CAPITOLO

13

After the War: the Welfare State, Windrush and the Absurd

"We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done." — Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe how Britain changed between 1945 and 1973: the welfare state, the end of Empire, Windrush and the 1960s.
2. I can explain the Theatre of the Absurd and the Angry Young Men, and summarise *Waiting for Godot* without its text.
3. I can analyse a villanelle and a page of scientific prose, and compare them in a PEE paragraph.
4. I can make verbs agree with collective nouns, amounts, titles and long or double subjects.
5. I can write a Europass CV and a cover letter, answer "Tell me about a time when..." with the STAR method, and open my colloquio in two minutes.

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English 5 · Parte IV · From 1945 to the Present · versione 1.0
Capitolo 13: After the War: the Welfare State, Windrush and the Absurd · pagine 415–446 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

On 22 June 1948 several hundred men and women from the Caribbean walked down the gangway of a ship at Tilbury, on the Thames, and into a country that was still rationing bread. Thirteen days later, on 5 July, every person in Britain became entitled to see a doctor without paying. The two events were not planned together, but they belong to the same story: a tired, nearly bankrupt country, which had just won a war, trying to build a fairer society at home while its empire came apart abroad.

This chapter covers Britain from 1945 to 1973, when it joined the European Economic Community. You will meet a theatre in which nothing seems to happen and a group of young writers who were angry about almost everything; you will read a Welsh poet's most famous poem and the first page of a scientific paper that is still discussed every time somebody asks whether a computer can think. The Skills section is the most practical of the book: it prepares you for the first job interview and the first CV of your adult life.

13.1 History and Society: Building a New Britain, 1945–1973

In 1945 Britain was on the winning side, but the war had left it deeply in debt, its cities were bomb-damaged and food, clothes and fuel were rationed. Many people who had fought or worked through the war did not want to go back to the unemployment of the 1930s. Their mood decided the first election after the war. Figura 13.1 places the main events of the chapter on a single time axis.

13.1.1 From the Beveridge Report to the NHS

In December 1942, in the middle of the war, the civil servant and economist William Beveridge published a government report on social insurance. It named five "giants" that blocked the road to reconstruction — Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness — and proposed a single national system of insurance, paid for by workers, employers and the state, to protect every citizen "from the cradle to the grave", as the phrase of the time put it. The report became an unexpected best-seller.

In July 1945 the Labour Party, led by Clement Attlee, won a landslide victory over Winston Churchill's Conservatives. Over the next six years it built what came to be called the **welfare state** (*stato sociale*): a state that takes responsibility for its citizens' basic security — health, income in sickness, unemployment and old age, housing and education. Family allowances, voted just before the election, and National Insurance (1946) were followed by the most popular reform of all. On **5 July 1948** the National Health Service, designed by the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, opened: hospitals, doctors, dentists and opticians became available to everyo-

ne, paid for by taxation and free at the point of use. The government also brought coal (1947), the railways (1948) and other industries into public ownership — a policy called **nationalisation** (*nazionalizzazione*).

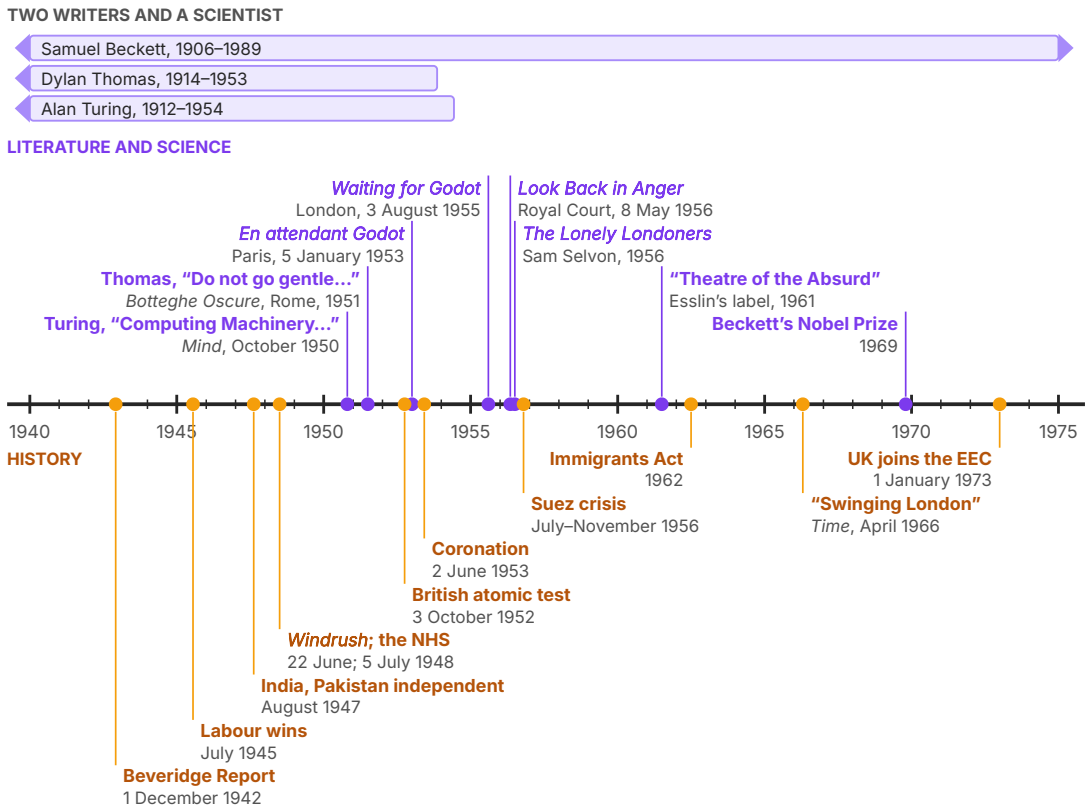


Figura 13.1 Britain after the war: three lives (top), works of literature and science (above the axis, violet) and historical events (below, amber), 1940–1975, on a proportional axis (ticks every year, labels every 5). Beckett died in 1989, beyond the right edge.

Peace did not mean plenty. Rationing lasted longer than the war — bread was rationed from 1946 to 1948, and meat until 1954 — and the country depended on American loans. This is the Britain that historians have called the age of "austerity".

13.1.2 The end of Empire

The war had also weakened Britain's hold on its empire. In August 1947 British India became two independent states, India and Pakistan. Partition — the division of the territory along religious lines — was followed by violence and by one of the largest migrations in history: millions of people crossed the new borders, and hundreds of thousands were killed (historians' estimates vary widely). Ceylon and Burma followed in 1948. Ghana became the first colony in sub-Sa-

haran Africa to gain independence (1957), and by the late 1960s most of the colonies in Africa and the Caribbean were independent states; Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago became independent in August 1962. This was the start of decolonisation (*decolonizzazione*); chapter 15 follows it to the present. Most former colonies chose to stay in the Commonwealth of Nations, a free association of states — not to be confused with the republic of 1649 (English 4, chapter 3).

In 1956 Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal; in November Britain and France landed troops to take it back, but American pressure forced them to withdraw. The **Suez crisis** showed that Britain could no longer act as a great power against the wishes of the United States. In the Cold War it chose to stay close to Washington, and it built its own nuclear weapon: the first British atomic test took place off the coast of Western Australia on 3 October 1952.

13.1.3 Windrush

The British Nationality Act of 1948 created a single "citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies": a person born in Kingston, Jamaica, had the same right to live in Britain as a person born in Bristol. Britain needed workers to rebuild, and many people in the Caribbean — some of whom had served in the British forces during the war — were ready to come. In May and June 1948 the troopship *Empire Windrush* called at Trinidad, Jamaica, Mexico, Cuba and Bermuda on its way back to Britain (Figura 13.2). It docked at Tilbury on 21 June, and its passengers came ashore on 22 June. According to the ship's passenger list, now in the National Archives, there were 1,027 passengers, 802 of whom gave a country in the Caribbean as their last place of residence.

The ship gave its name to a whole generation. The **Windrush generation** (*generazione Windrush*) are the people who came from the Caribbean to Britain between 1948 and the early 1970s, many of them to work in the new NHS, on London's buses and the Underground, and in factories. They often met discrimination in housing and at work, and in 1958 there were violent attacks on Black residents in Nottingham and in Notting Hill, London. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 began to restrict the right of entry. In 2018 the "Windrush scandal" revealed that some of these citizens, who had lived legally in Britain for decades, had been wrongly treated as illegal immigrants; the government apologised, and 22 June is now Windrush Day.

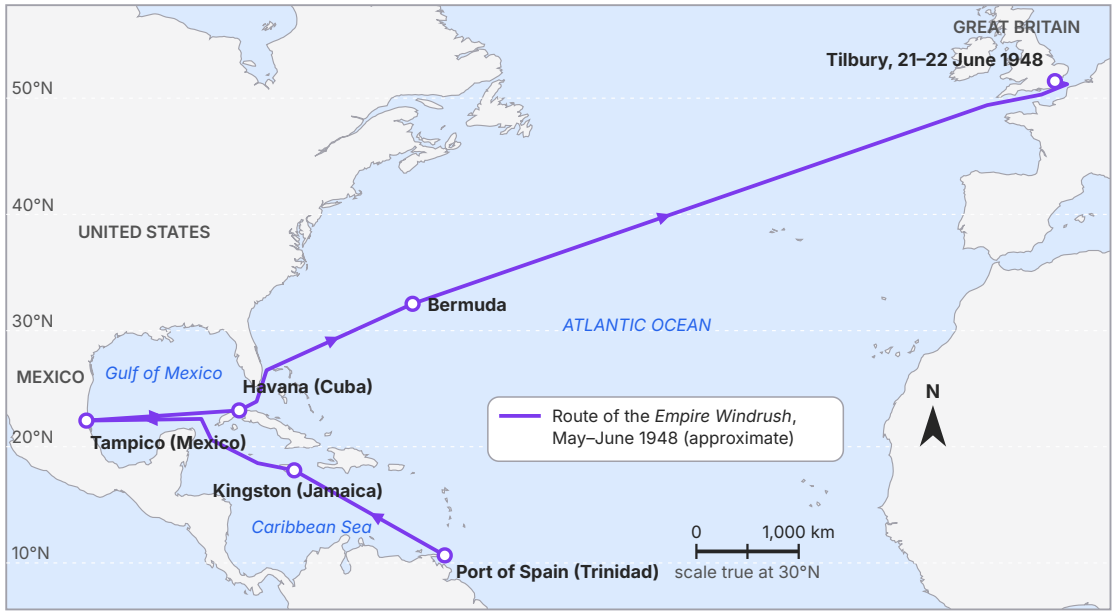


Figura 13.2 The voyage of the *Empire Windrush*, May–June 1948: Port of Spain, Kingston, Tampico, Havana, Bermuda and Tilbury, in the order given by the National Archives. The line between ports is approximate. Equirectangular projection; coastlines from Natural Earth (public domain).

