

The changing workplace

Possible answers and solutions

1. Describe and analyse the following chart.

- The bar chart “Education & Training Pays, 2006” was published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a very reliable source.
- The chart shows the unemployment rate (in per cent) of eight different educational attainments on the left and the average full-time earnings per week for these levels of qualification on the right.
- Employees and workers 25 years and older were taken into consideration for this chart.
- From the chart we can conclude the following statements:
 - The higher your level of education the less likely you are to be unemployed. The unemployment rate of university level education is very low at 2.3% or less.
 - People without university education are more likely to be unemployed, especially the lowest level of education in this chart: Some High School out of which 6.8 % of all workers are unemployed.
 - Additionally, your income is higher the higher your qualification is. The weekly difference between “Professional Degree” (\$ 1,474) and “Some High School” (\$ 419) is drastic.
- Taken together we can summarize: the higher your education the better is your job situation and your income. Therefore try to qualify yourself as much as possible.

Task 1 asks you to **describe** (*Anforderungsbereich 1*) and to **analyse** (*Anforderungsbereich 2*) the chart. **Describe** means you just present what you see in the chart: What kind of visualisation is presented? Who published it? When was it published? What is shown? **Analyse** means you interpret the figures: What can you conclude from the chart?

2. Summarize the text.

- The two extracts are taken from the play “The Adding Machine” written by Elmer Rice in 1923. The text presents Mr. Zero’s ideas of a promotion and the harsh reality of being fired after 25 years.
- In Part I the protagonist Mr. Zero daydreams about some kind of gratification for having been with the company for 25 years. He is just an ordinary worker who has been doing the same job for 25 years. He thinks about talking to his boss and imagines the boss is going to promote him.
- In Part II the boss really comes to talk to Mr. Zero but not to thank him for 25 years of work but on the contrary to fire him. During the conversation Zero is very nervous.
- The company plans to modernise by installing an adding machine and this makes Mr. Zero’s position redundant. Zero is shocked.

Task 2 asks you to write a **summary** and therefore clearly aims at the contents of the text (*Anforderungsbereich 1*). Please remember to give an introduction (text type, title, author, when published, main idea or topic) and focus on the topical ideas. Leave out your own interpretation and opinion.

3. Contrast Mr. Zero’s language in Part I to his language and behaviour in Part II.

- Mr. Zero appears to be very self-assured and confident in Part I. He is proud of having kept his job for 25 years (l. 5) and wonders whether the boss actually remembers his 25th anniversary (l. 6).
- He seems to be determined to inform the boss about this special day (l. 8) and he plans to impress the boss by rejecting a cigar (l. 11). Mr. Zero comes across as convincing because he has clear projections of what to say (ll. 10–20)
- His choice of words in Part I is mainly positive but Mr. Zero’s low level of education becomes clear because he constantly omits some syllables (e.g. in l. 5, l. 6, l. 7).
- In contrast to Part I Mr. Zero acts and speaks completely differently to the boss when he actually has to face him.
- The stage directions make it clear that Zero is extremely nervous (“trembles nervously”, l. 23) and he constantly uses “Sir” in his answers as a sign of respect towards his boss (l. 24, l. 26, etc.).
- None of the self-assured behaviour remains.
- When the boss fires him (l. 53) he only asks in amazement and shock but does not oppose the boss as expected from his language in Part I.
- Part II clearly states Mr. Zero’s inferior position.

With **task 3** you are in *Anforderungsbereich 2*, because **contrast** asks you to emphasise the differences concerning the use of language in Part I and Part II. Therefore you do not only refer to the text and give proof from the text but you also analyse.

4. **Creative writing:** Imagine Mr. Zero writes a letter of complaint to the local newspaper. Please write the letter for him.

Dear Sirs

After having worked for 25 years for the same company I was fired!

I am totally disappointed by my boss and the system which does not prevent something like this.

My family depends on my income and I don't know how we are going to survive without it.

The company plans to modernise, but instead of offering me some kind of training or a different job they just get rid of me.

...

In **task 4** you are asked to **produce** a text, which does not refer directly to the original text (Anforderungsbereich 3). Please keep in mind what kind of text you have to produce – in this case a **letter to the newspaper**. You should address the editor (salutation) and give a brief account on what happened (reasons for your letter). Then inform the public about your current situation. You may end the letter with some kind of appeal or a closing phrase.

5. **Comment:** Mr. Zero loses his job because of modernization of the workplace. His boss is ruthless and only interested in efficiency and money. In Grisham's book "The Firm" moral aspects also play no role for the owners of "Bendini, Lambert & Locke". Please comment on the connection of business and moral. To what extent should companies consider moral responsibility?

Depending on what you want to focus on and what conclusion you want to draw, your answer may take different forms. Here are some ideas:

Introduction: In the following comment I am going to discuss the connection between business and moral aspects./ In our modern world challenged by globalization many companies try to survive by all means, even if this implies the disregard of moral aspects ...

On the one hand:

- moral aspects are very important because:
- trust is important, people who can rely on their company are more loyal towards the company and thus more productive,
- our society is based on respect and the regard of rules,
- ...

On the other hand:

- some companies, like "Bendini, Lambert & Locke" are greedy and try to gain as much as possible, not considering any responsibility,
- destruction of jobs but profit for the companies,
- ...

Conclusion:

Companies have to survive in a very complex and aggressive business environment. However, even if the competition is very strong, the companies should always be "fair" and honest to their employees ...

The word **comment** in **task 5** demands you to give reasons for your opinion if you agree or disagree with the companies' actions (Anforderungsbereich 3). Please make sure that your comment is well structured: introduction of the topic, discussion providing reasons for and reasons against the companies' moral and draw a conclusion. Make sure that you use linkers and connectors to make your text fluent to read.