



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

---

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**8693/12**

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

**October/November 2010**

**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 experiences on a cycling holiday.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) The writer and his friend decide to try another type of holiday elsewhere involving a different form of transport. Write the opening (between 120-150 words) of the article, basing it closely on the language and style of the original passage. [10]

There was a point in our off-road cycling adventure across Sardinia when I wondered whether we might be the first ever slapstick double-act in the history of this most demanding of leisure activities.

It came on our first full day away from the smooth security of tarmac. "At the Y-junction, take the trail to the right," proclaimed my friend Tony, who had insisted on taking on the map-reading duties. 5

Craning our necks to the right, we could see a terrifying trail soaring vertiginously up what seemed an almost sheer cliff, strewn with massive, looming boulders and punctuated by treacherous patches of loose scree.<sup>1</sup> For one gruelling stretch, we had to claw our way upwards on our hands and knees while balancing our bikes precariously on our shoulders. Sweating and panting, we had almost reached the summit when I heard Tony consulting the maps again: "At the first Y-junction, take the trail to the left," he yelled out. "I was reading the wrong bit. That should have been to the left..." 10

Peering down, we could see the trail to the left easing down gently into the valley, a leisurely freewheel winding restfully into the forest. I can't repeat exactly what was said as we clambered back down the cliff-face, except to confirm that the word "eejit",<sup>2</sup> prefixed by colourful adjectives, featured prominently. "Well, we did say that we were looking for something more challenging this time," Tony replied sheepishly. "Whatever you say about it, this is definitely challenging..." 20

Yes, but not quite in the way that we had imagined.

After our implausibly ambitious odyssey from Budapest to Krakow across the Tatra mountains of Slovakia the previous year, we were looking to step up the level of difficulty. On that occasion, there had been grave doubts about whether two podgy Irish blokes could possibly conquer some of the most gruelling cycle routes in the world. But with a lot of unflattering Lycra and a good deal of bluster, we had somehow managed to pull it off. 25

Taking the podgy cyclist show off-road seemed like the obvious next step. And Sardinia, with its gleaming coastline and rugged interior seemed like the perfect destination. The route, known as the Coast to Coast, would begin at the south-western extremity before rearing diagonally across the island, intersecting the formidable Gennargentu range, the mountainous backbone of Sardinia, and terminating almost 400km away just below the crass resorts of the Costa Smeralda. 30

Most of the journey would be on mule-tracks, mining trails and wilderness. For the first time, we would enjoy the luxury of luggage transfer, with our rucksacks shuttled by van to the next stop, as well as a guide to offer advice and support. But for the most part, we would be on our own, battling the Sardinian elements in the cycling adventure of a lifetime. 35

We flew into Sardinia's capital, Cagliari, and were met by our guide, Renato, whose lithe physique, honed by mountain-trails, made us both instinctively suck in our bellies: "So, you've only ever cycled on tarmac?" he purred, as he whisked us off to the starting point, the seaside hamlet of Calasetta. "This should be very interesting..." 40

The hilltop hotel was packed with grizzled, leather-clad German bikers, with their chrome-spangled Harleys lined up outside. They glowered from the shadows as Renato handed over the maps and offered a few handy off-roading tips: “Hold on to the handlebars,” he said, without a flicker of humour. “And try not to fall off...” 45

In the morning, we discovered that the bikers had let the air out of our tyres. “Hell’s Angels sure ain’t what they used to be!” said Tony, pumping them back up furiously. 50

Once re-inflated, we powered up the Gulf of Gonnese with cliff-edge panoramas and rocky gobbets of islands spat into the bay. Then we meandered through the eerie, abandoned mining town of Ingurtosu and took up our positions at the beginning of our first test of off-road mettle.

The scene couldn’t have been more dramatic and primordial. On one side lay a fat, pot-bellied dune named Piscinas, looking like a wedge of burning gold thrust between shimmering sea and crisp blue sky. 55

And sweeping away in front, like a tract of Martian landscape, was the extraordinary valley of the Rio Irvi. Stained an angry vermilion by the iron ore deposits in the surrounding hillsides, the river looked like a stream of red-hot lava flowing through the sand and gorse. 60

“Follow the trail down into the valley,” read Tony from the directions. “Start counting. You should cross the river 21 times...”