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Gli immigrati del Windrush arrivarono come stranieri senza diritti.» → ✓ Arrivarono come **cittadini**: il British Nationality Act del 1948 dava ai nati nelle colonie la cittadinanza del Regno Unito e delle Colonie. Il problema, allora e nel 2018, fu che molti non ricevettero mai documenti che lo dimostrassero.

✗ «Il welfare state è nato con il Rapporto Beveridge.» → ✓ Il Rapporto (1942) era un **progetto**; il welfare state fu costruito dalle leggi del governo laburista dal 1945, e il NHS iniziò il 5 luglio 1948.

13.1.4 From the Coronation to the “Swinging Sixties”

Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953, and for many families the ceremony was the first thing they ever watched on television. Food rationing ended the following year, wages rose, and in the late 1950s and the 1960s most families came to own a television, a fridge and, increasingly, a car. Young people had money of their own for the first time, and a youth culture of music and fashion grew around them. Liverpool gave the world the Beatles, whose first single appeared in October 1962; in April 1966 the American magazine *Time* called London “the swinging city”.

Parliament changed the law on matters of private life: the death penalty for murder was suspended in 1965, abortion was made legal under conditions in 1967, homosexual acts between men over 21 were partly decriminalised in England and Wales in the same year, and divorce became easier in 1969. Critics called the result the "permissive society" — a label, not a neutral description. After two French vetoes (1963 and 1967), the United Kingdom joined the European Economic Community on **1 January 1973**.

13.2 Literature: the Absurd, the Angry and the Villanelle

After 1945 the great experiments of Modernism (chapters 9 and 10) seemed finished, and many British writers turned back to realism, to provincial and working-class life, and to a plainer kind of poetry. But the most original play of the period came from an Irishman living in Paris, and it was written in French.

13.2.1 Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) was born near Dublin, studied French and Italian at Trinity College, and settled in Paris, where he knew Joyce (chapter 9) and joined the French Resistance during the war. After the war he began to write in French, because, he later explained, it allowed him to write without style. *En attendant Godot* was published in 1952 and first performed in Paris on 5 January 1953; Beckett's own English version, *Waiting for Godot*, opened in London on 3 August 1955. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969. Beckett is not in the public domain, so in this book his words are summarised, never quoted at length.

The play has two acts and almost no plot. On a country road, by a bare tree, two shabby men, Vladimir and Estragon, wait for someone called Godot, who has promised to come. They talk, quarrel, eat a carrot, think about hanging themselves and decide not to. Two other travellers pass, the cruel Pozzo and his servant Lucky, whom he leads on a rope. At the end of each act a boy arrives with a message: Godot will not come today, but he will come tomorrow. The second act repeats the first with small differences — the tree now has a few leaves, Pozzo has gone blind — so that the structure of the play is circular: it could begin again the next evening. Godot never arrives, and the play never tells us who he is. Beckett called the English version "a tragicomedy in two acts": a **tragicomedy** (*tragicommedia*) mixes the painful and the comic, and Vladimir and Estragon, with their bowler hats and falling trousers, owe as much to music-hall comedians and silent film as to tragedy.

In 1961 the critic Martin Esslin grouped Beckett with Eugène Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet and the young Harold Pinter under a single label: the **Theatre of the Absurd** (*teatro dell'assurdo*). It describes plays that show human life as having no meaning that we can discover, and that express this through their form: circular or static plots, characters without a past, dialogue that repeats itself, breaks down or says the opposite of what happens on stage. The word comes from the philosopher Albert Camus, who in 1942 had called "absurd" the conflict

between our need for meaning and a silent world. The label is Esslin's, not the playwrights': Beckett did not choose it for his own work. Pinter (1930–2008) gave the absurd a British setting: in plays such as *The Birthday Party* (1958) ordinary rooms fill with menace and pauses become as important as words.

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ «Alla fine Godot arriva, ma nessuno lo riconosce.» → ✓ Godot **non arriva mai**; alla fine di ogni atto un ragazzo annuncia che verrà "domani".
>
> ✗ «Beckett fondò il teatro dell'assurdo.» → ✓ Il "teatro dell'assurdo" è un'**etichetta critica** di Martin Esslin (1961), applicata a più autori; non è un nome scelto da Beckett.

13.2.2 The Angry Young Men

On 8 May 1956 John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* opened at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Its hero, Jimmy Porter, an educated young man from a working-class background, lives in a small flat in the Midlands, runs a sweet stall and rages for three acts against the class system, the Church, his wife's comfortable family and the complacency of post-war Britain. The press soon called Osborne and a group of writers of his generation the **Angry Young Men** (*"giovani arrabbiati"*): a journalists' label, again, for novelists and playwrights from the lower-middle or working class — Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*, 1954), John Braine (*Room at the Top*, 1957), Alan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958) — whose heroes resent a society that still judges people by their accent and their school. Realistic plays of this kind, set in ordinary working-class homes, were nicknamed **kitchen sink drama** (*teatro realista "del lavello"*): the label, first used in the mid-1950s for a group of realist painters, takes its name from the most ordinary object in a home.

13.2.3 Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas (1914–1953) was born in Swansea, in South Wales, the son of a grammar-school English teacher. He spoke no Welsh, but the rhythms of Welsh preaching and of the Bible run through his English. He published his first book of poems at twenty, moved to London, wrote film scripts and radio talks during the war and became famous as a reader of his own poetry on the radio and, from 1950, on reading tours of the United States. He died in New York on 9 November 1953, at thirty-nine. His "play for voices" *Under Milk Wood*, a day in the life of a small Welsh seaside town, was broadcast by the BBC in January 1954. Thomas died in 1953, so in Italy his work has been in the public domain since 1 January 2024.

Against the plain style of many post-war poets, Thomas wrote dense, musical verse full of compound images and repetition. His best-known poem, "Do not go gentle into that good night", first appeared in 1951 in *Botteghe Oscure*, a literary review published in Rome by Marguerite Caetani; it was collected in book form in 1952. Its form is the **villanelle** (*villanella*): a poem

of nineteen lines — five **tercets** (*terzine*, stanzas of three lines) and a final quatrain — built on only two rhymes and two refrains (English 3). The first and third lines of the poem return alternately as the last line of each tercet and come together at the end (Figura 13.3). The form is so demanding that every repetition is felt as a struggle against it — which is exactly what Thomas's poem is about.

APPROFONDIMENTO

An Italian song, a French poem, an English form. The word *villanella* first named a rustic part-song of sixteenth-century Naples (from *villano*, "peasant"). In France the word was used for pastoral poems of no fixed shape; one of them, Jean Passerat's "J'ay perdu ma tourterelle" (published 1606), happens to have nineteen lines on two rhymes with two alternating refrains. Nineteenth-century French and English poets took that single poem as the model of a fixed form. So the villanelle is less ancient than it looks — and, as a strict form, it is mostly an English-language tradition.

13.2.4 Larkin, Hughes and the Windrush voices

The two major English poets of the next generation are not in the public domain. Philip Larkin (1922–1985), a university librarian in Hull, wrote ironic, precise poems about ordinary English life, death and disappointment (*The Whitsun Weddings*, 1964). Ted Hughes (1930–1998) wrote about the violence and energy of animals and nature (*The Hawk in the Rain*, 1957) and became Poet Laureate in 1984. A new voice came from the Caribbean: in *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) the Trinidadian Sam Selvon followed a group of West Indian men through the cold rooms, jobs and friendships of London in the early 1950s. Selvon wrote not only the dialogue but the narration itself in a Caribbean-inflected English — a political choice as much as a stylistic one, which later writers (chapter 15) would follow.

IN SINTESI

British literature, 1945–1973, at a glance. Theatre of the Absurd — Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Paris 1953, London 1955); Pinter · **Angry Young Men** — Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1956); Amis, Braine, Sillitoe · **poetry** — Dylan Thomas (villanelle, 1951); Larkin; Hughes · **migration** — Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). In bold: critics' labels, not names the writers chose.

13.3 Texts: Rage, Reason and Waiting

Three texts from the same few years: a poem written to a dying father, the first page of a paper on machines and thought, and a play in which two men wait for someone who never comes, read beside the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All of them, in different ways, ask what gives a human life its value.

13.3.1 T1 · Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night” (1951)

Context. The poem is usually read as addressed to Thomas’s father, David John Thomas, who was old and ill when it was written and died in December 1952. The speaker begs him not to accept death quietly. It is printed here complete.

Tabella 13.1 T1 — Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night”, complete (19 lines). Text as in *The Poems of Dylan Thomas* (New Directions), reproduced by the Academy of American Poets (poets.org); checked against a second online text, whose line 16 has a different word: this book follows the New Directions text.

