

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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/01

Paper 1 Passages for Comment

October/November 2003

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

2 hours

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write in dark blue or black pen on both sides of the paper.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

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.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

Answer two questions

- 1 The passage below describes the writer's thoughts and feelings as he recalls his attempts to help an injured woman after a bomb attack.
- (a) You yourself are a survivor of a similar disastrous road accident. In the style of the original passage write the opening of your account (between 120–150 words). [10]
- (b) Compare the style and language of your piece with those of the original extract. [15]

We dug, or rather we pushed, pulled, heaved, and strained, I somewhat ineffectually because of my hands; I don't know for how long, but I suppose for a short enough while. And yet it seemed endless. From time to time I was aware of figures round me: an ARP warden, his face expressionless under a steel helmet; once a soldier swearing savagely in a quiet monotone; and the taxi-driver, his face pouring sweat. 5

And so we came to the woman. It was her feet that we saw first, and whereas before we had worked doggedly, now we worked with a sort of frenzy, like prospectors at the first glint of gold. She was not quite buried, and through the gap between two beams we could see that she was still alive. We got the child out first. It was passed back carefully and with an odd sort of reverence by the warden, but it was dead. She must have been holding it to her in the bed when the bomb came. 10

Finally we made a gap wide enough for the bed to be drawn out. The woman who lay there looked middle-aged. She lay on her back and her eyes were closed. Her face, through the dirt and streaked blood, was the face of a thousand working women; her body under the cotton nightdress was heavy. The nightdress was drawn up to her knees and one leg was twisted under her. There was no dignity about that figure. 15

Around me I heard voices. 'Where's the ambulance?' 'For Christ's sake don't move her!' 'Let her have some air!' 20

I was at the head of the bed, and looking down into that tired, blood-streaked, work-worn face I had a sense of complete unreality. I took the brandy flask from my hip pocket and held it to her lips. Most of it ran down her chin but a little flowed between those clenched teeth. She opened her eyes and reached out her arms instinctively for the child. Then she started to weep. Quite soundlessly, and with no sobbing, the tears were running down her cheeks when she lifted her eyes to mine. 25

'Thank you, sir,' she said, and took my hand in hers. And then, looking at me again, she said after a pause, 'I see they got you too.'

Very carefully I screwed the top on to the brandy flask, unscrewed it once, and screwed it on again, for I had caught it on the wrong thread. I put the flask into my hip pocket and did up the button. I pulled across the buckle on my great-coat and noticed that I was dripping with sweat. I pulled the cap down over my eyes and walked out into the street. 30

Someone caught me by the arm, I think it was the soldier with the girl, and said: 'You'd better take some of that brandy yourself. You don't look too good'; but I shook him off. With difficulty I kept my pace to a walk, forcing myself not to run. For I wanted to run, to run anywhere away from that scene, from myself, from the terror that was inside me, the terror of something that was about to happen and which I had not the power to stop. 35

It started small, small but insistent deep inside of me, sharp as a needle, then welling up uncontrollable, spurting, flowing over, choking me. I was drowning, helpless in a rage that caught and twisted and hurled me on, mouthing in a blind unthinking frenzy. I heard myself cursing, the words pouring out, shrill, meaningless, and as my mind cleared a little I knew that it was the woman I cursed. Yes, the 40

woman that I reviled, hating her that she should die like that for me to see, loathing that silly bloody twisted face that had said those words: 'I see they got you too.' That she should have spoken to me, why, oh Christ, to me? Could she not have died the next night, ten minutes later, or in the next street? Could she not have died without speaking, without raising those cow eyes to mine?

'I see they got you too.' All humanity had been in those few words, and I had cursed her. Slowly the frenzy died in me, the rage oozed out of me, leaving me cold, shivering and bitterly ashamed. I had cursed her, cursed her, I realized as I grew calmer, for she had been the one thing that my rage surging uncontrollably had had to fasten on, the one thing to which my mind, overwhelmed by the sense of something so huge and beyond the range of thought, could cling. Her death was unjust, a crime, an outrage, a sin against mankind – weak inadequate words which even as they passed through my mind mocked me with their futility.

