

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS

SECTION A: Reading

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.

The writer is gradually losing his sight but is unwilling to give up driving his car.

The Day I Quit Driving



All my life I was crazy about cars. Within days of turning 16 I got my driver's licence and took off. I assumed the trip would never end.

But, unknown to me, I was going blind. After a few decades of normal vision I could no longer see at night or make out faces clearly from more than a few feet away.
5 I couldn't imagine a life without wheels. So, holding my breath and trusting to luck I stayed on the road, a little too long.

By this time, my eyesight was worse. Traffic signals had started vanishing and reappearing – the whole signal box, not just the bulbs – as if conjured in and out of sight by mischievous sprites. Street signs were unreadable. Cars loomed up at me out
10 of nowhere, and pedestrians materialised in the middle of empty crossings.

Why, you might reasonably ask, would someone with vision so impaired persist in driving? Romance. Practicality. Pride. Denial.

When I was a teenager, I had a stack of car magazines that dwarfed everything else in my bedroom bookcase. The cars in my real life were less fierce, less perfect. But so
15 what? They started, they ran, they carried me down the highway of dreams. Now I had a 10-year-old car that took me anywhere I wanted to go. Driving wasn't everything, just life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the promise that I would never, ever grow old, that I would not fade away. Riding the bus meant being sucked into a symbolic, bottomless vortex of failure. I was terrified.

20 I had the route to the school where I worked pretty much mastered from long experience. I took a left into the street and began to peer along the kerb for a parking space. I couldn't have been going more than 10 mph.



25 Suddenly. The sickening thud of my front bumper hitting flesh and bone. My right foot coming off the gas and slamming down on the brake pedal. The car stopped just short of an airborne boy, maybe 12 or 13, levitating a few inches above the pavement as his unzipped nylon school bag launched itself from his shoulder and spewed notebooks, pencils and personal effects all over the street.

30 The kid lay sprawled in a heap on the pavement. A car door slammed somewhere off to my left, and then a woman, his mother, was kneeling beside him. By the time I managed to turn off the engine, she had helped him hobble back to their old car and lowered him onto the back seat, where he sat with the door still flung open, dazed and splay-limbed, holding his back. It never even occurred to me to go and see how the boy was, I felt so shaken, so ashamed, so uninvited. I just stood next to my car, watching as people emerged from nowhere. Sirens came speeding toward us up the
35 avenue.

The paramedics lifted the kid onto a stretcher. As the mother stood behind the ambulance watching them shove him inside, I finally got up the nerve to approach her. "I'm very sorry," I said. She wouldn't even look at me. They took the boy to a hospital emergency room and I waited on the kerb for the police, who showed up an
40 hour later to take the accident report.

"I just didn't see him," I admitted, which was true. The officer didn't ask me anything about that, but simply said the kid shouldn't have walked in front of my car, which was also true. She got my signature, tore off a copy of the report for me, and drove away.

45 Somebody told me they knew in the school office what had happened. If I wanted, I could go home. I did want to go home. Desperately.

I got back into my car, fastened my seat belt, started the engine, felt how much I was shaking, and turned it off. I went into the office, borrowed the phone, and got my friend Adrian out of bed. Adrian drove me home and put the car back in its space
50 behind my apartment.

So, finally facing facts, I put the car up for sale and gave up my driver's licence. No one ever contacted me about the accident. Not my insurance company, not the school or a personal injury lawyer. I felt justified in assuming – thankfully – that the boy wasn't hurt too badly.

55 But still, every time I think about it, my hands remember the weird, rubber shock of the impact through the steering wheel, and I see the whole thing all over again. The boy bouncing off the front of the car in slow motion. The books flying. The stretcher sliding into the open mouth of the ambulance. The rage and disbelief on his mother's face. Some things, some of us only learn the hard way.

(Source: Joel Deutsch, 1997)



N 3 1 4 0 7 A 0 3 1 6

**You should refer closely to the passage to support your answers.
You may include brief quotations.**

1. How do we know that the writer has always been enthusiastic about driving?

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Q1

(Total 2 marks)

2. Look again at lines 7 to 10 .
Select **two** phrases or sentences that the writer uses to describe his worsening eyesight.

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Q2

(Total 2 marks)

3. Look again at lines 11 to 19.
In your own words, explain why the writer continues to drive, despite his deteriorating sight.

