



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

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

8693/13

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 The following passage describes the writer's journey as he starts a new job.

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) The same writer produces another article about his travels to another city to take another job. Write a section of the article (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original passage. [10]

Idealisation doesn't come close. I have made of Sydney, to which I sailed in 1965, a paradise beyond the powers of fancy. Were I an actor in need of tears I would have only to think of what Sydney Harbour looked like when I first saw it, or how I felt when I left it three years later – not just the place but those I'd grown to love there – for the tears to pour from my eyes like waterfalls. 5

I was young, I was newly married, my Cambridge degree was still warm in my pocket – a roll of parchment guaranteeing me, I thought, a sort of free ambassadorial passage to any campus of my choosing, and I had chosen Sydney – the world was all before me. Nothing had been good until then: I had hated university, I had been lonely, I craved respect though I had done nothing to deserve any, I had no idea what I was for. But now there could be no doubt: I was on a fourfold mission – to put the past behind me, to enter manhood, to cheer up, to teach English literature . . . oh, and to overcome seasickness. So that's a fivefold mission. 10

I failed the last. Some would say I failed the lot. But about seasickness, at least, there can be no argument. We were at sea about a month, and it was a whole year before the ground stayed still beneath my feet. Flotillas of small boats came out to meet us, each stocked to the point of capsizing with touristical junk, of which the most vivid to me still, perhaps because we bought a pair, were carved wooden elephant bookends. In minutes the merchants would ensnare the ship in a tangle of rigging which enabled them to send us up our merchandise, and us to send them down our money. If any more picturesque method of bartering and buying has ever been devised I had not encountered it. Though I had travelled a bit, I had never seen anything like this – a towering vessel roped from funnel to anchor, as though about to be boarded by pirates, so that items of silk, brass, batik and beads, could be hauled up while baskets of paper money and coins were hauled down, all to the accompaniment of a wild cacophony of negotiation and derision. I felt like Marco Polo, surveying the wonders of the world. 15

When we went ashore it was the same. I was spat at in Port Said – don't ask me why. (By which I mean don't ask me or I'll tell you.) We bought Bob Dylan records for a quarter of their price in Aden, faring better than those who bought boxed shirts only to discover, when they got them back on board, that they had no sleeves or backs. And in Colombo, where I bought my wife a ring from a gold dealer in an upstairs room in a backstreet I wouldn't dare to venture into today, we were chased by a snake charmer who believed we owed him more than we'd paid him for taking his photograph. 20

But for the lurching sea, everything we saw was lit by the light of a marvellous adventure . . . well, but for the lurching sea and the Australian stowaway. We'd have helped her more had she not snored when we gave her our cabin floor to sleep on. 25

We entered Sydney Harbour late on a broiling February afternoon. The sky was a phosphorescent blue, the air was balmy; in the distance I could make out the arch of the bridge, as full of promise as a rainbow. Bigger and more curious seagulls than I had ever seen in England hovered over us. "Waltzing Matilda"¹ played on the loudspeaker system. I could barely breathe for the kitschy splendour of it all. My wife kissed me. Our new life had begun. 30

More fun for me, as it was to turn out, than for her.

45

Everything happened at once. We were met off the boat by the professor who'd hired me. We were to stay with him that night. But before sleep, dinner. The gallon flagons of wine that were passed around the table I will never forget. It's my suspicion that wine coming in flagons made one drink more; when you have only red or white to choose from, you concentrate more on quantity than variety. I was drunk quickly anyway, and stayed a man who got drunk quickly for the rest of my sojourn in Australia – a Pom² who couldn't hold his liquor. I offer that as partial excuse for my behaviour.

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¹ *“Waltzing Matilda”*: unofficial Australian national anthem

² *Pom*: Australian slang for an English person

2 The following passage describes the life of a family at sea.

- (a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]
- (b) The writer's father records his thoughts and feelings about the sea in a section of his autobiography. Write the opening of the section (between 120–150 words). Base your answer closely on the material of the original extract. [10]

When we were out at sea on Bungo Rye, we kids always wanted to jump into the crystal Pacific when it was calm. Dad would haul out the sea anchor: the big round canvas tarpaulin connected by a ring of ropes like a parachute connected to the boat. Its drag would stop the boat from moving forward. He lowered it into the water, then the steel ladder that hung just above the water's surface, dipping into it at intervals as the boat gently rocked with the movements of our bodies. We yelled and leapt into the flat water, its coolness surrounding our unwashed skin and hair that had gone all greasy in the salt air. 5

But down on the water's surface, the sides of the bowl rose up completely over our heads, making us feel even more insignificant than usual. Looking into the ocean underneath was even worse. Lines of white sunlight streaked down into the invisible space for miles. It felt exactly like we were up on top of a tall building, ready to plummet to the depths without any support, like in a falling nightmare. We could literally see down forever, and this water was as deep as it comes. We could have all been swallowed up, pulled down to the unknown bottom, boat and all, and nothing would have made any difference. No coast guard would know nor any news organization find a trace. We would become another vague sea myth, another voyage gone into the one-way oblivion. 10 15

Dad would stand up on deck as we swam, looking for sharks. He'd have a huge black automatic rifle cocked in his arm. It was kept under the couch downstairs, next to the oversized military fatigues he told us we all needed to put on in case we were approached by an unseemly ship, and the crew needed to look like it was made up of men, not mere children. My father would stand there on deck shirtless, as he usually was, the salt and pepper pattern on his head sneaking its way onto his burly chest. His eyes would scan the horizon like a macho robot, searching for figures coming at him in the water. He was prepared, practically hoping for the worst. 20 25

The first time he did this on our inaugural voyage, I heard Dad's arm cock the rifle as we stood behind him, dripping with pure saltwater from the sea. "Stand back, you kids. I'm gonna do a practice round."