Do not go gentle into that good night,	
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;	
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.	
Though wise men at their end know dark is right,	
Because their words had forked no lightning they	5
Do not go gentle into that good night.	
Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright	
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,	
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.	
Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,	10
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,	
Do not go gentle into that good night.	
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight	
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,	
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.	15
And you, my father, there on the sad height,	
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.	
Do not go gentle into that good night.	
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.	

Glosses. *gentle*: here an adjective used as an adverb, “gently, quietly” · *that good night*: death, seen as a kind and peaceful night · *rave*: speak wildly, as in a fever · *forked no lightning*: produced no flash of lightning — had no effect on the world · *the last wave by*: when the last wave has pas-

sed · *frail*: weak · *bay*: a bay of the sea, and also the laurel of poets and heroes · *grieved*: made sad · *blinding sight*: a vision so strong it blinds · *gay*: here "merry, full of joy" · *sad height*: the high place where the dying man lies, also the edge of life.

Analysis

The argument. The first tercet states a command and a reason: old age should not go quietly. The next four tercets give four examples of men who, at the end of their lives, refuse to accept death: the *wise* men (ll. 4–6), the *good* men (ll. 7–9), the *wild* men (ll. 10–12) and the *grave* men (ll. 13–15). Each discovers too late that his work or his life was incomplete — words that changed nothing, deeds too small, joy that passed — and each therefore fights. Only in the quatrain does the speaker turn to the person he is really talking to: *my father* (l. 16).

Form and meaning. The two refrains carry the poem's two moods: line 1 is a negative command (*Do not…*), line 3 a positive one, doubled (*Rage, rage*). Because the villanelle forces them to come back again and again, they sound like a prayer repeated by someone who knows it may not be heard. Every rhyme in *-ight* belongs to the world of light and darkness (*night, light, bright, flight, sight, height*); the second rhyme in *-ay* (*day, way, pray*) belongs to time passing. The metre is iambic pentameter (English 3), but the many monosyllables and the strong stresses of *Rage, rage* break its regularity.

Paradox and pun. Thomas joins opposites: *blinding sight*, *Curse, bless*, *fierce tears*. *Grave men* (l. 13) are serious men and also men close to the grave — a pun (English 3). The paradox of the last stanza is the poem's centre: the son asks to be cursed and blessed at once, because any strong feeling is a sign of life.

1. Divide the poem into the four types of men and the father. For each type, what has he failed to do?
2. Find all the words connected with light and fire. What does light stand for?
3. Why is the night called *good* in line 1? Is the speaker contradicting himself?
4. Line 16 is the only line that names the person the speaker is addressing. How does this change the way you read the earlier stanzas?
5. Thomas uses the imperative throughout. Find three imperatives. Who gives orders to whom, and why is this unusual between a son and a father?

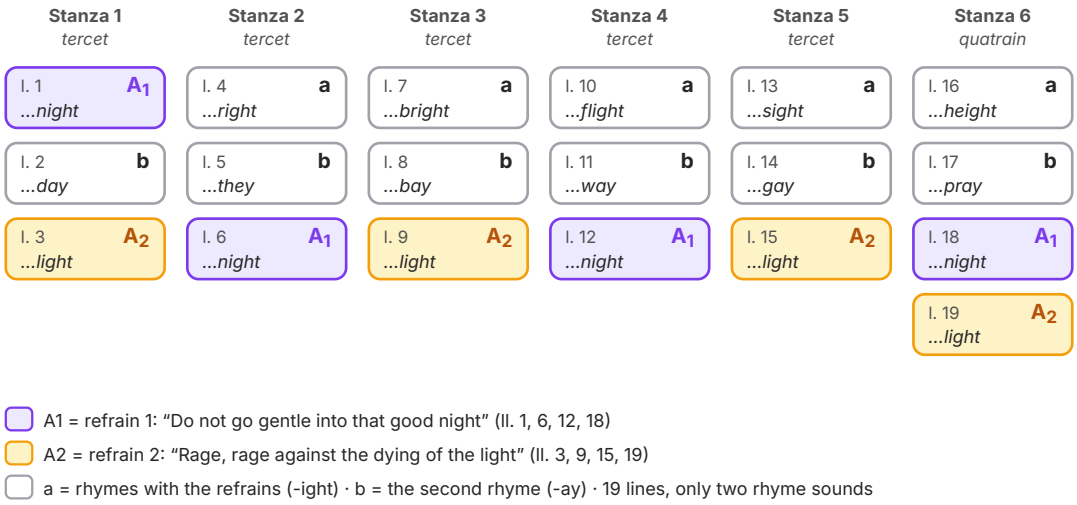


Figura 13.3 The villanelle scheme, checked on Thomas's text: five tercets (*a b a*) and a quatrain (*a b a a*) on two rhymes, with the two refrains A_1 (violet) and A_2 (amber) alternating at the end of each tercet and joined at the close. Each box shows the line number, the rhyme letter and the last word.

13.3.2 T2 · Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950)

Context. Alan Turing (1912–1954), the Cambridge mathematician who in 1936 had described a universal computing machine on paper and who worked on breaking German codes at Bletchley Park during the war, was in 1950 at the University of Manchester, where one of the first stored-program computers was running. His paper appeared in the philosophical journal *Mind* in October 1950. Turing died in 1954, so in Italy his writings have been in the public domain since 1 January 2025. These are its first two paragraphs as printed, the second one shortened. It is scientific prose, but it reads as an argument.

Tabella 13.2 T2 — A. M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", *Mind*, vol. 59, no. 236 (October 1950), p. 433, section 1, "The Imitation Game": the first paragraph complete and the first two sentences of the second (single quotation marks as printed). Checked against the page of the journal.

I propose to consider the question, 'Can machines think?' This should begin with definitions of the meaning of the terms 'machine' and 'think'. The definitions might be framed so as to reflect so far as possible the normal use of the words, but this attitude is dangerous. If the meaning of the words 'machine' and 'think' are to be found by examining how they are commonly used it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the meaning and the answer to the question, 'Can machines think?' is to be sought in a statistical survey such as a Gallup poll. But this is absurd. Instead of attempting such a definition I shall replace the question by another, which is closely related to it and is expressed in relatively unambiguous words.

The new form of the problem can be described in terms of a game which we call the 'imitation game'. It is played with three people, a man (A), a woman (B), and an interrogator (C) who may be of either sex. […]

Glosses. *framed*: formulated · *so far as possible*: as much as possible · *to escape the conclusion*: to avoid concluding · *to be sought*: to be looked for · *a Gallup poll*: an opinion survey (Gallup was a polling company) · *relatively unambiguous*: with fairly clear, single meanings · *interrogator*: the person who asks the questions · *of either sex*: a man or a woman.

Analysis

The move. Turing does not answer his question: he replaces it. A definition of *think* drawn from ordinary use, he argues, would turn a philosophical problem into a matter of opinion — and he shows how absurd that would be with a short, almost comic sentence (*But this is absurd.*). Instead he proposes a game that can be played and observed: the **imitation game** (*gioco dell'imitazione*), in which an interrogator, who cannot see or hear the players, asks written questions and must decide from the answers alone who is who. Later in the paper a machine takes the place of one player; if the interrogator cannot reliably tell the machine from the human, the machine has passed what is now called the Turing test.

The style of science. The paragraph is a model of academic English: the first person singular for the author's decisions (*I propose*, *I shall replace*), the impersonal passive for general procedures (*is to be sought*, *are to be found*), careful hedging (*so far as possible*, *relatively unambiguous*) and one blunt, short sentence for emphasis. Notice too a small grammatical slip in the original: in the fourth sentence the verb that follows *the meaning of the words* is plural, although strictly *the meaning* needs *is*. It is a classic agreement error after a long subject, and the Language section of this chapter explains why it happens.

1. Which two words does Turing say need defining, and why does he refuse to define them from their normal use?
2. Paraphrase the sentence *But this is absurd*: what exactly is absurd?
3. Describe the imitation game in your own words in three sentences.
4. Find two hedges and one passive in the first paragraph. Why do scientists write like this?
5. Turing replaces a question that cannot be answered with one that can be tested. Which other scientist you have studied did something similar (think of Galileo, English 4, chapter 2)?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Writing a PEE paragraph that compares two texts (T1 and T2).

1. **Point.** Make one claim that covers both texts. *Both texts, written within a year of each other, refuse to accept an easy answer to a question about human life.*
2. **Evidence.** One short quotation from each, with line or paragraph reference. *Thomas's speaker rejects the quiet acceptance of death (Do not go gentle, l. 1); Turing rejects a definition of thinking based on a Gallup poll (paragraph 1).*
3. **Explanation.** Say how each text does it and what the difference is. *The poet answers with an emotional command, repeated by the form of the villanelle; the scientist answers with a procedure that anyone can repeat. One appeals to feeling, the other to observation — but both turn a passive question into an action.*

Check. Two quotations only, each under ten words; the explanation is longer than the evidence; the comparison word (*both*, *whereas*) appears in the first and last sentence.

13.3.3 T3 · Reading without the text: *Waiting for Godot*, the end of each act, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

Context. Beckett's text is protected by copyright, so here is a precise summary of the two endings, which mirror each other. Beside it is a text from the same years that anyone may reproduce: the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris on 10 December 1948.

End of Act I. Night is falling. A boy arrives and tells Vladimir that Godot cannot come this evening but will certainly come the next day. Vladimir questions him about himself and his work for Godot; the boy answers vaguely and runs off. The moon rises. Estragon, who has taken off his boots, wonders whether they should part; they talk of the time they have spent together. Estragon asks if they should go, and Vladimir agrees. The stage direction says that they do not move. The curtain falls.

