consumption of coffee increased considerably in London.

17. ●● The noun formed from the verb *fail* is…
    - **A.** failness
    - **B.** failure
    - **C.** failation
    - **D.** failment

18. ● Write the noun for each verb or adjective. a publish · b invest · c refuse · d grow · e popular · f polite · g free · h wise · i appear · j decide · k able · l accurate.

19. ●● Rewrite each sentence with a noun phrase as subject, as in the example. Example: *The shares collapsed suddenly, and many families were ruined.* → *The sudden collapse of the shares ruined many families.* a Newton explained colour, and this changed optics. b The coffee houses were popular, so the government was worried. c Scotland and England united in 1707, which created a single parliament. d Pope translated Homer, and this made him rich. e Readers multiplied rapidly after 1695, and this encouraged new periodicals. f Addison wrote clearly, and this made his essays a model of style.

20. ●● Replace the phrasal verb with a formal verb of similar meaning. a The government *set up* a bank in 1694. b Prices *went up* in the spring of 1720. c A committee *looked into* the collapse. d Many readers could not *put up with* Pope's satire. e Newton *found out* that white light is a mixture. f The family decided to *cut down on* sugar.

21. ●● Error correction. Each sentence has one mistake. a The discover of the spectrum changed science. b There was a large increase of the number of coffee houses. c The government did a decision to close them. d The popularity of Pope's Homer translations were enormous. e *The Rape of the Lock* is a five-cantos poem. f In this essay I'm gonna show that Addison wanted to improve manners.

22. ●● Build one noun phrase from the information, as in the example. Example: *a poem — it has five cantos — Pope wrote it* → *Pope's five-canto poem*. a a newspaper — published every day — the first in London · b a crash — on the stock market — in 1720 · c an essay — Addison wrote it — about the aims of his paper · d an experiment — Newton did it in the 1660s — with a prism · e a club — Steele invented it — its members represent the nation.

23. ●● Translate into English, in a formal register. a L'aumento del numero dei lettori fu una conseguenza della fine della censura preventiva. b La scoperta della dispersione della luce si deve a Newton. c La fondazione della Banca d'Inghilterra nel 1694 rese possibile il finanziamento della guerra.

24. ●●● Too many nouns. Rewrite each sentence in clear, formal English, with at least one real verb. a *The coffee house newspaper reading habit growth investigation results publication has occurred.* b *The occurrence of a reduction in the level of investor trust was the cause of the share price collapse.*

Vocabulary

25. ● Complete with words from Tabella 5.7: *gossip, fashionable, reputation, manners, readership, subscribers, editor, column*. a The ___ decided to put the story on the front page. b Paying ___ received the volumes before anyone else. c In 1711 it was ___ to be seen with *The Spectator*. d Our school magazine has a ___ of about 400 students. e Don't spread ___ about people you don't know. f She writes a weekly ___ about science. g He lost his ___ after the scandal. h Table ___ differ from country to country.

26. ●● Clipping. Give the full word and say whether the clipping is back, fore or middle. a exam · b bus · c flu · d lab · e phone · f gym · g plane · h maths. Then give two Italian clipped words.

27. ●● Collocations. Complete with *make, carry out, reach, give, conduct, pay*. a ___ an experiment · b ___ a discovery · c ___ a conclusion · d ___ an explanation · e ___ research · f ___ a visit.

Writing and Speaking

28. ●●● Write a column for the *Link Spectator* (200–250 words) in the voice of a persona: a school bell that has rung for forty years writes about punctuality. Follow the checklist in the Writing section.

29. ●● Speaking (pairs). At the reception after a school concert, start a conversation with a parent of another student you have never met. Open, ask two polite questions, show interest, take a turn and close the conversation (about 2 minutes).

