



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

**Monday 1 November 2021 – Morning**

**GCSE (9–1) English Language**

**J351/01** Communicating information and ideas

Insert

**Time allowed: 2 hours**



**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Do **not** send this Insert for marking. Keep it in the centre or recycle it.

**INFORMATION**

- Use this Insert to answer the questions in Section A.
- This document has **8** pages.

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**Details of text extracts:**

**Text 1**

Text: adapted from *The Life of P. T. Barnum*

Author: Phineas T. Barnum (1855)

**Text 2**

Text: adapted from *Why does the new film about P. T. Barnum gloss over his cruelty and racism?*

Author: Jane Fryer (2017)

## Text 1

*Phineas T. Barnum was a controversial American entrepreneur who was famous for exhibiting unusual animals and people. In his autobiography he defended himself against his critics.*

In taking a survey of my career I shall perhaps disagree with some of my straight-laced but worthy readers as to the value and significance of that career. I shall, however, give my honest opinion upon the matter even at the risk of being charged with egotism.

5 As a businessman my first object has been to put money in my purse. In this I succeeded beyond my wildest expectations and am satisfied. But what I have here said will prepare the reader for what I consider to be a reasonable claim that I have also benefitted the public to an extent seldom paralleled in the history of professional philanthropists<sup>1</sup>.

10 My travelling museums of natural history have been the largest and most interesting ever exhibited in the United States. No author or university has ever accomplished as much in the spread of a knowledge about the varied forms of animal life. My museums have been one of the chief means by which I have instructed the masses.

15 For the elevation and refinement of musical taste in this country, it will not be denied that I have done more than any man living. By bringing Jenny Lind<sup>2</sup> to the United States, I inaugurated a new era in the most beautiful and humanising of all the fine arts and gave to the cultivated and wealthy, as well as to the middling classes, a larger measure of enjoyment than has ever been derived from the enterprise of any other single individual.

20 I will not enter into a further discussion of the benefits I have conferred on my countrymen and women as a minister to their instruction and happiness while pursuing my main purpose of making money. No one, however, can say that he has ever paid for admission to one of my exhibitions more than his admission was worth to him.

25 If a sight of my exhibitions was not worth twenty-five cents, the privilege of seeing the most extensive and valuable museum in the United States was worth double that sum to anyone enticed into it by the ingenious contrivance of my advertisements. And I should like to see the moralist who thinks that my customer would have done as well with his money at the drinking den or any of the other places of paid-for entertainment.

<sup>1</sup>philanthropist = person who does good

<sup>2</sup>Jenny Lind was a famous opera singer who Barnum took on a very successful series of tours round the United States

## Text 2

*A film based on the life of P. T. Barnum was released in 2017. In this review, published in the Daily Mail, Jane Fryer claims that the film does not give a true picture of what Barnum was like.*

P. T. Barnum was the man who ‘invented showbusiness’ and ‘the Shakespeare of advertising’ but he routinely exploited people in the name of profit. He invented the big top circus entertainment extravaganza and launched the first superstar tour, with singer Jenny Lind, the ‘Swedish nightingale’. Then, once Barnum had his fill of all the razzmatazz, he neatly reinvented himself as a campaigning politician and philanthropist.

It’s quite a story. No wonder Australian actor, Hugh Jackman, has been clamouring for years to make an epic rags-to-riches romantic musical movie celebrating Barnum’s extraordinary life. Jackman said, ‘It is not exaggerating to say he ushered in modern-day America, especially the idea that your talent, imagination and ability to work hard should be the only things that determine your success. So many things that I aspire to in my life are embodied in this one character.’

What a shame, then, that in his haste to pay homage to the man who ‘celebrated all humanity’, Jackman’s film has left so much out. What about his cynical and relentlessly commercial manipulation of hundreds of America’s vulnerable, abused misfits as money-making opportunities in his ‘freak’ shows? In the film, the emphasis is firmly on Barnum’s so-called empowering of them, rather than on his exploitation of them. What about Joice Heth, the 80-year-old black slave whom Barnum bought — yes, bought — for £1,000 (\$1,350) in 1835? She was rebranded as ‘George Washington’s 160-year-old nanny’ and became a travelling exhibit but she has been airbrushed out of the film completely. Barnum even boasted about how he’d plied her with drink and then pulled out her remaining teeth to make her look closer to 160.

Over the years, Barnum’s fortunes went up and down almost as often as the tent for his big top circus, but every time he came back with something new — usually a hoax or scam. He lied about anything and everything and laughed off criticism by declaring it all ‘showmanship’. So Jumbo ‘the world’s biggest elephant’ was not the biggest elephant in the world — nowhere near it. He was just a big elephant with rotten teeth from eating too many buns.

Barnum instinctively knew better than anyone how to give audiences the mix of glitz and ghouliness they craved. But he also showed astonishing vision. When, in 1850, he met opera star Jenny Lind, he promised her an American tour which turned into the precursor of the modern rock extravaganza. The tour took the equivalent of £16 million in today’s money over just nine months and spawned a mania for Jenny Lind merchandise: hats, paper dolls, and even Lind-branded chewing tobacco.

He was the personification of the American dream — a man who rose from poverty and followed his passions and made a fortune.

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