



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/01

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

May/June 2009

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.



This document consists of **7** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Answer two questions.

- 1 The passage below describes the writer's experience in Burma when he was serving as a police officer at a time when the British ruled the country. He has been ordered to deal with a possible threat posed by an elephant.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) Later that day, a member of the crowd records her thoughts and feelings in her diary about how the officer and the crowd behaved. Basing your answer closely on the material of the original extract, write the opening section (between 120–150 words) of the diary entry. [10]

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal). Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him. 5 10

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout* came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. 15

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward. 20 25

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick – one never does when a shot goes home – but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like 30 35 40

a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay. 45

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open – I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock. 50 55 60

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away.

*mahout: an elephant owner or keeper

2 The passage below describes the writer's experience of visiting Venice, in Italy.

(a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]

(b) A travel guide invites the writer to contribute an article about another tourist location. The guide's editor wants the writer to convey her detailed impressions of the atmosphere of the place. Basing your answer closely on the style and language of the original extract, write the opening (between 120–150 words) of the article. [10]

There, next to the shuttered kiosk, was the first bridge: stepped, the black night water slopping beneath it, a rakish police launch moored to one side. Beyond, half-visible through the thick fog, lay a stone path, a portico, another bridge.

At that moment, a group of students came running across the bridge, through the portico, down the stone path. It was two in the morning, but I could see immediately that there was nothing sinister or fugitive in their speed: this was high spirits. Human, energetic, timeless: they could have been Capulets*. Their voices filled the air, stilled by the fog. Then they were gone in a tumble of footsteps which fell away like blown leaves. At last: the city of voices and footsteps. I'd waited forty years for this. 5

The next day, somewhere near the post office, I found myself following a path between high buildings. It became a dark, covered alleyway; I stopped, for perhaps the sixth time, to check my map. A man with a stick was following me, swaddled in a heavy black coat; I could tell at a glance his soul was unquiet. As he clattered past me, he muttered what sounded like curses. His nose was aquiline*; his face imperious and sinewy. He wore sandals, though; his feet were bare. I watched him hobble into the darkness, bent on endurance, and realised that nothing in this field of vision would have altered in five hundred years. The paving slabs, the building stones, the January gloom, the human figure wrapped in dark wool and clutching a wood stick: I was gazing into the past. Venice is time travel. 10 15

The fog hushed what was already a quiet city further; you could hear the city's fearless sparrows squabble with each other in the vaporetto* shelters. Eventually a lumbering boat would loom, groaning, reverse and thump the wharf posts. There would be an exchange of shuffling, muffled passengers, and it would wallow off again. The only trace the great Greek ferries left now was a dull moan; fog had swaddled up their improbable bulk as they inched across the basin and down the Giudecca towards the Maritime Station. Boatmen still sing in Venice, since there's a chance the song will be heard. A gondola is black and lacquered, like a grand piano; the passengers sat on little thrones beneath thick, embroidered blankets, mute with the strangeness of it all. 20 25

The top of the Campanile in San Marco had disappeared into the fog, and at night the floodlights which were meant to strafe it and play on the arched façade of the basilica floundered lamely in the pewter vapour. On Saturday morning – was it morning? – I seemed to be almost alone in the Piazza. Then the bells began. The fog didn't snuff the sound so much as trap it at ground level. Bell strike melted into bell strike, amplified by the stone slabs under my feet; I began to feel the resonance in my bones, my liver, my heart. Any louder, I thought, and internal bleeding might begin. Perhaps I would be the first tourist ever to be murdered by the bells of San Marco. I hurried into Florian's, where not only could I choose my table, but also sit, if I wished, in an entirely empty room. A white-coated waiter brought me chocolate as thick as tree resin. I ate it rather than drank it, revelling in its bittersweet luxury, looking out at the January misery of the pigeon-food salesmen. 30 35 40

Unless your stay is very short, too, the fog will eventually lift. The noise and horizons will return; you will see that Venice has gasworks and pylons and pollution. The insidious damp cold will ebb a little, as will the taste of the past. The bells will no longer threaten to break your frame, and you will see that you are not alone with your maps and your guidebook; you will realise, indeed, that Venice has no such 45

thing as out-of-season. The rewards of a sunlit Venice have been amply conveyed elsewhere. As you watch the barges and lighters swarm across the basin, skipping between the serenity of San Giorgio and the sensuality of La Salute as they deliver the post and the beer and lug the vegetables of Catania and Umbria up to the Rialto, you'll find the busy pretty intricacy of the scene has barely changed, only the means of propulsion. Even fogless, there is no better place for those with an antipathy to the modern than Venice. 50