<sup>1</sup>scree: rock debris

<sup>2</sup>eejit: Irish pronunciation of ‘idiot’

2 The passage below is from a story which describes how a husband and wife grow apart.

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) Before the husband moves out, he writes a letter to the friend he is going to stay with. In it, he expresses his thoughts and feelings about his wife and their marriage. Write the opening (120-150 words) of the letter, basing it closely on the material of the original passage. [10]

She couldn't remember when she began to envy her husband's dreams. Maybe around the fourth week of pregnancy, after he'd moved out and then moved back again. Or maybe around the twentieth week, when he wanted to name the baby after himself, and she said no. The truth is, she didn't remember because the condition of envy had become a chronic background noise. Her husband had always had baroque and complex dreams and she'd never minded. Now her envy surrounded them both like a hot electric fence. 5

She could see her husband clearly. He was blond, bearded, surrounded by the haze of his dream. He woke up, propped himself up on one elbow, looking slightly disoriented. She didn't ask to hear the dream. He told her. 10

This morning his dream was about time travel. He had visited a country where people still thought the earth was flat and never traveled far because they were afraid they were going to fall off. Since he knew the earth was round, he convinced them otherwise, but when they started to disappear over the horizon, it seemed he had made a mistake. She leaned forward, looking encouraged – maybe this was a dream of failed adventure, after all. But no. It turned out that when everyone disappeared over the horizon, they were really flying. Her husband could fly, too: as he flew, he saw the entire country below him. Thatched roofs. Children with hoops. Quaint little streets. "A fairyland," he said, "just like Disney." 15

He often had flying dreams. They were giddy, hallucinatory, perilous. She lay in bed listening and her envy surrounded them. 20

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered.

She smiled, concealing her envy, but he caught it. "Just life," she reassured him. 25

In a sense, she was telling the truth. Their faucets<sup>1</sup> leaked. Their washing machine overflowed. Yesterday they'd bought two dozen minuscule T-shirts that turned out to be for nine-month-olds, not newborns. Lists of names for the baby lined their kitchen wall and they couldn't agree on any of them.

But in another sense, the truth was only her envy – not any kind of envy, but dream envy, an affliction of trolls, gremlins, bats – sad, dreamless beings relegated to caves. A dangerous omen. An unhappy and violent passion. Her midwife had advised her of this, pressing into her hands herbs, amulets, arcane books, a dream pillow filled with lavender and sage. Dreams are essential, she'd said. You must work to get yours back. 30

Her husband leaned over and touched her belly. "Whatever happened to the good old days?" he asked. It was something he'd been asking for a while, a compelling, urgent question.

"Nothing," she said. "They're here right now." The baby chose this moment to shift inside of her. An obscure dolphin. A rumbling miniature subway. He was always, without a doubt, the most important person in the room, an unruly character, waiting for the chance to speak. On ultrasound he was the size of a kitten, his transparent heart no bigger than a dime.<sup>2</sup> After they saw him, her husband drew a heart on her stomach and kissed it. See. I'm being good now. 40

Today he turned to her, not unkindly. "You resent my dreams," he said. "You 45  
begrudge me this little corner of my mind."

"Of course I don't."

"But you do. You begrudge me. I know it."

She said nothing. Under her pillow, she could feel the velvet dream pillow the 50  
midwife had given her. It was prickly, filled with sage and lavender. The sage had  
come from the Bolivian mountains. The midwife found it last summer at the witch's  
market in La Paz.

"I'm being exemplary these days," he continued. "I've found a crib.<sup>3</sup> I went with 55  
you to buy those ridiculous T-shirts and today I'm going to help you return them. I've  
even gone to those damn birthing classes with what's-her-name."

"Laurel Moonflower," she supplied. Laurel Moonflower was the midwife. Her  
husband didn't like her. He said she was a New Age parody.

"Laurel Moonflower," he agreed. "I've gone there and I've sat there and I've 60  
admired her models of the pelvis. I've chanted atonal chants. I've offered prayers.  
I've rubbed your back. And you begrudge me my dreams."

I don't begrudge you, I blame you. She didn't say this, but thought it. The day 65  
after he'd moved out, to a lawyer friend's place on a street with the improbable name  
of Taurus, she'd woken from a dream about being trapped in the city of Dresden  
during the second world war. She was in a house, standing by a cabinet full of  
fragile china, when a bomb fell. Cup after cup after cup shattered in slow motion.  
A miniature china shepherdess was severed from her sheep. Plates decorated  
with flowers crashed. This had been her last dream. Now her nights were a blank  
canvas.