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Q3

(Total 4 marks)



SECTION B: Reading and Writing

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Remind yourself of the passage *I Never Thought I could be this Lucky* from the London Examinations Anthology, and then answer questions 5 and 6.

I Never Thought I could be this Lucky

Like any bride, Karen Darke was determined she'd have a wedding to remember. She spent months with her fiancé, Suresh Paul, planning their day. They decided to keep it fun – she wore trousers and a camisole top and 400 guests joined them for a barbecue on the beach of a Scottish *loch*¹. “It was the perfect day,” says Karen, a geologist.
5 “Absolutely brilliant.”

It was especially poignant for Karen, 31, from Aberdeen, Scotland, because for 10 years she'd believed her love life was over. “When I lost the use of my legs, I couldn't imagine ever falling in love and getting married. But then I met Suresh and everything changed,” she says.

10 Karen was a Geology student at Aberdeen University when the accident happened. She was an experienced rock-climber and had gone climbing with three friends when she lost her footing and fell backwards, plunging 30 feet down the rock face. She lay there, barely conscious, while two of them ran to the nearest house – a mile away – to raise the alarm. Karen was then taken by helicopter to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary,
15 where she slipped into a coma.

Karen's parents kept a vigil by her bedside and after three days she came round. “I opened my eyes and could see tears of relief on my mum's cheeks. My family gave me the will to fight,” she recalls, “But I couldn't feel my legs. It was terrifying. I knew I was paralysed, but I was sure it was temporary,” she says.

20 Later that day, her doctor dropped a bombshell and told her that she'd broken her neck and back so badly she'd never walk again. “It was too much to take in,” says Karen. “The idea of not being able to use my legs was horrific.” She'd also fractured her skull, broken her arms and punctured her lung. “I was ruined emotionally as well,” she admits.

25 After a month in intensive care, Karen underwent gruelling physiotherapy and learnt how to use a wheelchair. When she left hospital in September 1993 she went back to university, where she had to get used to looking after herself in a specially adapted flat. “Living alone was hard. I'd lost a lot of feeling, so I had to be extra careful doing things like cooking. But my friends were really supportive.”

30 Eighteen months later, Karen moved into an adapted flat with friends and completed her degree. “By then I was having fun again. I was used to being disabled and could cope,” she says. Slowly, Karen regained her love of sport and began taking part in adapted outdoor activities. In 1997 she became the first woman ever to hand-cycle across the Himalayas, and now competes in wheelchair marathons. “Physically, my
35 disability became irrelevant as I pushed myself to the limit,” she says.

¹ *Loch*: lake



N 3 1 4 0 7 A 0 7 1 6

In 1998, Karen started a job as a geologist for Shell and gradually began to rebuild her life. But she still found it impossible to have successful relationships. “My self-confidence had taken a battering,” she says. “I didn’t want to be a burden to anyone, so I put romance to the back of my mind.” But in 2000 Karen met Suresh, now
40 32, from London, at a conference about expeditions for the disabled. They clicked immediately. But Suresh, who designs equipment for the disabled, had a girlfriend – so they kept in touch as friends, meeting up occasionally and chatting on the phone.

“Because Suresh wasn’t available I didn’t let myself think of him romantically,” says Karen. But when his relationship ended a year later, Karen was hopeful. When she
45 went on holiday, Suresh drove her to the airport. “I just had to say something, so I mumbled that I liked him,” says Karen. “Suresh changed the subject. I was sure I had blown it and was heartbroken.” But a week later, Karen received an e-mail from Suresh saying, “I want to be with you. I love you.”

He picked Karen up from the airport and, just five weeks later, he proposed. Suresh
50 moved from London to Aberdeen to be with Karen, and their relationship gave her a huge confidence boost. “My disability wasn’t an issue for him,” she says. Suresh agrees. “Karen’s the most beautiful woman in the world, inside and out. I couldn’t be happier.”

They planned their wedding and managed to incorporate Karen’s love of outdoor
55 sports into the plans. And earlier this year they both canoed on to the beach for the ceremony. Now, having recently returned from their honeymoon, the couple are thinking about having children. “Knowing Suresh sees me as I am, not as a woman in a wheelchair, gives me enormous confidence,” says Karen. “I know we can do anything together.”

(Source: Lisa Laws, *Woman*, 11 November 2002)



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(Question 7 continued)

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