Towards B2

30. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the word (A, B, C or D) that best fits each gap. Edward Lloyd's coffee house is first (1) ___ in 1688. Ship-owners and captains soon (2) ___ into the habit of meeting there, because Lloyd took care to collect (3) ___ news about ships and cargoes. Before long, merchants who wanted to (4) ___ themselves against the loss of a ship were writing their names under its details, each one (5) ___ responsibility for part of the loss. In this way a coffee house (6) ___ rise to one of the world's great insurance markets. (1) A recorded B written C remarked D told · (2) A came B fell C made D put · (3) A trustful B reliable C confident D faithful · (4) A insure B assure C ensure D secure · (5) A taking B making C doing D putting · (6) A made B gave C brought D took

31. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. The (1) ___ (PUBLISH) of *The Spectator* began in March 1711. Its (2) ___ (POPULAR) was immediate, and its (3) ___ (READ) soon included merchants, lawyers and their families. The authors aimed at the (4) ___ (IMPROVE) of manners, and readers admired the (5) ___ (CLEAR) of Addison's prose and the (6) ___ (POLITE) of his tone.

32. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals. Use between two and five words, including the word given. a Newton discovered that white light is a mixture of colours. DISCOVERY — Newton ___ white light is a mixture of colours. b Prices rose sharply in 1720. SHARP — There ___ prices in 1720. c Because the shares collapsed, many investors were ruined. DUE — Many investors were ruined ___ of the shares. d Everyone was surprised that *The Spectator* was so popular. POPULARITY — The ___ surprised everyone. e They found out the truth about the scandal. DISCOVERED — They ___ the scandal.

33. ●● Open cloze. Write one word in each gap. *The Spectator* appeared every day (1) ___ Sunday. (2) ___ narrator, Mr Spectator, hardly ever spoke, (3) ___ he observed everything. He belonged (4) ___ a club of gentlemen from different walks of life. The essays were (5) ___ popular that they were collected in volumes, and readers were still enjoying them a century (6) ___.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. C: the introduction to the Restoration and the eighteenth century, and the sections on Pope and on *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on the literature of the early eighteenth century.
- [POR] R. Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*: the chapters on print, politeness and the coffee houses.
- [MOR] K. O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*: the chapter on the eighteenth century (the Union, the Hanoverians, Walpole).
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "neoclassic and romantic", "burlesque" (mock epic) and "periodical essay".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage* and [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the entries on formal and informal style and on noun phrases.
- The texts of this chapter online: Pope, *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. T. M. Parrott (Project Gutenberg #9800); *The Spectator*, ed. H. Morley (Project Gutenberg #12030).

Glossario del capitolo

Acts of Union
Atti di Unione — the laws of 1707 that united England and Scotland in the Kingdom of Great Britain, with one parliament.

Augustan
augusteo — of the age of Augustus; used for English literature of about 1690–1745, which took Roman classics as models.

Bathos
caduta di tono, anticlimax — a sudden fall from an elevated style to a trivial one, often for comic effect.

Clipping
accorciamento — making a new, shorter word by cutting part of a longer one (*exam, phone, flu*).

Coffee house
caffè, bottega del caffè — a public room where people drank coffee, read papers and discussed news and business.

Decorum
decoro, convenienza — the neoclassical rule that style must suit the subject and the speaker.

Dispersion
dispersione — the separation of white light into colours, because each colour is refracted by a different amount.

Jacobite
giacobita — a supporter of the exiled Catholic Stuarts (James II and his descendants) after 1688.

Machinery
apparato soprannaturale, «macchina» — the gods and spirits who intervene in the action of an epic (Pope's sylphs).

Mock-heroic
eroicomico — treating a trivial subject in the grand style and with the conventions of the epic.

Neoclassicism
neoclassicismo — the taste for order, reason, decorum and the imitation of Greek and Roman writers.

Nominalisation
nominalizzazione — expressing as a noun what could be a verb or an adjective (*discover → the discovery of*).

Periodical essay
saggio periodico — a short essay on manners, morals or taste, published in a periodical (*The Spectator*).

Refraction
rifrazione — the change of direction of light when it passes from one medium into another.