<sup>1</sup>*faucets*: taps

<sup>2</sup>*dime*: a small coin

<sup>3</sup>*crib*: a baby's bed

- 3 The passage below contains some of the final diary entries of Captain Robert Scott, leader of a group of explorers, in the early twentieth century. They were narrowly beaten to the South Pole by a team of Norwegian explorers.

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) One of the other explorers in Captain Scott's team survives the journey and later writes a newspaper article about his experiences, and about Captain Scott's leadership. Write the opening (between 120-150 words) of the article, basing it closely on the material of the original passage. [10]

**Wednesday, January 17** – Camp 69. T.-22 degrees at start. Night -21 degrees. The Pole. Yes, but under very different circumstances from those expected. We have had a horrible day – add to our disappointment a head wind 4 to 5, with a temperature -22 degrees, and companions labouring on with cold feet and hands.

We started at 7.30, none of us having slept much after the shock of our discovery. We followed the Norwegian sledge tracks for some way; as far as we make out there are only two men. In about three miles we passed two small cairns.<sup>1</sup> Then the weather overcast, and the tracks being increasingly drifted up and obviously going too far to the West, we decided to make straight for the Pole according to our calculations. At 12.30 Evans had such cold hands we camped for lunch – an excellent 'week-end'. To-night little Bowers is laying himself out to get sights in terrible difficult circumstances; the wind is blowing hard, T.-21 degrees, and there is that curious damp, cold feeling in the air which chills one to the bone in no time. We have been descending again, I think, but there looks to be a rise ahead; otherwise there is very little that is different from the awful monotony of past days. Great God! this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority. Well, it is something to have got here, and the wind may be our friend to-morrow. Now for the run home and a desperate struggle. I wonder if we can do it.

**Thursday morning, January 18** – We have just arrived at this tent, 2 miles from our camp, therefore about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the Pole. In the tent we find a record of five Norwegians having been here. We carried the Union Jack about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north with us and left it on a piece of stick as near as we could fix it. Well, we have turned our back now on the goal of our ambition and must face our 800 miles of solid dragging – and good-bye to most of the day-dreams!

**Saturday, February 17** – A very terrible day. Evans looked a little better after a good sleep, and declared, as he always did, that he was quite well. He started in his place on the traces, but half an hour later worked his ski shoes adrift, and had to leave the sledge.

The surface was awful, the soft recently fallen snow clogging the ski and runners at every step, the sledge groaning, the sky overcast, and the land hazy. We stopped after about one hour, and Evans came up again, but very slowly. Half an hour later he dropped out again on the same plea. He asked Bowers to lend him a piece of string. I cautioned him to come as quickly as he could, and he answered cheerfully as I thought. We had to push on, and the remainder of us were forced to pull very hard, sweating heavily.

Abreast the Monument Rock we stopped, and seeing Evans a long way astern, I camped for lunch. There was no alarm at first, and we prepared tea and our own meal, consuming the latter.

After lunch, and Evans still not appearing, we looked out, to see him still afar off. By this time we were alarmed, and all four started back on ski. I was first to reach the poor man and shocked at his appearance; he was on his knees with clothing

disarranged, hands uncovered and frostbitten, and a wild look in his eyes. Asked what was the matter, he replied with a slow speech that he didn't know, but thought he must have fainted. We got him on his feet, but after two or three steps he sank down again. He showed every sign of complete collapse. Wilson, Bowers, and I went back for the sledge, whilst Oates remained with him. 45

When we returned he was practically unconscious, and when we got him into the tent quite comatose. He died quietly at 12.30 A.M. On discussing the symptoms we think he began to get weaker just before we reached the Pole, and that his downward path was accelerated first by the shock of his frostbitten fingers, and later by falls during rough travelling on the glacier, further by his loss of all confidence in himself. Wilson thinks it certain he must have injured his brain by a fall. 50

It is a terrible thing to lose a companion in this way, but calm reflection shows that there could not have been a better ending to the terrible anxieties of the past week. 55

<sup>1</sup>*cairns*: piles of stones used as guides for travellers.

## BLANK PAGE

---

*Copyright Acknowledgements:*

Question 1 © John O'Mahony; *The Guardian*; [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk); 17/01/2009.

Question 2 © Thaisa Frank; *Love in Haniel*; taken from: [http://fiction.eserver.org/short/love\\_in\\_haniel.html](http://fiction.eserver.org/short/love_in_haniel.html).

Question 3 © R F Scott; "Doomed Expedition To The Pole, 1912", *EyeWitness to History*; [www.eyewitnesstohistory.com](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com); 1999

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (UCLES) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

University of Cambridge International Examinations is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.