**Segment adapted from “The Social Function of Science,” John D. Bernal (1939)**

The extract is taken from a book written sixty years ago by a British scientist in which he considers the relationship between science and society.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The pioneers of the teaching of science imagined that its introduction into education would remove the conventionality, artificiality, and backward-lookingness which were characteristic of classical studies; but they were gravely disappointed. So, too, in their time had the humanists thought that the study of the classical authors in the original would banish at once the dull pedantry and superstition of mediaeval scholasticism. The professional schoolmaster was a match for both of them, and has almost managed to make the understanding of chemical reactions as dull and as dogmatic an affair as the reading of Virgil's Aeneid.The chief claim for the use of science in education is that it teaches a child something about the actual universe in which he is living, in making him acquainted with the results of scientific discovery, and at the same time teaches him how to think logically and inductively by studying scientific method. A certain limited success has been reached in the first of these aims, but practically none at all in the second. Those privileged members of the community who have been through a secondary or public school education may be expected to know something about the elementary physics and chemistry of a hundred years ago, but they probably know hardly more than any bright boy can pick up from an interest in wireless or scientific hobbies out of school hours.  As to the learning of scientific method, the whole thing is palpably a farce. Actually, for the convenience of teachers and the requirements of the examination system, it is necessary that the pupils not only do not learn scientific method but learn precisely the reverse, that is, to believe exactly what they are told and to reproduce it when asked, whether it seems nonsense to them or not. The way in which educated people respond to such quackeries as spiritualism or astrology, not to say more dangerous ones such as racial theories or currency myths, shows that fifty years of education in the method of science in Britain or Germany has produced no visible effect whatever. The only way of learning the method of science is the long and bitter way of personal experience, and, until the educational or social systems are able to make this possible, the best we can expect is the production of a minority of people who are able to acquire some of the techniques of science and a still smaller minority who are able to use and develop them.  | 16274561779596116135151171186203222228246264282301318337344363382402412 |
| Adapted from: *The Social Function of Science*, John D Bernal (1939)Adapted for an SAT Practice Reading Comprehension Test <http://www.majortests.com/sat/reading-comprehension-test01> |  |
| **Related Article** “The Social Function of the Scientist”Herausgegeben von Helmut Steiner’s Response to Bernal’s article **“1939 J. D. Bernal’s The Social Function of Science 1989”**retrieved from [*http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/BB/A/B/O/G/\_/bbabog.pdf*](http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/BB/A/B/O/G/_/bbabog.pdf)*,* 1/20/13 |  |

Literature in Action – Fluency – Module 5