



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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/11

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

October/November 2011

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 following passage is a magazine article in which the writer describes her experiences in Peru visiting local healers known as shamans.

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

(b) Later in life the writer tries another type of healing therapy (such as meditation). She writes another article about her experience. Write the opening of the article (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original extract. [10]

I will never forget what it was like. The overwhelming misery. The certainty of never-ending suffering. No one to help you, no way to escape. Everywhere I looked: darkness so thick that the idea of light seemed inconceivable.

Suddenly, I swirled down a tunnel of fire, wailing figures calling out to me in agony, begging me to save them. Others tried to terrorize me. "You will never leave here," they said. "Never. Never." 5

I found myself laughing at them. "I'm not scared of you," I said. But the darkness became even thicker; the emotional charge of suffering nearly unbearable. I felt as if I would burst from heartbreak – everywhere I felt the agony of humankind, its tragedies, its hatreds, its sorrows. I reached the bottom of the tunnel and saw three thrones in a black chamber. Three shadowy figures sat in the chairs; in the middle was what I took to be the devil himself. 10

"The darkness will never end," he said. "It will never end. You can never escape this place."

"I can," I replied. 15

All at once, I willed myself to rise. I sailed up through the tunnel of fire, higher and higher until I broke through to a white light. All darkness immediately vanished. My body felt light, at peace. I floated among a beautiful spread of colors and patterns. Slowly my *ayahuasca** vision faded. I returned to my body, to where I lay in the hut, insects calling from the jungle. 20

"Welcome back," the shaman said.

The next morning, I discovered the impossible: the severe depression that had ruled my life since childhood had miraculously vanished.

Giant blue butterflies flutter clumsily past our canoe. Parrots flee higher into treetops. The deeper we go into the Amazon jungle, the more I realize I can't turn back. It has been a year since my last visit, and I'm here again in Peru traveling down the Río Aucayacu for more shamanistic healing. The truth is, I'm petrified to do it a second time around. But with shamanism – and with the drinking of ayahuasca in particular – I've learned that, for me, the worse the experience, the better the payoff. There is only one requirement for this work: you must be brave. You'll be learning how to save yourself. 25 30

The jungle camp where our shamanistic treatment will take place is some 200 miles (322 kilometers) from the nearest town, Iquitos, deep in the Peruvian Amazon. Beside me are the other four members of my tour. There is Winston, the biggest person I've ever met. Nearly seven feet tall (two meters), surely over 400 pounds (181 kilograms), he has a powerful body that could easily rip someone apart. I expect him to be a bodyguard or a bouncer; turns out he's a security guard. But there is something else about him. Something less tangible. It seems to rest in the black circles beneath his eyes, the face that never smiles, the glances that immediately dismiss all they survey. Winston does not seem like a happy man. 35 40

Then the others: Lisa, who has a master's degree from Stanford and is now pursuing her doctorate in political theory at Duke University; Christy, who just quit her job counselling at-risk teens to travel around South America; and Katherine, Christy's British friend. By all appearances, our group seems to be composed of ordinary citizens. No New Age energy healers. No pan-flute makers. No hippies or nouveau Druids. Christy betrays only a passing interest in becoming a yoga instructor. 45

And then there is me, who a year ago came to Peru on a lark to take the "sacred spirit medicine", ayahuasca, and get worked over by shamans. Little suspecting that I'd emerge from it feeling as if a waterlogged wool coat had been removed from my shoulders – literally feeling the burden of depression lifted – and thinking that there must be something to this crazy shamanism after all. 50

And so I am back again.

I've told no one this time – especially not my family. I grew up among fundamentalist atheists who taught me that we're all alone in the universe, the fleeting dramas of our lives culminating in a final, ignoble end: death. Nothing beyond that. It was not a prescription for happiness, yet, for the first couple of decades of my life, I became prideful and arrogant about my atheism, believing that I was one of the rare few who had the courage to face life without the "crutches" of religion or, worse, such outrageous notions as shamanism. But for all of my overweening rationality, my world remained a dark, forbidding place beyond my control. And my mortality gaped at me mercilessly. Lisa shakes me from my reveries, asking why I've come back to take another tour with the shamans. 60

**ayahuasca:* a drug used for healing purposes

2 The passage below describes the writer's experience of the First World War (1914–1918).

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) Continue the account (between 120–150 words), although you do not need to bring it to a conclusion. Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original extract. [10]

We had waited a long time for nine o'clock on that July night of 1917, and now that we were nearing the hour to be off we wanted sleep.