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- 2 The passage below describes the writer's feelings as he travels across China to the point of the Great Wall.
- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage.
- (b) A luxury travel company wants to encourage tourists to visit China, especially the remoter parts. Basing your answer closely on the extract, write the text for the advertisement in a positive and persuasive manner (between 120–150 words). [10]

Only a couple of days later, walking to the platform at Beijing station, do I get scared. It is dark. I am heading for a door labelled 'Civilisation – Exit'. The cosy soundtrack of the metropolis is switching to silent. Urine simmers above the tracks; the stench of the provinces. Through the bars of motionless trains appear wild, staring eyes and uncut thatches of hair. To pass beyond the shelter of the Great Wall, they say, is to lose the protection of China itself. 5

Perhaps I am getting carried away. Inside my carriage, things look fine. Instead of sand-demons and barbarian nomads, I see funky green night-lights and electronic screens announcing customer information. My fellow-travellers are young urbanites from Beijing – more men in suits – carrying tea-supplies in personal vacuum flasks of stainless steel. We all go to bed and sleep soundly. 10

Only the light of dawn brings any sense of movement. Outside, the layered hills of north China are vanishing in the mist. The terraces here are barely wide enough to turn a mule on. Hamlets of houses groan under heavy ceramic roof-tiles and suggestions of flying eaves. But when I tell the urbanites that I find the scenery attractive they murmur, incredulously, among themselves ('He calls this attractive?'). 15

I deny nothing. Later, walking down the train corridor, I see people in bed, eating breakfast, helping their children dress. They look embarrassed, as though I have blundered into the collective bedroom of the Chinese people. Are they becoming bourgeois? My own rucksack looks shabby beside their executive luggage with wheels and pull-out handles. 20

Out there, meanwhile, a fog is invading the ancient gullies and fissures of the plateau of Shanxi Province. Through these dry hills, I know, cuts the Yellow River, the life-blood of ancient China. I see piles of yellow maize drying on rooftops, donkeys ploughing, peasants in headscarves stacking wheat. 25

At Xi'an, later in the day, all the men wearing ties and carrying stainless steel vacuum flasks, abandon the train. 'Have fun out west!' they say, bolting for the door. From now on, it's just us: the peasants, rolling on into China's wild places. A newcomer with an accidental moustache and vertical hair is stashing bags of meat and bread under the window-table. He keeps his tea in a jam jar. A boy has a musical cicada in a bamboo case. A student with foppish hair asks insistent questions while peeling pears with meticulous concern. How many people am I travelling with? Why do I travel? How can I afford it? How often do I do this kind of trip? 30

When I ask what he does for fun, he tells me: 'I'm into cricket-fighting. You know? Insects. My cricket against yours. We bet on the winner. The loser runs away, or gets eaten.' We spend hours lying about like Buddhas in our bunks, staring at a winding gorge, dun-coloured villages, and weather-stained cliff faces. From time to time, I glimpse sections of the Great Wall, ramparts of crumbling earth, barely detectable ridges and bumps in the dust. Not until late on the second day, at Jiayuguan, do I finally leave the train. I am nearing the end of the Wall here, nearing the last towers and broken forts of ancient China. 40

Under icy clouds, I walk an empty street into town. Jiayuguan (I soon see) may be trying to escape its primordial bleakness. Daubed onto walls are exhortations to the masses written in big, child-like characters: 'Please be graceful and keep order!' 45

'Push the Western Region to the forefront of modernisation!' 'Strive to be the most eminent tourist city of China!' But I only have one thing to do here, namely, to wander past the willow trees to the Impregnable Fort Under Heaven. In the morning I soon find it, a few miles away, in the desert, guarding the gap between the Qilian and Mazong Mountains: brown walls, pale against a now blue sky.

