



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 2012

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 In the following passage the writer, while visiting China, considers his role as a tourist.

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

(b) The same writer produces another article about a visit to another location or country. In it he considers his thoughts and feelings about the place. Write a section of the article (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original passage. [10]

I mean, who'd actually set out to be a tourist? Oh yes, that's right, me. In Beijing, where being a tourist takes cluelessness to a whole new level. It's like having the tiniest taste of what life might be like being deaf and dumb – you can't talk to anyone, you can't understand anything. And you can't leave your hotel without checking three times that you have the address card with you, written in Chinese characters, since without it the chances of ever seeing your baggage again are, at best, remote. After I hand it, wordlessly, to my third taxi driver of the day, I remind myself getting home at the end of an evening is a matter of hope over probability. 5

And so it is that after I make the pilgrimage to Tiananmen Square and marvel at its empty vastness, the colossal painting of Chairman Mao, and the enormous crowds of people queuing up to go into the Forbidden City, and contemplate the queues and the bare statistics in my guidebook (it has 9,999.5 rooms covering an area of 730,000 square metres), I give up. I feel faint at the hugeness of it, of the sheer scale of Beijing, with its seven – seven! – ring roads. And feel an instant sense of relief. 10 15

Because not-sightseeing is so much more enjoyable than sightseeing, in that it's more like life. As opposed to the strange non-life that being a tourist entails where you're expected to do strange, unnatural things you would never contemplate back home, where I rarely leap out of bed on a Saturday morning and think I *must* see the crown jewels and then the changing of the guard.¹ In Nan Lu Guo Xiang, one of the few *hutongs*, or alleyways, that managed to escape Beijing's crazed demolition gangs, there are boho² cafés and funky jewellery shops and young Beijingers and expats³ whiling away their afternoons, and I do what they do – I hang out. I drink coffee and study a tourist guide in English, and it's here that I realise that the trick with any city is to pretend that you live in it. I'm a rubbish tourist, but I've loved my stints of living abroad, where you see the city out of the corner of your eye, rather than attempt to bag it in a weekend. 20 25

And what people who live in Beijing do is get out of it. As soon as they can. In a good way, because although it's exciting and dynamic and throbs with life and traffic and skyscrapers, I breathe a sigh of Beijinger relief on the bus ride out of town, as we finally leave the sprawling suburbs and low-hung sky to emerge in blinding sunshine in the kind of mountains a child would draw: range after range of pointy peaks topped with snow. 30

There are a million different tourist trips to "The Wall", but they all go to Badaling (with its Starbucks), or to remoter Simatai, which is not so remote as to not have a chairlift. But as a pseudo-local, I join not a tourist tour but a hiking group, Beijing Hikers, and we head to Yanqing District, where there is an empty, broken-down stretch, truly in the middle of nowhere – a six-hour walk starting near the village of Chang Yu Cheng, up one of the pointy mountains to an ancient watchtower, 1,550m above sea level. When we finally get there, the view is astonishing – mile after mile of wall, zig-zagging crazily across the landscape, disappearing into the horizon beyond. 35 40

What's even better is the company. Huijie, who is Beijing born and bred, runs

Beijing Hikers with her husband, Hayden, and it attracts a mix of native Beijingers, adopted Beijingers and the odd blow-in like me. There's Mei, who was from Beijing originally before living for 30 years in Australia and who has returned – reluctantly – because her husband is doing business; and Zach, who's one of the hundreds of young Chinese Americans who've come back to see the country their parents fought so hard to leave. The group is a sort of halfway house, Western enough to appreciate the joys of slogging your guts out up a steep hill, but Chinese enough to have an insight into the local culture. 45

But then, that's the other great thing about not-sightseeing, not-schlepping⁴ dutifully around the sights, and not-taking a whole load of photos of buildings you'll never look at again: if you do things you tend to like doing anyway, you tend to meet people who like doing the things that you like doing, too – in my case walking up hills and hanging out in bookshops. 50 55

¹ *crown jewels... the changing of the guard*: tourist attractions in London

² *boho*: a shortened form of *bohemian*, unconventional way of life

³ *expats*: a shortened form of *expatriates*, people who live in a different country from where they were born

⁴ *schlepping*: moving slowly

2 In the following passage a Russian man called Vitali Vitaliev describes his experience of learning to drive.

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

(b) Kevin, the driving instructor, writes his thoughts and feelings about Vitaliev's driving in his diary. Write the opening of the diary entry (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the material of the original passage. [10]

While living in Australia, I used to hate fire hydrants.