End of Act II. The next day, at the same hour, the same boy (or one who says he is a different boy) brings the same message. This time Vladimir answers the questions for him, and angrily asks him to say that he has seen them. When the boy has gone, the two men consider hanging themselves from the tree; Estragon takes off the cord that holds up his trousers, which fall down, and the cord breaks when they test it. They decide to bring a better rope tomorrow — unless Godot comes, in which case they will be saved. The exchange that closed Act I returns, but now Vladimir asks and Estragon agrees. Again they do not move.

Tabella 13.3 T3 — Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1 (United Nations, General Assembly resolution 217 A, 10 December 1948; official English text, un.org).

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Glosses. *dignity*: the value every person has simply as a person · *endowed with*: given, provided with · *conscience*: the moral sense of right and wrong (not *consciousness*, being aware) · *brotherhood*: solidarity among all people (today's documents often prefer gender-neutral words).

Analysis

Two answers to 1945. The Declaration was written after a war in which the dignity of millions had been denied, and it answers with confidence: human beings have *reason* and *conscience*, and therefore duties to each other. Beckett, who had seen the same war, puts on stage two men who seem to have neither a purpose nor a reason to hope. Yet the play is not simply despairing. Vladimir and Estragon quarrel, but they do not leave each other; in Act II they help a fallen Pozzo to his feet. Many readers find in them exactly the *spirit of brotherhood* of article 1, shown without any of its confidence.

Structure as meaning. The repetition of the final exchange, with the speakers' roles reversed, makes the circular structure visible: nothing has changed, and nothing will. The contrast between what the characters say (*let's go*) and what the stage direction shows (they do not move) is the play's most famous image of the absurd.

1. List three things that are repeated, and three that change, between the end of Act I and the end of Act II.
2. Why is the stage direction more important than the dialogue at the end of each act?
3. Article 1 says that human beings *should act* in a certain way. Is it a description or a rule? Find the modal verb.
4. Do Vladimir and Estragon show *reason*, *conscience* and *brotherhood*? Give one example for each, or argue that they do not.

13.4 Language: Agreement with Collective and Tricky Subjects

Every sentence you write in English has to make its verb agree with its subject: *the patient* ***is***, *the patients* ***are***. In most sentences this is automatic. It becomes difficult when the subject is a group, an amount, a title or two nouns joined together, or when it is long and the verb is far away — as in Turing's sentence in T2. This section collects these cases; Figura 13.4 sums them up as a decision.

13.4.1 Collective nouns

A **collective noun** (*nome collettivo*) names a group of people: *government, team, family, staff, committee, audience, class, crew, public*, and the names of organisations (*the BBC, the NHS, Arsenal*). In British English it can take a singular verb when the group is seen as one unit, and a plural verb when we think of its members as individuals. In American English the singular is normal (chapter 6).

Tabella 13.4 Collective nouns: British and American English

	singular verb (the group as a unit)	plural verb (the members)
BrE	*The government **has** published its plan.*	*The government **are** divided about the plan.*
BrE	*The committee **meets** once a month.*	*The committee **are** arriving from different cities.*
AmE	*The team **is** playing well. The staff **is** ready.*	*(rare; for members: **The team members are...**)*

Whatever you choose, keep it: the pronoun and the possessive must follow the verb (*The family **has** made **its** decision* / *The family **have** made **their** decision*). **Notional agreement** is the name for this choice: the verb agrees with the meaning the writer has in mind, not only with the grammatical form. **Notional agreement** (*accordo a senso*) is also why we say *The majority of nurses **were** women*: *the majority of* + a plural noun takes a plural verb, while *the majority* alone, seen as one block, can be singular (*The majority **was** small*).

13.4.2 Always plural, always singular

- **Plural without -s:** *people, police, cattle* always take a plural verb: *The police **are** investigating. People **were** angry. Staff*, meaning the employees, is usually plural in British English (*Our staff **are** trained*); American English often treats it as one unit (*The staff **is** ready*).
- **Singular with -s:** subjects in *-ics* (*physics, economics, mathematics*) and *news*: *Physics **is** my CLIL subject. The news **was** good. Politics* is singular as a subject of study and plural when it means someone's opinions (*His politics **are** conservative*).
- **Amounts** of time, money, distance and weight seen as one quantity are singular: *Ten years **is** a long time to wait. Two thousand pounds **was** a lot of money in 1948.*
- **Titles and names** are singular even when plural in form: *Waiting for Godot **is** Beckett's best-known play. The Lonely Londoners **was** published in 1956. The United States **is**...* But a band or team named with a plural noun takes a plural: *The Beatles **were** from Liverpool.*
- **A number of** (= several) + plural noun → plural; **the number of** (= the total) → singular: *A number of passengers **were** from Trinidad. The number of passengers **was** 1,027.*

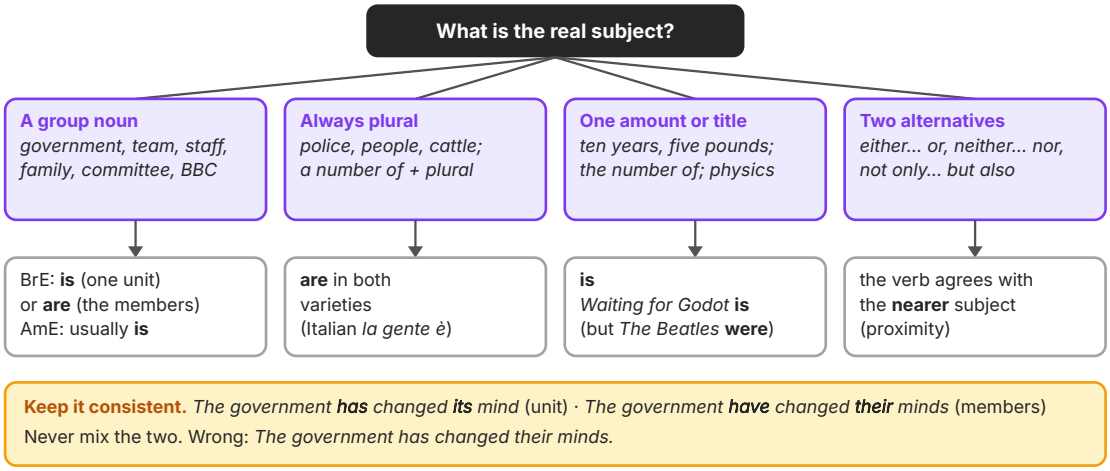


Figura 13.4 Agreement with tricky subjects: four questions to ask (violet) and the rule of consistency (amber).

13.4.3 Two subjects, one verb

Two subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb (*Vladimir and Estragon* ***wait***), unless they form a single idea (*Fish and chips* ***is*** *a British classic*). With *either… or*, *neither… nor* and *not only… but also*, the verb agrees with the subject nearer to it: this is **proximity agreement** (*accordo di prossimità*). *Neither Vladimir nor Estragon* ***knows*** *who Godot is. Neither the boy nor the two tramps* ***know***. If the result sounds awkward, put the plural subject last. After *neither of* / *none of* + plural, formal writing prefers the singular, informal speech the plural: *Neither of the acts* ***ends*** *(formal) /* ***end*** *(informal) with an arrival. Each* and *every* are always singular (English 4, chapter 2).

13.4.4 Long subjects, relative clauses and data

- **Find the head noun.** In a long subject the verb agrees with the head, not with the noun next to it: *The* ***meaning*** *of the words "machine" and "think"* ***is****…* (✗ *are*, Turing's slip). *The* ***list*** *of passengers* ***is*** *in the National Archives.*
- **One of the… who**: the relative pronoun refers to the plural noun, so the verb is plural: *Turing is one of the scientists who* ***have*** *changed our lives* — but *the only one of the scientists who* ***has****…*
- **Data** was originally the plural of Latin *datum*. In scientific writing it is often plural (*The data* ***are*** *consistent*); in general English it is usually treated as uncountable and singular (*The data* ***is*** *on the website*). Both are correct; be consistent. *Criteria* and *phenomena* are always plural; their singulars are *criterion* and *phenomenon*.
- **There is / there are** agrees with the noun that follows: *There* ***are*** *two refrains in a villanelle.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

L'accordo soggetto–verbo (*subject–verb agreement*). In inglese il verbo concorda con il soggetto **reale**, che spesso non è la parola più vicina. Casi da ricordare: i **nomi collettivi** (*government, team, family*) vogliono il singolare o, in inglese britannico, il plurale se si pensa ai membri; *people, police, cattle* vogliono **sempre** il plurale; quantità, titoli e materie in *-ics* il singolare; *a number of* il plurale, *the number of* il singolare; con *either… or* e *neither… nor* il verbo concorda con il soggetto più vicino.

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano dice *la gente* ***è***, *la polizia* ***indaga***, *il governo* ***ha*** *deciso* (sempre singolare): in inglese *people* ***are***, *the police* ***are***, e *the government* ***has / have***. Ma l'italiano conosce già l'accordo a senso: *la maggior parte degli studenti* ***sono*** *d'accordo* è accettato accanto a *è*, proprio come *the majority of students* ***are***. E il caso di Turing (*il significato delle parole … **sono***) è un errore che si fa anche in italiano quando il soggetto è lungo.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *The people is worried about the new law.* → ✓ *The people* ***are*** *worried…* (*people* è plurale; *a people*, "un popolo", è un'altra parola: *the peoples of the Commonwealth*).

✗ *The number of migrants were growing.* → ✓ *The number … **was** growing.* · ✗ *A number of migrants was…* → ✓ *A number of migrants **were**…*

✗ *The team has lost their match.* → ✓ *The team has lost **its** match* / *The team have lost **their** match* (BrE): non mescolare singolare e plurale nella stessa frase.