Register
registro — the variety of language that suits a situation, from informal to formal.

Small talk
conversazione di circostanza — light, polite conversation on safe topics with people you do not know well.

South Sea Bubble
bolla dei Mari del Sud — the speculative boom and crash of South Sea Company shares in 1720.

Subscription
sottoscrizione, abbonamento — payment in advance for a book or a periodical; Pope's Homer was published this way.

Whig / Tory
whig / tory — the two parties of the age: Whigs for Parliament, trade and the Protestant succession; Tories for the Crown, the Church and land.

Zeugma
zeugma — a figure in which one verb governs two objects of very different weight ("stain her honour or her new brocade").

Soluzioni

1. B (Scotland kept its law, Church and universities; the Hanoverian succession was settled by the Act of Settlement, 1701).

2. D.

3. A (Lloyd's of London, the insurance market, still carries Edward Lloyd's name).

4. a F — Anne was the last Stuart; the first Hanoverian was George I (1714). b T. c T (the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695). d F — as a Catholic he could not attend a university; he largely educated himself. e F — every day except Sunday. f T (1712; five cantos in 1714).

5. Steele, *The Tatler*, 1709 · Addison and Steele, *The Spectator*, 1711 · Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, 1711 · Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, 1714 · Pope, *An Essay on Man*, 1733–1734 · Newton, *Opticks*, 1704.

6. *Traccia*: a the taste for imitating Greek and Roman writers, with order, reason and general Nature (Pope's *Essay on Criticism*); b the rule that style must suit subject (high style for heroes, low for ordinary life — which the mock-heroic breaks on purpose); c a trivial subject told in the grand style of the epic (*The Rape of the Lock*); d the supernatural beings who intervene in an epic (Pope's sylphs); e one verb governing two objects of very different weight ("stain her honour or her new brocade"); f a short essay on manners and morals published in a periodical (*The Spectator*).

7. *Model answer*: Coffee houses gave writers a public and a subject. Men of different ranks read papers there and discussed them, so a new reading public grew, and with the end of licensing in 1695 periodicals multiplied. Steele and Addison wrote for this public: *The Spectator* wanted to bring philosophy "into Coffee-houses", and writers themselves met at Will's and Button's. (62 words)

8. C.

9. a It makes him "drunk": a superficial knowledge makes us proud and confused. b Either study deeply or do not study at all ("Drink deep, or taste not"). c *sobers*. d Free answers, e.g. *Half-knowledge is worse than ignorance.*

10. a LIT-tle LEARN-ing IS a DANG'-rous THING — ten syllables, five stresses (iambic pentameter). With *dangerous* in three syllables the line would have eleven; the elision keeps the metre regular (the stress on *is* is light, but it falls in the iambic pattern).

11. a *dire offence, mighty contests, I sing*. b The Muse ("Muse!", "Goddess!"); he also dedicates the verse to Caryll. c *dire offence / am'rous causes*, *mighty contests / trivial things*, *Slight is the subject, but not so the praise* (any two). d The last line, "And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty Rage?" (*Aeneid* I.11).

12. *Model*: Tell me, Muse, what strange reason could make a well-mannered lord attack a gentle young lady? And what even stranger reason, still unknown, could make a gentle young lady refuse a lord? Can such small men attempt such bold actions, and can such great anger live in such soft hearts?

13. a Three thousand. b About sixty thousand ("Threescore thousand"): 3,000 copies × 20 readers per copy = 60,000. c In clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee houses. d To have it served every morning with tea and bread and butter, as part of the tea set. e 60,000 / 600,000 = 1/10: about one inhabitant in ten (a generous estimate — Mr Spectator calls it "modest" with some irony).