Yet, through the nervous excitement which weeks of preparation had engendered we could doze but fitfully.

On the rat-eaten boards of a dug-out on the canal bank we sprawled, pinned 5
down by our battle clobber. A curtain hung at the door to keep out gas. It also kept out the twilight.

"Can't someone get a blasted light?" Private Smith suddenly exclaimed, and as an answer a match was struck, applied to a piece of four-by-two, which in turn was stuck in the middle of a tin of dubbin¹. This acted as a candle, and threw a strange 10
eerie light that turned the faces of the twenty of us who were huddled there a pale green, with dark shadows that made holes for eyes.

Smith, who stared vacantly across to my side, broke the silence again.

"God, this makes you think," he said, in a voice which wasn't quite like his own.

"Put a sock in it, Smith," was the solitary answer he received to his philosophy, 15
and once more silence descended upon the dug-out, and shadows jumped over the domed roof as the green light bobbed up and down.

I reflected idly on the happenings of the past month. Right back, where we could sleep in tolerably clean straw and pinch the eggs and cherries of an old French farmer, we had also crushed down his growing wheat and had cut trenches across 20
his fields.

We were told that these trenches followed the line of those we were to attack later, and, having cut them out, we rushed over them every day for a fortnight, always, at the end, capturing the little village of St. Julien.

Only it was rather different there. You see we had a breathing space half-way 25
across the fields, and from nowhere French girls came with baskets of oranges and chocolates for heroes – only the heroes had to pay through the nose for the dry or gritty delicacies.

It was a great holiday, that – when we put one foot in paradise, experienced the unregretted loss of lousy shirts, stole eggs for breakfast, got fruit for tea and 30
generally were fattened up. For what end?

It was still dark, and my illuminated watch said 3.30. That meant half an hour more. Then we became very silent, and even the guns seemed to be still. It seemed like the calm that comes before the thunderstorm ...

An officer came round once more. 35

"Five minutes more, boys," he said; "get ready."

We fixed our bayonets². We gripped each other's hands. And waited. My heart seemed to thump violently against my ribs ...

Suddenly it came.

I can still hear those three sharp staccato cannon shots which seemed to split 40
the darkness, for there followed a tremendous roar and crash which sent the first light of dawn trembling along the distant horizon above the mist, suddenly to burst into miles of flames.

And from No Man's Land shot up a myriad of distress lights, trembling. And "express trains"³ roared overhead. It was a wonderful moment. Some magic force 45
drew us up from our crouching positions, and in the blue mist which still clung to the hollows in the battlefield we looked like ghosts wreathed by smoke. Eighty thousand of us.

Then we swept forward as if caught by the wind. The spreading light of dawn caught the glint of bayonets as they moved on and on ... 50

I met Ira by the side of a shell hole. He had pulled out his leg from the squelchy mud which had dragged him down to the knee. Months we had campaigned together. The happiness which we had managed to squeeze out of those dreary months we shared; the sorrows we shared; the parcels from home we shared.

On those blessed days of rest we had flung bits of poetry to each other and had teased to say what we had quoted. We thought that after the War we would quit the monotonous life at home and would go adventuring. We had mapped out what we would do, where we would go – this country and that. 55

They knew us as the twins. Before we went over we had been told to press on: if a man dropped down he must be left – others would follow to patch him up. 60

“If you fall I shall stop,” said Ira to me a day before. “Hell to them all! I shall stop.” But we were separated before we began. He was attached to another platoon.

I saw him as I went over. He was well.

He laughed as he swore, “What a bloody mess!” We said good-bye – “God be with you.” 65

I never saw him again.

¹*dubbin*: wax for waterproofing boots

²*fixed our bayonets*: attached blades to our rifles

³*“express trains”*: artillery shells

3 The passage below comes from the novel *McTeague*, set in the early 20th century. In it, a rather lonely American dentist and his surroundings are introduced.