13.5 Skills: Applying for a Job

13.5.1 Vocabulary: society, health and migration

The vocabulary of the welfare state is also the vocabulary of today's news. Note the collocations in the examples: they are as important as the words.

Tabella 13.5 Society, health and migration: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
welfare (n.)	health, comfort and security; state help for people in need	*The state became responsible for the welfare of its citizens.*
benefit (n.)	money paid by the state to people who need it	*She claimed unemployment benefit for three months.*
health care (n.)	the services that look after people's health	*Health care is free at the point of use.*
pension (n.)	money paid regularly to a person who has retired	*He receives a state pension.*
migrant (n.)	a person who moves to another place to live or work	*Many migrants found work in the NHS.*
settle (v.)	go to live permanently in a place	*Her parents settled in Bristol in 1956.*
citizenship (n.)	the legal status of a citizen, with rights and duties	*They had British citizenship from birth.*
belonging (n.)	the feeling of being accepted as part of a group or place	*Selvon's characters search for a sense of belonging.*
discrimination (n.)	unfair treatment because of race, sex, age, etc.	*They faced discrimination in housing.*
shift (n.)	a fixed period of work, especially at night or at weekends	*Nurses work long shifts.*

Word formation: acronyms and initialisms

English loves short forms made from the first letters of a phrase. When the letters are read as a word, the short form is an **acronym** (*acronimo*): *NATO* /ˈneɪtəʊ/, *radar* (radio detection and ranging), *laser* (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation). When each letter is pronounced separately, it is an **initialism** (*sigla letta lettera per lettera*): *NHS* /ˌen eɪtʃ ˈes/, *BBC*, *UN*, *EU*, *DNA*, *CV*. The stress falls on the last letter (*an N-H-**S** hospital*). Some acronyms have become ordinary words, written in lower case (*radar, laser, scuba*). Before an initialism, choose *a* or *an* by the first **sound**: *an NHS doctor* (/en/), *a UN report* (/juː/).

DA RICORDARE

Italian and English short forms often differ. ONU = **UN** · UE = **EU** · NATO = **NATO** (same, but /ˈneɪtəʊ/) · DNA = **DNA** (French and Spanish: ADN) · AIDS = **AIDS** · Servizio Sanitario Nazionale (SSN) ≈ **NHS**. Write the full form the first time you use a short form in an essay.

13.5.2 Reading: One Service, Three Lives

Before you read. Who in your family has worked in a hospital, a school or another public service? Read Sam's post for *The Link, Year Five* and answer: what does Sam's grandmother mean when she says that the NHS is "not a building"?

Tabella 13.6 Reading text — Sam's post on *The Link, Year Five* blog

One Service, Three Lives · posted by Sam
This month our book club is reading about Britain after the Second World War, and Giulia asked me a question I couldn't answer: "What did the NHS actually change for ordinary families?" So I did what any English student does when he hasn't got an answer. I asked my family.
My grandma Joan is seventy-two. She never treated a patient in her life, but she spent more than thirty years in the office of a children's hospital in Bristol, until she retired. "Everybody remembers the doctors and nurses," she told me, "but a hospital is also the people who answer the phone at three in the morning and find the right file for a frightened mother." Her own mother — my great-grandmother — was a child in the 1930s, and she used to tell Grandma that before the war her family kept a jar on the mantelpiece with coins for the doctor. If the jar was empty, you waited and hoped. "When the health service started," Grandma said, "people didn't believe it at first. Then they couldn't imagine living without it."
My mum, Helen, has been a nurse for over twenty years. She trained in her early twenties and has worked nights, weekends and Christmas Days, like most nurses I know. What struck me most in our conversation was how many of the colleagues who taught her were people whose parents or grandparents had come from the Caribbean, from Ireland, from India and from the Philippines to work in British hospitals. In the 1950s and 1960s the health service actively recruited nurses overseas, and many of them stayed for the whole of their working lives. "The NHS was built by people who came here to help," Mum says. "Some of them were treated very badly by the country they were helping." She mentioned the Windrush scandal, and for once she didn't want to say any more.
Then there's my sister Lily, who is seven. She was born in an NHS hospital, she has had her vaccinations from the practice nurse at our GP surgery, and last winter she spent a night in hospital with a bad chest infection. Nobody at home ever talked about the cost, because there wasn't one. Lily has no idea that this is unusual in the world. Neither did I, until Callum's American flatmate asked him how much his asthma inhaler cost and couldn't believe the answer. (In Scotland, where Callum studies, prescriptions are free; in England adults of working age usually pay a fixed charge for each item.)
I'm not trying to say the NHS is perfect. Mum talks about waiting lists, tired staff and wards that are always full, and the newspapers are full of arguments about money every winter. But when I asked the three of them what one word they would choose for the health service, Grandma said "people", Mum said "promise" — and Lily, after thinking very hard, said "plasters".
I think all three of them are right. Grandma's word is the past: a service is the people who run it. Mum's word is the present: a promise has to be kept every single day, or it stops meaning anything. And Lily's word is the future: she takes it for granted, which is exactly what the people who started it wanted. So, Giulia, that's my answer. What did the NHS change? It changed what ordinary families were afraid of.

After reading. a) Find a collective noun and a plural-only noun in the text and say which verb form they take. b) Find two initialisms. c) Which of the three words — *people*, *promise*, *plasters* —

would you choose for the health service in your country? Tasks in INVALSI style on this text are in the exercises.

13.5.3 Speaking: a job or internship interview, as the candidate

In English 2 (Unit 5) Callum went to his first interview for a summer job, and you learnt the basics there: greeting, talking about your skills, asking for clarification, asking questions at the end. At nineteen the questions change: interviewers want evidence, not adjectives. The most common question type is the **competency question** — *Tell me about a time when you…* — and the clearest way to answer it is the **STAR method** (*metodo STAR*): describe the **S**ituation, the **T**ask you had, the **A**ction you took (say *I*, not *we*) and the **R**esult, with something you learnt. An answer of about one minute is ideal.

Tabella 13.7 Useful language — an interview as the candidate

Function	Phrases
presenting yourself	*I'm in my final year at a liceo scientifico in Turin, where I'm preparing for my school-leaving exam. · My main interests are…*
strengths, with evidence	*I'd say I'm good at explaining things — for example, during my placement I… · One thing I'm proud of is…*
STAR: situation and task	*Last year, during my placement at…, I was asked to… · The problem was that…*
STAR: action and result	*So what I did was… · I decided to… · As a result,… · What I learnt from that was…*
a weakness, honestly	*I sometimes take on too much. I've learnt to… · I'm working on…*
buying time, bridging	*That's a good question — let me think for a moment. · I haven't been in exactly that situation, but something similar happened when…*
your own questions, beyond the basics	*Could you tell me a bit more about…? · What would a typical day look like? · What would you expect from me in the first week?*

1. **Role play in pairs.** Student A is the interviewer for the summer job in the Writing section; Student B is the candidate. A asks four questions, including at least two that begin *Tell me about a time when you…* (worked in a team / solved a problem / had to explain something difficult / made a mistake). B answers with STAR and ends by asking one question. Then swap.
2. **The one-minute strength.** Choose one strength and prove it with a STAR story from school, sport, volunteering or your PCTO. Your partner times you and notes the four parts: is each one there?

13.5.4 Writing: a CV and a cover letter

In English 2 (Unit 5) you wrote a formal email of application, saw a first CV with Europass-style headings and learnt the formal openings and closings (*Dear Ms Patel* … *Yours sincerely*; *Dear Sir or*

Madam … Yours faithfully). Now you write the two documents that most employers and universities in the English-speaking world expect: a CV in the European format (Europass) and a **cover letter** (*lettera di presentazione*), the one-page letter that goes with it and explains why you are the right person. The CV gives facts; the cover letter gives reasons.

Giulia has seen this advert on a museum website: *Northfield Summer Science School, Edinburgh* (invented) is looking for *Summer Science Assistants*, aged 18 or over, for six weeks from mid-July, to help run hands-on science workshops for children aged 9–13. Candidates must speak good English and be enthusiastic about science. Accommodation is provided. Apply with a CV and a cover letter to the Programme Coordinator, Dr Morag Lindsay.

Tabella 13.8 Model text — Giulia's CV (Europass-style; contact details omitted)

Section	Content
Personal information	Giulia Ferraro · Turin, Italy · email · phone · nationality: Italian
Education and training	Liceo scientifico (upper secondary school, science track), Turin — final year; school-leaving exam (*esame di maturità*) in June–July. Main subjects: mathematics, physics, natural sciences, Italian, English. CLIL: physics taught partly in English.
Work experience	Work placement (PCTO, one afternoon a week since September), education office of a science museum, Turin: helped to prepare and run hands-on workshops on light and electricity for primary school classes; wrote bilingual activity sheets.
Language skills	Italian: mother tongue. English (self-assessed on the CEFR grid): understanding C1 · speaking B2 · writing B2. French: A2.
Digital skills	Office software and presentation tools; basic programming (Python); simple video editing.
Other	Member of an international online book club with students in the UK and Ireland (monthly video calls, shared blog). Volunteer in a summer sports camp for children (two summers).

