

Tuesday 3 June 2014 – Morning**GCSE ENGLISH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE****A680/01/RBI** Information and Ideas (Foundation Tier)**READING BOOKLET INSERT****Duration: 2 hours****INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- The materials in this READING BOOKLET INSERT are for use with the questions in Section A of the Question Paper.

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Mobile phone use on planes: menace or must?



Soon passengers flying from London to New York will be able to make in-flight calls and send texts using their mobile phones. But is this a good thing?

If, like me, you're a seasoned user of public transport, those overheard snippets of mobile phone conversations are an all too familiar nuisance. "I'm on the bus," says one traveller. "I'm on the train," says another. "I'm going through a ... hello, hello, are you still there?" asks another mobile phone user as his conversation gets cut short when the train enters a tunnel.

In our constantly switched-on society, non-stop background chatter and one-sided conversations dominate our waking lives. And now that some airlines intend to offer travellers the option to use their mobile phones on planes, my frustration has turned to fear.

Sitting through a two-hour train journey being subjected to endless descriptions of a stranger's personal life in loud and graphic detail is bad enough. But an eight-hour plane journey from London to New York? As a New Yorker would say: "You gotta be kidding me!" I'm not the only one who hates the idea of mobile phones being used on planes.

A recent poll by a travel website found that 86 per cent of people are against mobile phone use on aeroplanes. However, if mobile use was available on flights, 48 per cent said they would send texts and 35 per cent said they would use the technology to surf the internet. Around 10 per cent said they would send email while only 6 per cent said they would actually make and take calls.

To me, it seems like a clear-cut case of "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should". Don't get me wrong, I'm not against mobile phone use – I do have one. It's mobile phone use in a confined space that's the problem. There needs to be some recognition that many people value a bit of peace and quiet when they are travelling.

Indeed, many trains now have quiet carriages so travellers can escape the chatter of other passengers – whether their conversation is taking place face-to-face or over the phone. So it's particularly irritating when one passenger doesn't realise, or conveniently forgets, that they're in a quiet carriage.

One traveller I spoke to has even taken on those who've disturbed the peace in the quiet carriage. "A guy was chatting really loudly on his phone for about twenty minutes. I was annoyed and asked him to be quiet. I pointed out that we were in the quiet carriage. He respected my request and shut up for the rest of the journey. It's fair to say that I had a few appreciative glances from other passengers who, while giving the guy dirty looks when he was chatting, didn't have the bottle to say anything."

There really is nothing worse than being subjected to snippets of multiple conversations. I for one hope that mobile phone use on planes doesn't become the norm.

On your mobile? Not in my shop.



The coffee trader who has banned bad manners deserves a medal

A 36-year-old coffee-trader, Mr Darren Groom of Norwich, has struck a brave blow for the rights of ordinary people. These are the rights that are in danger of being swept away by the flood of technological progress.

Irritated by customers mouthing their orders to him while jabbering on their mobile phones, Mr Groom has had enough. Why should he and his staff be treated in this offhand way? Why should they have to be amateur lip-readers, trying to work out if the rude person re-living last night's match with his mate has ordered a coffee or a tea?

True champion

Mr Groom, a true champion of good manners, has now introduced a zero-tolerance policy in his shop, refusing to serve customers who ignore the house rules. 'Sorry we are unable to serve you if you are on the phone,' reads a sign above the till. That polite 'sorry' makes you warm to the man. He is a modern-day hero.

If only other shops had the guts to follow his lead. Unfortunately, they are terrified of driving customers away by seeming fussy or old-fashioned. And so the curse of the mobile phone – the loud background music of the age, drowning out softer notes – goes on unchecked. For every person who turns their phone off in company, there is another person who regards it as their basic human right to hold two conversations at once, while tweeting with their spare hand.

Over the course of a generation, good manners – rooted in kindness and consideration – have been turned upside down. How rarely nowadays people give you what they would once have given automatically: their undivided attention! You have to share them with their friends, their emails, their text messages, the latest apps – until you are left feeling like a bit-part player in their oh-so-busy lives.

I was in a supermarket queue the other day behind a young woman who talked on her phone throughout the entire checking-out process, from

the weighing of her broccoli to the entering of her PIN number. She never so much as glanced at the man serving her, let alone said thank you. He could have been invisible.

Mindless chit-chat

Did it even occur to her that she was being rude? Did it occur to her that an everyday activity such as shopping demands certain basic manners? Probably not. All over the supermarket, people were doing the same thing: chatting to someone miles away. If you'd even hinted to them that they were polluting the environment with their mindless chit-chat, they would have looked at you in disbelief. But the environment, as Mr Groom

reminds us, extends to all public spaces and the people who use them.

I believe that new technologies are to be welcomed. A commuter quietly reading a novel on a Kindle or listening to music on their iPod does no harm to anyone. But the same cannot be said of mobile phone users who deliberately inflict their conversations on others. Or of those who are too wrapped up in their conversations to notice the people serving them, whether waiters, shop assistants or bus drivers.

Mr Groom's challenge should be taken up by everyone who cares about good manners.

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