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

(b) Feeling a need for romance, McTeague joins a dating agency where he is asked to provide information about himself and his circumstances. He wishes to give an account that will impress others. Write the opening of his account of himself (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the material of the original extract. [10]

Once in his office, or, as he called it on his signboard, “Dental Parlors,” he took off his coat and shoes, unbuttoned his vest, and, having crammed his little stove full of coke, lay back in his operating chair at the bay window, reading the paper, drinking his beer, and smoking his huge porcelain pipe while his food digested; crop-full¹, stupid, and warm. By and by, gorged with steam beer, and overcome by the heat of the room, the cheap tobacco, and the effects of his heavy meal, he dropped off to sleep. Late in the afternoon his canary bird, in its gilt cage just over his head, began to sing. He woke slowly, finished the rest of his beer – very flat and stale by this time – and taking down his concertina from the bookcase, where in week days it kept the company of seven volumes of “Allen’s Practical Dentist,” played upon it some half-dozen very mournful airs.² 5 10

The six lugubrious airs that he knew, always carried him back to the time when he was a car-boy at the Big Dipper Mine in Placer County, ten years before. He remembered the years he had spent there trundling the heavy cars of ore in and out of the tunnel ... 15

Two or three years later a travelling dentist visited the mine and put up his tent near the bunk-house. He was more or less of a charlatan, but he fired Mrs. McTeague’s ambition, and young McTeague went away with him to learn his profession. He had learnt it after a fashion, mostly by watching the charlatan operate. He had read many of the necessary books, but he was too hopelessly stupid to get much benefit from them. 20

Then one day at San Francisco had come the news of his mother’s death; she had left him some money – not much, but enough to set him up in business; so he had cut loose from the charlatan and had opened his “Dental Parlors” on Polk Street, an “accommodation street” of small shops in the residence quarter of the town. Here he had slowly collected a clientele of butcher boys, shop girls, drug clerks, and car conductors. He made but few acquaintances. Polk Street called him the “Doctor” and spoke of his enormous strength. For McTeague was a young giant, carrying his huge shock of blond hair six feet three inches from the ground; moving his immense limbs, heavy with ropes of muscle, slowly, ponderously. His hands were enormous, red, and covered with a fell of stiff yellow hair; they were hard as wooden mallets, strong as vices, the hands of the old-time car-boy. Often he dispensed with forceps and extracted a refractory tooth with his thumb and finger. His head was square-cut, angular; the jaw salient, like that of the carnivora³. 25 30

McTeague’s mind was as his body, heavy, slow to act, sluggish. Yet there was nothing vicious about the man. Altogether he suggested the draught horse, immensely strong, stupid, docile, obedient. 35

When he opened his “Dental Parlors”, he felt that his life was a success, that he could hope for nothing better. In spite of the name, there was but one room. It was a corner room on the second floor over the branch post-office, and faced the street. McTeague made it do for a bedroom as well, sleeping on the big bed-lounge against the wall opposite the window. There was a washstand behind the screen in the corner where he manufactured his moulds. In the round bay window were his operating chair, his dental engine, and the movable rack on which he laid out his instruments. Three chairs, a bargain at the second-hand store, ranged themselves 40 45

against the wall with military precision underneath a steel engraving of the court of Lorenzo de' Medici, which he had bought because there were a great many figures in it for the money. Over the bed-lounge hung a rifle manufacturer's advertisement calendar which he never used. The other ornaments were a small marble-topped centre table covered with back numbers of "The American System of Dentistry", a stone pug dog sitting before the little stove, and a thermometer. A stand of shelves occupied one corner, filled with the seven volumes of "Allen's Practical Dentist." On the top shelf McTeague kept his concertina and a bag of bird seed for the canary. The whole place exhaled a mingled odor of bedding, creosote, and ether. 50

But for one thing, McTeague would have been perfectly contented. Just outside his window was his signboard – a modest affair – that read: "Doctor McTeague. Dental Parlors. Gas Given"; but that was all. It was his ambition, his dream, to have projecting from that corner window a huge gilded tooth, a molar with enormous prongs, something gorgeous and attractive. 55

¹*crop-full*: full of food

²*airs*: tunes

³*carnivora*: meat-eating animals

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