Tabella 13.9 Model text — Giulia's cover letter (249 words, greeting and close excluded)

Dear Dr Lindsay,
I am writing to apply for the position of Summer Science Assistant at the Northfield Summer Science School, which I saw advertised on your website. My CV is attached.
I am in my final year at a liceo scientifico in Turin, where I am taking my school-leaving examination this summer; I will be available from 14 July. Physics is my favourite subject, and this year part of it is taught in English, so I am used to explaining scientific ideas in English as well as in Italian.
Since September I have spent my Wednesday afternoons on a placement in the education office of a Turin science museum, helping to run workshops on light and electricity for eight- to ten-year-olds. On my first day one experiment failed in front of twenty-five children; instead of starting again, I asked them to guess why it had not worked, and their guesses became the best part of the session. That day taught me that children learn more from a good question than from a perfect demonstration. I have also volunteered at a summer sports camp, so I know how much energy a group of children needs — and has.
I would like to bring this experience to your school and to improve my English in a city I already know a little: a friend of mine studies at university in Edinburgh.
I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application in an interview, online or by phone. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Yours sincerely, Giulia Ferraro

Analysis. The plan is the one you know from Callum's email in English 2: **paragraph 1** names the job, where it was advertised and the CV; **paragraph 2** says who she is and when she is available. What is new is the evidence. **Paragraph 3** is the heart of the letter: one experience told as a STAR story (situation: a failed experiment; action: a question to the children; result and lesson), then a second experience in one sentence. **Paragraph 4** explains why *this* job; **paragraph 5** asks for an interview and thanks. The register is formal, as in English 2: no contractions, *I would welcome*, *Yours sincerely* after *Dear* + name.

Checklist. ✓ CV: reverse chronological order, headings, facts only, one or two pages, no photo in UK applications unless asked · ✓ letter: one page, addressed to a named person if possible · ✓ one strength proved by evidence, not a list of adjectives · ✓ the employer's words from the advert (*hands-on, enthusiastic*) used naturally · ✓ no grammar slips in the agreement of long subjects · ✓ the same information in the CV and the letter.

Your task. Find (or invent) an advert for a summer job, a volunteering programme or a work placement in an English-speaking context. Write your Europass-style CV (headings and content) and a cover letter of 200–250 words.

LEARNING TO LEARN

The first two minutes of the colloquio. The oral exam may begin with material chosen by the commission, but how you present yourself — and how you recover when an answer goes badly — is a skill you can practise like a job interview. (Check the current year's decree and ordinance of the Ministry — MIM — for the exact rules.)

- **Prepare a two-minute presentation of yourself and your *percorso*** — your PCTO, your interests, what you want to do next — with one concrete example, exactly like a STAR answer. Practise it aloud, in Italian and in English, until it sounds natural, not memorised.
- **Turn a weak answer into a link.** If you do not know something, say what you do know and connect it: *I don't remember the exact date, but I know it was after the war, when the NHS was founded — and that links to…* A good link is worth more than a perfect date.
- **Transfer.** The same technique works in Italian and Latin: when a question goes beyond what you know, return to a text or an author you have studied well and build the bridge from there.

13.6 Connections: Two Post-war Foundations

13.6.1 The NHS and the Italian Constitution

In the same year, 1948, two countries that had been at war with each other put health at the centre of their new beginning. The Constitution of the Italian Republic came into force on 1 January 1948, six months before the NHS opened. Its article 32 reads:

> *La Repubblica tutela la salute come fondamentale diritto dell'individuo e interesse della collettività, e garantisce cure gratuite agli indigenti. Nessuno può essere obbligato a un determinato trattamento sanitario se non per disposizione di legge. La legge non può in nessun caso violare i limiti imposti dal rispetto della persona umana.*

"The Republic protects health as a fundamental right of the individual and an interest of the community, and guarantees free treatment to the poor. No one may be obliged to undergo any particular health treatment except by law. The law may in no case violate the limits imposed by respect for the human person." (Costituzione della Repubblica italiana, art. 32; translation by the editors.)

The two texts differ in an instructive way. The British welfare state was created by ordinary Acts of Parliament — Britain has no written constitution — and a later Parliament could change them; its promise was universal from the start. The Italian Constitution, by contrast, made health a *right* that the law must respect, but guaranteed free care only *agli indigenti*; a universal national health service on the British model, the Servizio Sanitario Nazionale, was created only

thirty years later, by law 833 of 1978. Article 32 also protects something the Beveridge Report did not discuss: the individual's freedom to refuse treatment, and *il rispetto della persona umana* — words written by people who had just seen what states could do to human bodies.

13.6.2 After the war on screen and on stage

Italy's answer to 1945 on the screen was **neorealism**: films shot in real streets, often with non-professional actors, about the lives of ordinary people in a ruined country. Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945) follows the Resistance in occupied Rome; Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948) follows a poor man and his son searching Rome for the stolen bicycle he needs for his job. Like the kitchen sink drama a decade later, neorealism took the camera into places that art had ignored.

The Absurd has an Italian ancestor too. In Luigi Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (Rome, 1921), six characters abandoned by their author interrupt a rehearsal and ask the actors to perform their story. Like Beckett, Pirandello made the play reflect on itself — a device called **metatheatre** (*metateatro*): theatre that shows its own conventions — and like Beckett he left the audience with no stable reality to hold on to. The difference is that Pirandello's characters are desperate to have their story told, while Beckett's seem to have no story at all.

13.6.3 Screen, music and art: the Festival of Britain and the Beatles

In 1951, a hundred years after the Great Exhibition, the government organised the **Festival of Britain** to show a country recovering from the war. Its main site, on the South Bank of the Thames in London, offered modern architecture, design and science to millions of visitors; most of it was pulled down the following year, but the Royal Festival Hall, a concert hall built for the occasion, is still in use. A decade later the most famous product of British culture was a pop group. The Beatles, four young men from Liverpool, released their first single in October 1962, and between 1963 and 1970 their records and films changed popular music: from short love songs to studio experiments with orchestras, Indian instruments and recording tricks. Listen in class to a Beatles song of 1963 and one of 1967 and describe the difference in instruments, structure and themes — you will hear the 1960s change in four years.

COLLEGAMENTI

Computer science and philosophy: from the imitation game to AI. Turing's question of 1950 was the starting point of a new science. The term "artificial intelligence" was introduced in 1955, in the proposal for a summer research project held at Dartmouth College, in the United States, in 1956. Today chatbots can hold a conversation that many people find hard to tell from a human one, so the imitation game is discussed again — and so are its limits: imitating the answers of a thinking being is not the same, many philosophers argue, as understanding them. In philosophy, compare Descartes's argument in the *Discourse on Method* (1637) that a machine could never arrange words to answer meaningfully whatever is said to it. Turing's own life ended tragically: convicted in 1952 for a homosexual relationship, then a crime in Britain, he died in 1954; he received a posthumous royal pardon in 2013. The paper closes with a sentence that is also this chapter's epigraph. Three years later, biology answered another great question about life — with a picture.

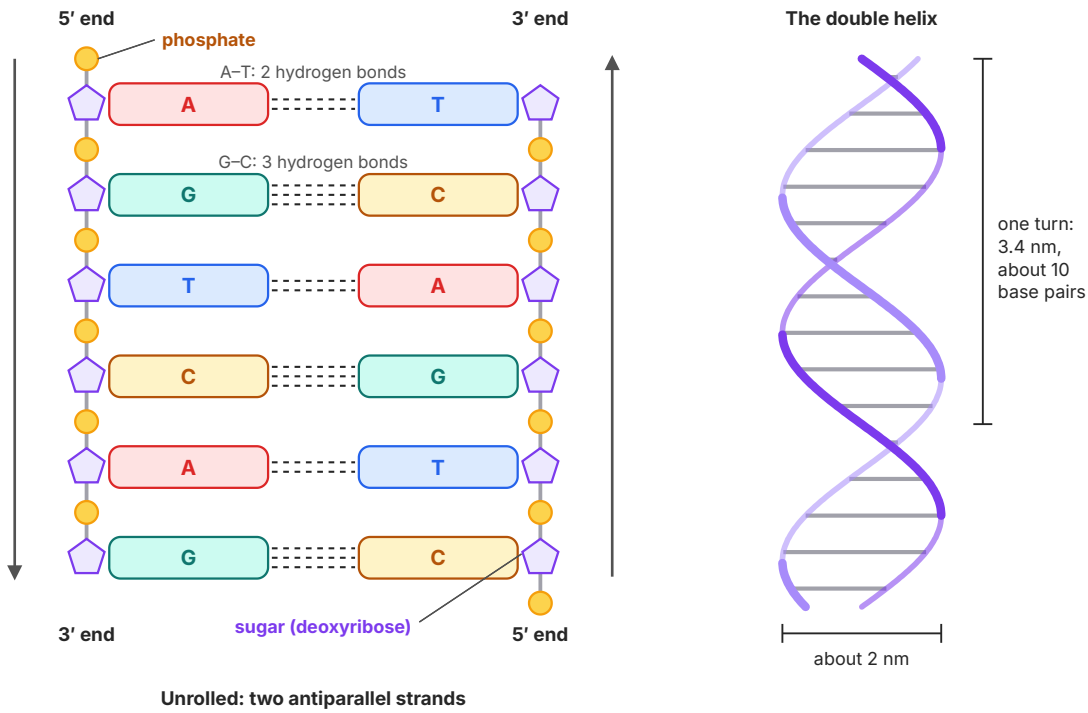


Figura 13.5 The DNA double helix (simplified). Left: a short stretch unrolled, with sugar–phosphate backbones, the two strands running in opposite directions (5′→3′ and 3′→5′), A–T pairs held by two hydrogen bonds and G–C pairs by three (dashed lines). Right: the helix, about 2 nm wide, with one complete turn every 3.4 nm, about ten base pairs (values of the 1953 model; the grooves are not to scale).

COLLEGAMENTI

Biology and chemistry: the structure of DNA (1953). On 25 April 1953 the journal *Nature* published a one-page letter by James Watson and Francis Crick, of the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge, proposing that DNA has the structure of a **double helix** (*doppia elica*): two chains twisted around each other and running in opposite directions (*antiparallel*, 5′→3′ and 3′→5′), each with a backbone of alternating sugar and phosphate groups (Figura 13.5). The bases point inwards and are joined in pairs by hydrogen bonds: each **base pair** (*coppia di basi*) is adenine with thymine (A–T, two hydrogen bonds) or guanine with cytosine (G–C, three). Because each base fixes its partner, each strand carries the information needed to build the other — the key to how DNA is copied.