Melbourne, the city where I was based, appeared to have been invaded by them. Wherever you went, rows of the things stood nonchalantly at the kerb, dragging people and cars towards them. Their short vertical form was almost pagoda-like, but I didn't feel like praying at those small roadside temples that gave the impression that Melbourne was possessed by pyrophobia¹ and inhabited exclusively by pyromaniacs². 5

I started suffering from that peculiar disease – firehydrantphobia – after my first-ever driving lesson. At the tender age of 37, I finally decided to learn to drive a car. I even successfully passed my traffic rules test, only slightly embarrassed to be doing this in the company of giggling teenagers. 10

I couldn't wait to be able to sit behind the wheel of my brand-new Mazda 121. Never before had I felt so passionate about an inanimate piece of technology. My Mazda though was very much alive: gleaming, young, beautiful and, yes, feminine. I was sure she winked at me coquettishly with her left blinker when I first approached her from the front. 15

Her insides smelled of leather and perfume, and the exterior was bright yellow – the safest colour, I was told. Her engine worked with short flirtatious purrs, which were driving me mad with desire to drive her.

The sad reality of my learner status was that I had to share my mechanical sweetheart with someone else, and I dropped myself into the driver's seat next to Kevin, my driving instructor. 20

'I never knew driving was so easy! The most difficult thing so far has been adjusting the mirrors.' And see: I am moving – faster and faster – my steady hands resting possessively on the wheel. Looking triumphantly around, I am driving, driving my beloved Mazda crazy with driving her. I am making a left-hand turn . . . 25

Crunch.

I don't know, I must have pressed the accelerator instead of the brake. My little Mazda leapt up in the air and landed beyond the kerb. Kevin had no time to react. We were both alive, it seemed – but where is this angry hissing coming from? 30

Kevin, my Mazda and I were lying on our side, and as I looked over my shoulder I saw a thick fountain of pressurised water beating from underneath the wreck. My voluminous research had educated me that a car engine needed water for cooling – but so much? 35

It occurred to me suddenly that the hissing might be some precursor to the car exploding, at which point I promptly fell out of my seat through the open car door and into the mud-filled ditch beneath.

Clambering to my feet I could see that the 20m-high fountain of water that beat from the flattened fire hydrant was generously watering the nearby palm tree – not to mention the unsuspecting rare pedestrians on the opposite side of the road. Two playful rainbows were already dancing above the newly created sea of Melbourne mud under the stream. 40

From the corner of my eye, I spotted another palm tree – hairy, thick and solid – just 20cm from where the car stopped. Only at that point did I realise how close I came to meeting my maker. 45

It all fell into a dreamlike sequence of events: the torrents of water flooding the street, the arrival of the water utilities people; the tow-truck lifting my poor Mazda and carrying her away.

I could hardly believe that I was the source of all that fuss. After all, I was just trying to turn the corner, the first corner in my car-driving life. 50

The injured fire hydrant was lying on the ground – a desecrated headstone on the grave of my illusions that driving was easy. It had probably saved my life by slowing down my Mazda's dash towards the palm tree.

An admirably courageous Kevin made sure we returned to the same corner in the same repaired Mazda several weeks later. I negotiated it again – this time without incident or accident. I was now educated and fit to transport the great and the good from A to B – right? 55

¹ *pyrophobia*: fear of fire

² *pyromaniacs*: people who deliberately start fires

3 The following passage from a story describes a time when only a few tribes of ‘man-apes’ exist.

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

Late that night, Moon-Watcher suddenly awoke. Tired out by the day’s exertions and disasters, he had been sleeping more soundly than usual, yet he was instantly alert at the first faint scrabbling down in the valley.