Up close, its four-square brick ramparts grow temporarily imposing. But from a distance it dwindles once again in the face of the natural elements. I see a 14th-century gate; a picturesque place to say goodbye; a fort on a Chinese Maginot Line. The last outpost of civilisation? The Ming, who built it, certainly saw it as the end of the road. Within its quiet enclosures, I wander about: here is a popular theatre, here are generals' homes and temples. Evidence that men tried to enjoy themselves. To judge by the fort's triple towers, rising like flowers from the desert floor, I think of them as Ming romantics. They have created a worthy backdrop for the leave-takings of China's saddest exiles.

North of here the black plain of the Gobi stretches away for ever. Not that the Impregnable Fort Under Heaven really was the last place in ancient China. The Han Great Wall, after all – built 1,400 years earlier than the Ming – extended further still: to Jade Gate Pass itself.

3 The passage below is taken from a story of suspense.

- (a) In the style of the passage, continue the story (between 120–150 words).
 (b) Compare the style and language of your piece with those of the original.

The cabin had been abandoned for several years, which was why the rent was within her single-parent budget. A faded 'For Sale' sign hung crookedly on a tree outside, mutely pleading for new owners. It was not far from a small town, but the access road, eleven miles of deeply rutted, treacherous trail, had probably discouraged buyers.

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Around the cabin the weeds were waist high, and she had to carry the four-year-old as they struggled down to the beach. A patch of scorched earth marked a firepit, and a picnic table stood nearby, almost hidden in a thick stand of purple fireweed.

'Mummy?' Jenny's voice, usually strident with first-grade exuberance, was soft, timid. 'Do we *have* to stay in this place? I don't think I like it here.'

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'Nonsense, Jen. It's just overgrown, lonely. No one has taken care of it for a long time. We'll clear a nice path down to the beach – see, there *is* a bit of a path under the weeds – then it will be easier for you to walk. We can build a campfire tonight and have hot dogs and marshmallows. It will be *fun!*' She smiled at the child, wondering why her own voice had sounded so loud and harsh.

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The beach was beautiful; sandy and shallow for a long way out and nestled in a small cove that kept the water calm and warm. While the children splashed and searched for frogs, she began clearing the trail with a rusty, but still serviceable sickle she found near the picnic table.

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Once, stopping work to wipe the sweat from her eyes and to check on the children, she glanced up at the hillside behind her and saw, almost hidden among tall cedars, the dark bulk of another, larger, cabin.

Curious, for no one had mentioned a second place close by, she called to the girls to stay out of the water until she came back, and pushed through the deep undergrowth on the hillside towards the hidden cabin.

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It was large, built of grey-weathered logs, and surrounded by a wooden porch with a low railing. As she got closer, she could see that it was obviously deserted, and had been for a long time. The windows were boarded over with plywood, the steps to the front porch were pushed askew by saplings that nudged the foundation, and two solid planks were nailed, cross-like, over the front door. Oddly disappointed, she turned, and began the downward climb. As she walked, she realised why the large cabin had been built so far away from the water. The view was spectacular. She could see far across the lake, around a bend in the shore, to where a solitary mountain, still snow-capped in July, reared distantly through the heat haze. Below her the lake threw off slices of sunlight, and she could see her children digging intently in the sand. Of her own cabin, she glimpsed only the roof and her bedroom window through the trees.

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In the evening, sunburned and exhausted, the girls again crawled into bed early. She made herself a cup of tea and with it walked down the now cleared path to the beach, admiring her handiwork. She stayed until the sun began to set, watching the coloured rays slant off the water, then, tired herself, she made her way back up the trail.

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When she reached the cabin, both children were crying. She ran to their room, stopping abruptly as a large grey rat sitting between the two beds slowly turned, stared at her for a moment with basalt eyes, then scurried between her legs and out the door.

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