The model depended on experimental evidence from King's College London, where Rosalind Franklin and her student Raymond Gosling had taken X-ray diffraction images of DNA; the clearest, known as "Photo 51", dates from May 1952. Maurice Wilkins, also at King's, showed it to Watson in January 1953 without Franklin's knowledge. Papers by Wilkins's group and by Franklin and Gosling appeared in the same issue of *Nature*. The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine of 1962 went to Watson, Crick and Wilkins; Franklin had died of cancer in 1958, at thirty-seven, and the prize is not given after death.

DA RICORDARE

For the exam. Starting point: *a description of Photo 51 — a grey X-shaped pattern of dark spots, taken with X-rays in 1952.* Three links it opens:

- **another English author** — Turing's question (T2): science as a new way of asking what a human being is; or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (English 4, chapter 14);
- **an Italian author** — Primo Levi, chemist and writer (*Il sistema periodico*, 1975), and the responsibility of science after the war;
- **another subject** — biology (the double helix and DNA replication) or physics (X-ray diffraction: waves and interference).

SINTESI

- The **Beveridge Report** (1942) named five "giants"; Labour won the 1945 election and built the **welfare state**: National Insurance, nationalisation and the **NHS** (5 July 1948), free at the point of use.
- **Decolonisation:** India and Pakistan became independent in August 1947 after partition; most colonies became independent by the 1960s and joined the Commonwealth of Nations. **Suez** (1956) showed the limits of British power.
- The ***Empire Windrush*** docked at Tilbury on 21 June 1948; its passengers, citizens under the British Nationality Act 1948, gave their name to the **Windrush generation**.
- From the Coronation (1953) to the 1960s: rising wages, youth culture, the Beatles, "Swinging London", liberalising laws; the UK joined the **EEC** on 1 January 1973.
- **Beckett**, *Waiting for Godot* (Paris 1953, London 1955): two acts, circular structure, Godot never arrives; the **Theatre of the Absurd** is Esslin's label (1961).
- The **Angry Young Men** (Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*, 1956) and **kitchen sink drama** attacked class and complacency in realistic settings.
- **Dylan Thomas**, "Do not go gentle into that good night" (1951): a **villanelle** — 19 lines, five tercets and a quatrain, two rhymes, two refrains.
- **Turing**, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950) replaces "Can machines think?" with the **imitation game**.
- The **UDHR** (10 December 1948), article 1, affirms dignity, reason, conscience and brotherhood; Beckett's play stages the same questions without the confidence.
- **Agreement:** collective nouns singular or plural (BrE), singular (AmE); *people, police* plural; amounts and titles singular; *a number of* + plural, *the number of* + singular; *neither… nor* → the nearer subject; find the head of a long subject.
- **Skills:** acronyms and initialisms; the STAR method for interviews; a Europass CV and a cover letter that proves one strength with evidence.
- **Connections:** NHS and Costituzione art. 32 (1948); neorealism; Pirandello's metatheatre; the Festival of Britain and the Beatles; the double helix (1953) and AI.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Which of these was NOT one of the five "giants" named in the Beveridge Report?
   - **A.** Squalor
   - **B.** Ignorance
   - **C.** Hunger
   - **D.** Idleness

2. ● In which language did Samuel Beckett first write *Waiting for Godot*?
   A. English
   B. Irish
   C. German
   D. French

3. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The NHS began on 5 July 1948. b The *Empire Windrush* sailed directly from Jamaica to London without stopping. c Its Caribbean passengers needed a visa to settle in Britain. d Martin Esslin invented the label "Theatre of the Absurd". e In *Waiting for Godot* Godot appears briefly at the end of Act II. f Dylan Thomas wrote in English, not in Welsh.

4. ●● Match each author with a work and a date. Authors: Osborne · Selvon · Turing · Thomas · Watson and Crick · Esslin. Works: *The Lonely Londoners* · "Do not go gentle into that good night" · *Look Back in Anger* · "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" · *The Theatre of the Absurd* · the double helix in *Nature*. Dates: 1950 · 1951 · 1953 · 1956 · 1956 · 1961.

5. ●● Complete the timeline with the correct dates (day, month and year where you know them): a the Beveridge Report · b the independence of India and Pakistan · c the arrival of the *Windrush* at Tilbury · d the start of the NHS · e the Universal Declaration of Human Rights · f the UK joins the EEC.

6. ●●● Short answer (10–12 lines). How did the years 1945–1973 change Britain's idea of itself — at home, through the welfare state, and in the world, through the end of Empire and migration?

Text Analysis

7. ●● In T1, the two refrains are…
   A. the first and the last lines of every stanza.
   B. lines 1 and 3, which return alternately at the end of each tercet and together at the end.
   C. two lines that never repeat exactly.
   D. the first two lines of the quatrain.

8. ●● In T2, Turing rejects defining "think" from its ordinary use because…
   A. ordinary people do not use the word.
   B. machines cannot answer questions.
   C. the answer would become a matter of opinion, like a survey.
   D. he prefers a mathematical definition.

9. ●● T1: find in the poem (give line numbers) a an example of paradox · b a pun · c a simile · d alliteration on *b* · e a direct address to a person.

10. ●● T3: in about 80 words, explain how the end of Act II of *Waiting for Godot* repeats and changes the end of Act I, and what this tells us about the structure of the play.

11. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (100–120 words) comparing T1 and T3: what does each text say about how a human being should face a situation without hope?

12. ●●● Link to Italian literature. Compare the circular, waiting world of *Waiting for Godot* with Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*: name one similarity and one difference (about 80 words).

Language

13. ● Choose the correct form. Give both where both are correct in British English. a The police *is / are* looking for the stolen painting. b Physics *is / are* my CLIL subject. c Ten years *is / are* a long time to wait for a visa. d The staff *was / were* all trained in the new system. e *Waiting for Godot is / are* performed all over the world. f The government *has / have* announced *its / their* plans. g The news from the ward *was / were* good. h A number of nurses *was / were* recruited abroad.

14. ●● Each sentence has one agreement error (✗). Find and correct it. a The number of students who chose physics have doubled. b Neither the boy nor the two tramps knows who Godot is. c One of the scientists who has worked on DNA was Rosalind Franklin. d People in the 1950s was proud of the NHS. e The list of the passengers' names are kept in the National Archives. f The committee have made its decision.

15. ●● Rewrite in American English, changing only what is necessary. a The team are celebrating their victory. b The government are divided over the new law. c The family have decided to move to Bristol.

16. ●● Complete with *a number of* or *the number of* and the correct form of *be* (present or past). a … Caribbean passengers on the *Windrush* … 802. b … passengers … veterans of the RAF. c … people waiting for an operation … too high, according to the report. d … questions in the interview … about teamwork.

17. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals. Use two to five words. a Both Vladimir and Estragon fail to leave. (NEITHER) → … leaves. b The NHS has been criticised by many people. (NUMBER) → A large … have criticised the NHS. c Most of the passengers came from the Caribbean. (MAJORITY) → The … from the Caribbean.

18. ●●● Translate into English. a La gente pensava che la polizia fosse troppo severa. b La maggior parte dei passeggeri veniva dai Caraibi. c Né il governo né i medici volevano un servizio a pagamento.

Vocabulary

19. ● Complete with words from Tabella 13.5 in the correct form. a After forty years at the factory, he lives on a small state … . b Many families … in Bristol and London in the 1950s. c Nurses often work night … . d The scandal raised questions of … and of the rights of long-term residents. e Selvon's characters look for a sense of … in a cold city. f She lost her job and had to claim … for a few months.

20. ● Acronym or initialism? Write A or I and say how you would pronounce the indefinite article before each: NHS · NATO · UN · laser · BBC · radar · EU · DNA.

21. ●● Collocations. Match the verbs with the nouns, then use four pairs in sentences about the chapter: *apply for · claim · face · settle · take on · run — discrimination · a workshop · benefit · a job · in a new country · responsibility*.

Writing and Speaking

22. ●●● Writing. Write a Europass-style CV and a cover letter (200–250 words) for the advert you chose in the Writing section, or for Northfield Summer Science School. Use the checklist and include one STAR story.

23. ●●● Speaking. Answer this interview question in about one minute, using the STAR method: *Tell me about a time when you had to explain something difficult to someone.*

Towards INVALSI

24. ●● (B1) In Sam's post, why did Sam's great-grandmother's family keep coins in a jar?

    A. To buy medicine for the hospital.
    B. To pay the doctor before the health service existed.
    C. To save money for Christmas.
    D. To give money to the nurses.

25. ●● (B2) What does Sam's mother suggest about the nurses recruited overseas?

    A. They mostly returned home after a few years.
    B. They were all trained by her.
    C. Their contribution was important but was not always repaid with fair treatment.
    D. They were responsible for the Windrush scandal.

26. ●● (B2) The main idea of Sam's last paragraph is that…

    A. each family member's word represents a different time and meaning of the NHS.
    B. Lily's answer was the funniest.
    C. the NHS will not exist in the future.
    D. Giulia's question was impossible to answer.

27. ●● (B1–B2) True, false or not given? a Joan worked as a nurse in a children's hospital. b Helen has worked on Christmas Day. c Lily was born at home. d Callum's flatmate is American. e In England, prescriptions are free for adults of working age. f Helen thinks the NHS has no problems.

28. ●● (B1) Answer in no more than four words. a How old is Lily? b Who said the word "promise"? c Where does Callum study? d What illness did Lily have last winter?