14. *Model*: Pope gives a trivial quarrel the language of the epic. **P**: the opening imitates Homer and Virgil. **E**: "What mighty contests rise from trivial things, / I sing". **E**: *I sing* and the appeal to the "Goddess" are the epic poet's formulas, but the rhyme pairs *springs* with *trivial things*, so the grand style and the small subject collide; the final question pa-

rodies Virgil's amazement at Juno's anger. The result is comic, and it shows how much fashionable people exaggerate small offences. (about 85 words)

15. C (*a rise in* something; *a rise of* + an amount).

16. D (nominalisation, a Latinate verb, a precise adverb, no phrasal verb).

17. B.

18. a publication · b investment · c refusal · d growth · e popularity · f politeness · g freedom · h wisdom · i appearance · j decision · k ability · l accuracy.

19. a Newton's explanation of colour changed optics. b The popularity of the coffee houses worried the government. c The union of Scotland and England in 1707 created a single parliament. d Pope's translation of Homer made him rich. e The rapid growth in the number of readers after 1695 encouraged new periodicals. f The clarity of Addison's writing made his essays a model of style. (Other correct noun phrases accepted.)

20. a established (founded) · b rose / increased · c investigated · d tolerate · e discovered · f reduce (its consumption of).

21. a discover → **discovery** · b increase of → increase **in** · c did → **made** a decision · d were → **was** (the subject is *the popularity*) · e five-cantos → **five-canto** (a noun used as a modifier is singular) · f I'm gonna show → **This essay will show** / **I shall show** (register).

22. a the first London daily newspaper · b the 1720 stock-market crash · c Addison's essay on the aims of his paper · d Newton's prism experiment of the 1660s · e Steele's club of members who represent the nation (or: Steele's club, whose members represent the nation).

23. a The increase in the number of readers was a consequence of the end of pre-publication censorship (licensing). b The discovery of the dispersion of light is due to Newton (We owe the discovery... to Newton). c The foundation of the Bank of England in 1694 made it possible to finance the war (made the financing of the war possible).

24. *Possible answers*: a The results of the investigation into why more people read newspapers in coffee houses have been published. b Investors trusted the company less, and this caused the share price to collapse (or: A fall in investor confidence caused the share price to collapse).

25. a editor · b subscribers · c fashionable · d readership · e gossip · f column · g reputation · h manners.

26. a examination, back · b omnibus, fore · c influenza, middle · d laboratory, back · e telephone, fore · f gymnasium, back · g aeroplane, fore · h mathematics, back. Italian: *bici, moto, foto, frigo, prof, cinema* (any two).

27. a carry out · b make · c reach · d give · e conduct · f pay. (*Conduct an experiment* and *carry out research* are also correct: a and e may be swapped.)

28. *Traccia*: a title (*The Bell Speaks*); the persona introduces itself (age, place, proud and slightly offended tone); the problem: students and teachers who ignore it; causes and effects, with at least two nominalisations (*the decline of punctuality*, *the disappearance of watches*); an objection answered (*phones tell the time*); a proposal (a ceremony for the punctual?); a signature in character. Assess: persona and voice kept (4), structure (3), language and register (5), humour with a real point (3).

29. *Model*: *— Excuse me, is anyone sitting here? — No, please go ahead. — Lovely concert, wasn't it? I don't think we've met — I'm Giulia, I play the violin in the second piece. — Oh, that was you? It was beautiful. My son plays the drums, I'm afraid. — Really? That must be... lively at home! Do you happen to know when the next concert is? — In May, I think. And how long have you been playing? — Since I was eight. Speaking of May, are you coming to the school fair? — We are, yes. — Then perhaps we'll meet there. It's been lovely talking to you — I'd better go and find my teacher.*

30. 1 A · 2 B (*fall into the habit*) · 3 B · 4 A · 5 A · 6 B (*give rise to*).

31. 1 publication · 2 popularity · 3 readership (*readers* also accepted) · 4 improvement · 5 clarity · 6 politeness.

32. a made the discovery that · b was a sharp rise in · c due to the collapse · d popularity of *The Spectator* · e discovered the truth about.

33. 1 except (or *but*) · 2 Its · 3 but (or *yet*, *though*) · 4 to · 5 so · 6 later.