*Capulets: a family in the play *Romeo and Juliet*, also set in Italy

*aquiline: hooked

*vaporetto: a ferry

3 In the extract below the writer describes her shopping habits and the feelings they bring out in her.

(a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]

(b) The writer's mother has become concerned about her daughter's great interest in buying old clothes. In a letter to a friend she outlines her thoughts and feelings about it. Basing your answer closely on the material of the original extract, write the opening to the letter (between 120–150 words). [10]

I *feel* history when I walk into a vintage-clothes store. Sometimes, I can see history too. I imagine the heel catching on that ripped tweed skirt and the young woman fighting tears as she rushes past her annoyed-but-patient father to change. She climbs two steps at a time, her mind already rifling through her sister's closet for a plan B outfit. He reaches for another cigarette, exhaling any hopes of that steady drink before meeting "the man of her dreams." 5

I imagine the wine splashing on that filmy high-neck pale-pink blouse and the perfumed and powdered owner laughing it off, her attentions on the handsome soldier courting her. The next day, she hugs the blouse close to her heaving heart, soaking in the memories of their one evening together – the short sweet memories that will have to sustain her through the lonely months ahead. 10

I see the flushed cheeks and shining eyes of the young-and-in-love bride as her new husband secures this string of pearls around her neck. Her reflection in the tall moonlit looking glass shows a girl becoming a woman. He sees it too ...

There's romance in vintage. 15

There's courting, love, sex, sadness, and pain in vintage.

It's not always obvious from the dusty crowded windows, but it's there – the weddings, the funerals, the parties, the disgraces, the secrets, the celebrations, the lives. Sometimes, the storied pieces call to me from across the street, forcing me to "just take a quick look." Other times, I have to comb and climb through overcrowded racks of patterned polyesters, 80s mistakes, and moth eaten wool. But when I find that special something, I get goose bumps. 20

In evaluating the condition of a piece, I can't help but wonder at the life it had before me. Sometimes the past lingers in the fabric, the secrets stuffed deep in the pockets or shoved up stiff sleeves. Holding a dress to the light, you can often see the form of its previous owner. It's most obvious with vintage shoes, where in the scuffed soles, the worn heels, and the wrinkled tow-cap, you can see the footprint of a path once walked. 25

I live in a New York City apartment so, unfortunately, I can't adopt every little embroidered hankie, laugh-lined shoe, or patterned shift dress I think has a story. My wallet is always flexible but my closet is not. So I look for unique pieces. 30

In searching for vintage dresses or unique patterns, I've recently taken to trolling eBay*. I've found some reliable vintage stores, but my few experiences have reinforced what I've always known to be true: there's a very fine line between vintage and costume. With the right styling and photography, any vintage item can be made to look like a find. I recently purchased a vintage belted cream lace dress that I was very excited about. 35

It had a square neck and balloon sleeves and it looked special in the photograph. I ordered the dress and when it arrived, I noticed the frayed hem was not as edgy as it had appeared in the photo, and the collar and sleeves made me look like a Renaissance fair worker. I knew even before I tried it on that it was a nice dress, but it would make a beautiful cushion cover. 40

Had I found it in person and physically handled it before purchasing, I would have paid less, with that cushion – not my cushy backside – in mind. So now, I remind myself to make careful decisions when shopping vintage online, especially when it 45

comes to budget. The thrill of the vintage-store find is a rush but it can be tempered with a few step-away-and-step-back moves and a slow front-and-back reality check in front of a mirror. The thrill of the online auction however is more difficult to reign in. Take it from me that virtual-shopping can cloud your judgment and you'll suddenly find yourself needing – and willing to pay anything for – that vintage Chanel skirt that you can't even be sure will fit. I'm not afraid of eBay though, just aware. When used appropriately, it's a great resource for vintage fabrics, scarves, beads, shoes, jewelry, and other accessories. 50

I prefer to stumble – not click – upon my special blouses, dresses, and tees. I want to spot them nestled between the polyester disco dress and the satin nightie. I want to feel my pulse pick up as I cross to the rack, wondering if that pattern is as I imagine, if the fit is as I dream. I want to hear them separate from the rack, shaking loose their creases and tales. I want to take them home and introduce them to my other storied finds. 55

Then I want to add a new chapter. 60

*eBay: an online auction site

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