Towards the Exam

29. ●●● Starting point: *a description of a ship docking at a river port in June 1948, and people in their best clothes walking down the gangway.* Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

30. ●●● Starting point: a sentence from Turing's paper, "Can machines think?" Talk for 3 minutes and link it to two other subjects.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on post-war literature, with Beckett, Larkin and Hughes.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. F: the selections from Beckett, Dylan Thomas, Larkin and Hughes.
- [BRA] M. Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel*: the chapter on the novel after 1945 and the Angry Young Men.
- [HOB] E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*: the chapters on the end of the empires and on the "golden years" after the war.
- [BOE] E. Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*: the chapter on decolonisation and on writers arriving in Britain from the Caribbean.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entry "Literature of the Absurd".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on singular and plural, with collective nouns and *data*.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on agreement between subject and verb.

Glossario del capitolo

Acronym
acronimo — a short form made from initial letters and pronounced as a word (*NATO, laser*).

Angry Young Men
"giovani arrabbiati" — a journalists' label for British writers of the 1950s, such as John Osborne, whose heroes attack class and complacency.

Base pair
coppia di basi — two bases on opposite DNA strands joined by hydrogen bonds: A–T or G–C.

Collective noun
nome collettivo — a noun naming a group (*team, government, family*); in British English it may take a singular or plural verb.

Cover letter
lettera di presentazione — a one-page letter sent with a CV, explaining why the candidate is right for a job.

Double helix
doppia elica — the shape of the DNA molecule: two antiparallel strands twisted around each other.

Imitation game
gioco dell'imitazione — Turing's test (1950): an interrogator must tell, from written answers only, which of two hidden players is which.

Initialism
sigla letta lettera per lettera — a short form made from initial letters, each pronounced separately (*NHS, BBC*).

Kitchen sink drama
dramma realista della vita domestica — British realistic plays and films of the late 1950s set in ordinary working-class homes.

Metatheatre
metateatro — theatre that shows and reflects on its own conventions (Pirandello, Beckett).

Notional agreement
accordo a senso — agreement of the verb with the meaning of the subject rather than with its grammatical form.

Proximity agreement
accordo di prossimità — agreement of the verb with the nearer of two subjects (*neither… nor*).

STAR method
metodo STAR — a way of answering interview questions: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

Tercet
terzina — a stanza of three lines.

Theatre of the Absurd
teatro dell'assurdo — Martin Esslin's label (1961) for plays that present human life as without discoverable meaning, through circular plots and broken dialogue.

Tragicomedy
tragicommedia — a play that mixes tragic and comic elements.

Villanelle
villanella — a fixed form of 19 lines — five tercets and a quatrain — on two rhymes, with two alternating refrains.

Welfare state
stato sociale — a state that takes responsibility for its citizens' health, income security, housing and education.

Windrush generation
generazione Windrush — Caribbean migrants who settled in Britain between 1948 and the early 1970s.

Soluzioni

1. C (the five giants were Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness; hunger is part of "Want" but is not one of the names).

2. D (*En attendant Godot*, published 1952, performed in Paris in January 1953; Beckett's English version reached London in 1955).

3. a T. b F — it called at Port of Spain, Kingston, Tampico, Havana and Bermuda before Tilbury. c F — under the British Nationality Act 1948 they were citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies. d T (1961: a critic's label, not a name the playwrights chose). e F — Godot never arrives; a boy brings his messages. f T.

4. Osborne — *Look Back in Anger* — 1956 · Selvon — *The Lonely Londoners* — 1956 · Turing — "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" — 1950 · Thomas — "Do not go gentle..." — 1951 · Watson and Crick — the double helix — 1953 · Esslin — *The Theatre of the Absurd* — 1961.

5. a 1 December 1942 · b August 1947 (Pakistan 14, India 15 August) · c the ship docked on 21 June 1948, passengers came ashore on 22 June · d 5 July 1948 · e 10 December 1948 · f 1 January 1973.

6. *Traccia.* At home: the 1945 Labour government turned the Beveridge Report into a welfare state (National Insurance, nationalisation, the NHS of 5 July 1948), so that security in illness and old age became a right of citizens rather than charity; austerity and rationing lasted into the 1950s, but by the 1960s prosperity, youth culture and new laws had made Britain a more open society. Abroad: Indian independence and partition (1947), the independence of most African and Caribbean colonies and the Suez crisis (1956) ended Britain's role as an imperial great power; it turned to the Commonwealth, to the alliance with the USA and finally to Europe (EEC, 1973). Migration from the Caribbean (Windrush, 1948) and South Asia made Britain multicultural, but also exposed discrimination (1958, the 1962 Act). Conclusion: a smaller power, but a more equal and more diverse society.

7. B.

8. C (an answer found by examining common usage would be a "Gallup poll", which Turing calls absurd).

9. a *blinding sight* (l. 13) or *Curse, bless* (l. 17) or the *good night* of death (l. 1) · b *Grave men* (l. 13: serious / close to the grave) · c *like meteors* (l. 14) · d *Blind* ... *blaze* (l. 14) or *by* ... *bright* (l. 7) — accept any correct example · e *And you, my father* (l. 16).

10. *Traccia.* At the end of both acts a boy announces that Godot will come tomorrow, the two men agree to leave and do not move. In Act II the roles in the final exchange are reversed, Vladimir answers the boy's questions himself and the two try and fail to hang themselves. Repetition with small changes makes the structure circular: time passes but nothing progresses, and the play could begin again the next evening — the form itself expresses the absurd.

11. *Traccia.* Point: both texts show people facing an end they cannot change, but they recommend opposite attitudes. Evidence: Thomas's refrain *Rage, rage* (l. 3) commands resistance; Vladimir and Estragon, who say they will go, stay where they are. Explanation: Thomas turns despair into energy and love — the son wants his father to fight; Beckett shows endurance without hope, but the two men stay together. Both, in different ways, find value in not giving up the human bond.

12. *Traccia.* Similarity: both are metatheatrical and deny the audience a stable reality and a conclusion — Pirandello's characters cannot finish their story, Beckett's cannot begin one. Difference: Pirandello's characters have a past and a desperate need to tell it (passion, family drama); Beckett's have almost no past and wait for a meaning that never comes. Pi-

randello (1921) questions identity and art; Beckett (1953) questions meaning itself.

13. a are · b is · c is · d were · e is · f has … its / have … their (both, if consistent) · g was · h were.

14. a ✓ *has doubled* (head: *the number*) · b ✓ *know* (nearer subject *the two tramps*) · c ✓ *who have worked* (*who = the scientists*) · d ✓ *were* · e ✓ *is kept* (head: *the list*) · f ✓ *has made its* or *have made their*.

15. a The team is celebrating its victory. b The government is divided over the new law (or: Members of the government are divided…). c The family has decided to move to Bristol.

16. a The number of … was · b A number of … were · c The number of … is (was) · d A number of … were (are).

17. a Neither Vladimir nor Estragon (leaves) — the verb is singular because the nearer subject is singular · b (A large) number of people · c (The) majority of the passengers came (accept *majority of passengers came*).

18. a People thought (that) the police were too strict. b Most of the passengers came (or: The majority of the passengers came) from the Caribbean. c Neither the government nor the doctors wanted a service that patients had to pay for (a fee-paying service).

19. a pension · b settled · c shifts · d citizenship · e belonging · f benefit.

20. NHS I (*an* NHS hospital) · NATO A (*a* NATO base) · UN I (*a* UN report, /juː/) · laser A (*a* laser) · BBC I (*a* BBC programme) · radar A (*a* radar) · EU I (*an* EU law, /iː/) · DNA I (*a* DNA test).

21. apply for a job · claim benefit · face discrimination · settle in a new country · take on responsibility · run a workshop. Sentences: open, e.g. *Many Windrush migrants faced discrimination when they looked for housing.*

22. *Assessment:* CV with all Europass sections, facts only, reverse chronological order; letter in five paragraphs (job and source · who you are and availability · evidence with a STAR story · why this job · request for interview and thanks), formal register, no contractions, correct salutation and close (*Dear Dr… / Yours sincerely*), 200–250 words, CV and letter consistent.

23. *Model answer.* "During my PCTO placement at a science museum (**situation**), I had to explain to a class of nine-year-olds why a straw looks broken in a glass of water (**task**). My first explanation used the word 'refraction', and I could see that nobody understood. So I stopped, gave each pair a glass and a pencil and asked them to describe what they saw from different angles; then I compared light to a person who walks more slowly in sand than on a road (**action**). By the end most of them could explain it to their teacher, and I learnt that a good example matters more than the right technical word (**result**)."

24. B.

25. C ("Some of them were treated very badly by the country they were helping").

26. A.

27. a F (she worked in the hospital office) · b T · c F (in an NHS hospital) · d T · e F (they usually pay a fixed charge) · f F (waiting lists, tired staff, full wards).

28. a seven (years old) · b (Sam's) mum / Helen · c in Scotland / Edinburgh · d a (bad) chest infection.

29. *Traccia.* Identify: the *Empire Windrush* at Tilbury, 21–22 June 1948. History: British Nationality Act 1948, labour shortage, the NHS and London Transport, discrimination (1958), the 1962 Act and the 2018 scandal. Literature: Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and the voice of migrants; chapter 15 (postcolonial writing). Link 1 — Italian history / Italian: Italian emigration after the war (to Belgium, Germany, the Americas) and internal migration from South to North; Link 2 — geography / Educazione civica: citizenship and rights (Costituzione art. 3, the UDHR). Close with a personal view.

30. *Traccia.* Turing (1950) replaced the question with the imitation game; scientific style and argument (T2). Link 1 — philosophy: Descartes on machines and language, the mind–body problem; Link 2 — mathematics/computer science: algorithms, the

universal machine (1936), today's AI and its limits; possible literary links: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (artificial life), the dystopias of chapter 12. Mention Turing's persecution and 2013 pardon briefly and soberly.