He sat up in the foetid¹ darkness of the cave, straining his senses out into the night, and fear crept slowly into his soul. Never in his life – already twice as long as most members of his species could expect – had he heard a sound like this. The great cats approached in silence, and the only thing that betrayed them was a rare slide of earth, or the occasional cracking of a twig. Yet this was a continuous crunching noise, that grew steadily louder. It seemed that some enormous beast was moving through the night, making no attempt at concealment, and ignoring all obstacles. Once Moon-Watcher heard the unmistakable sound of a bush, being uprooted; the elephants and dinotheria² did this often enough, but otherwise they moved as silently as the cats.

And then there came a sound which Moon-Watcher could not possibly have identified, for it had never been heard before in the history of the world. It was the clank of metal upon stone. Moon-Watcher came face to face with the New Rock when he led the tribe down to the river in the first light of morning. He had almost forgotten the terrors of the night, because nothing had happened after that initial noise, so he did not even associate this strange thing with danger or with fear. There was, after all, nothing in the least alarming about it.

It was a rectangular slab, three times his height but narrow enough to span with his arms, and it was made of some completely transparent material; indeed, it was not easy to see except when the rising sun glinted on its edges. As Moon-Watcher had never encountered ice, or even crystal-clear water, there were no natural objects to which he could compare this apparition. It was certainly rather attractive, and though he was wisely cautious of most new things, he did not hesitate for long before sidling up to it. As nothing happened, he put out his hand, and felt a cold, hard surface.

After several minutes of intense thought, he arrived at a brilliant explanation. It was a rock, of course, and it must have grown during the night. There were many plants that did this – white, pulpy things shaped like pebbles, that seemed to shoot up during the hours of darkness. It was true that they were small and round, whereas this was large and sharp-edged; but greater and later philosophers than Moon-Watcher would be prepared to overlook equally striking exceptions to their theories.

This really superb piece of abstract thinking led Moon-Watcher, after only three or four minutes, to a deduction which he immediately put to the test. The white round pebble-plants were very tasty (though there were a few that produced violent illness); perhaps this tall one . . . ?

A few licks and attempted nibbles quickly disillusioned him. There was no nourishment here; so like a sensible man-ape, he continued on his way to the river and forgot all about the crystalline slab, during the daily routine of shrieking at the Others.

The foraging today was very bad, and the tribe had to travel several miles from the caves to find any food at all. During the merciless heat of noon one of the frailer females collapsed, far from any possible shelter. Her companions gathered round her, twittering and meeping sympathetically, but there was nothing that anyone could do. If they had been less exhausted they might have carried her with them, but there was no surplus energy for such acts of kindness. She had to be left behind, to

recover or not with her own resources. They passed the spot on the homeward trek that evening; there was not a bone to be seen. 50

In the last light of day, looking round anxiously for early hunters, they drank hastily at the stream and started the climb up to their caves. They were still a hundred yards from the New Rock when the sound began.

It was barely audible, yet it stopped them dead, so that they stood paralysed on the trail with their jaws hanging slackly. A simple, maddeningly repetitious vibration, it pulsed out from the crystal; and hypnotised all who came within its spell. For the first time – and the last, for three million years – the sound of drumming was heard in Africa. 55

The throbbing grew louder, more insistent. Presently the man-apes began to move forward, like sleepwalkers, toward the source of that compulsive sound. 60

¹ *foetid*: stinking

² *dinotheria*: prehistoric relatives of modern-day elephants

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- Question 2 © Vitali Vitaliev; *After All: My first driving lesson*; IET, Knowledge Network
home>Magazines>Issues>1006<http://kn.theiet.org/magazine/issues/1006/after-all-1006.cfm>.
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