I saw him cradle the gun like John Wayne¹, the hero of so many of his favorite movies. His eyes were fixed squarely on that ominously raised horizon. The rifle went off with a huge crack, and it sounded like an ear-splitting echo ensued, although I couldn't see how in the immense vastness around us. My stepsister Rikki and I were closest to him, and we both jerked back and Rikki gave a yelp when the bullet case flung back at me, hitting me on my bare chest. A bright red mark formed. 30 35

Dad turned around with a smile plastered on his face. I looked at him carefully. "Oh, I got hit by a bullet case," he mocked. "Does it hurt?"

I pretended to be indifferent. He laughed and turned back around, triggering another round into the far away ocean. This time I made sure to stand back.

Ever since my dad had grown up hanging around the docks and old ships of Mystic, Connecticut, looking up to the sailors around him rather than his own absent, alcoholic father, he had known that was his calling: the endless, unquestioning sea. Shortly after my mother perished in a flash flood in California, my dad sold his insurance business, commissioned a sailboat to be built in Taiwan, and we all then flew to Hong Kong and set sail. 40 45

But who takes off on to a million miles of water, without first contemplating their own death in vivid Technicolor? I guess my father had to find his own soul

floating out there somewhere. Between two crests of transparent breaking waves, he would catch the glimpse that is his own life, in its entirety from start to finish. He would then see it for what it was, clearly and evenly and without judgment. Then it would submerge itself again, blending and sinking into the immeasurable oceans of the planet. All the planning, the labor, the willing, the phenomenal backbreaking hassle to get out on to that sea, it would all come to a conclusion right then and there. 50

And he would be alone out there, just him and the waters that are God. And I hope – I assume – he would at last be at peace. I'm guessing that this is what it was all about in the end. 55

¹ *John Wayne*: American actor, famous for appearing in cowboy films

- 3 The following passage is from a story that describes a world in the future. In this world people live indoors in isolation and rely solely on technology for all their needs. Vashti spends some of her time discussing ideas with other isolated people.
- (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 it to a close. Base your answer closely on the style and language of the original passage. [10]

Then Vashti generated the light, and the sight of her room, flooded with radiance and studded with electric buttons, revived her. There were buttons and switches everywhere – buttons to call for food, for music, for clothing. There was the hot-bath button, by pressure of which a basin of (imitation) marble rose out of the floor, filled to the brim with a warm deodorized liquid. There was the cold-bath button. There was the button that produced literature. And there were of course the buttons by which she communicated with her friends. The room, though it contained nothing, was in touch with all that she cared for in the world. 5

Vashti's next move was to turn off the isolation switch, and all the accumulations of the last three minutes burst upon her. The room was filled with the noise of bells, and speaking-tubes. What was the new food like? Could she recommend it? Has she had any ideas lately? Might one tell her one's own ideas? Would she make an engagement to visit the public nurseries at an early date? 10

To most of these questions she replied with irritation – a growing quality in that accelerated age. She said that the new food was horrible. That she could not visit the public nurseries through press of engagements. That she had no ideas of her own but had just been told one: she doubted there was much in it. Then she switched off her correspondents, for it was time to deliver her lecture on Australian music. 15

The clumsy system of public gatherings had been long since abandoned; neither Vashti nor her audience stirred from their rooms. Seated in her armchair she spoke, while they in their armchairs heard her, fairly well, and saw her, fairly well. She opened with a humorous account of music in the pre-Mongolian epoch, and went on to describe the great outburst of song that followed the Chinese conquest. Remote and primeval as were the methods of I-San-So and the Brisbane school, she yet felt (she said) that study of them might repay the musicians of today: they had freshness; they had, above all, ideas. Her lecture, which lasted ten minutes, was well received, and at its conclusion she and many of her audience listened to a lecture on the sea; there were ideas to be got from the sea; the speaker had donned a respirator and visited it lately. Then she fed, talked to many friends, had a bath, talked again, and summoned her bed. 20 25 30

The bed was not to her liking. It was too large, and she had a feeling for a small bed. Complaint was useless, for beds were of the same dimension all over the world, and to have had an alternative size would have involved vast alterations in the Machine. Vashti isolated herself – it was necessary, for neither day nor night existed under the ground – and reviewed all that had happened since she had summoned the bed last. Ideas? Scarcely any. 35

By her side, on the little reading-desk, was a survival from the ages of litter – one book. This was the Book of the Machine. In it were instructions against every possible contingency. If she was hot or cold or dyspeptic or at a loss for a word, she went to the book, and it told her which button to press. The Central Committee published it. In accordance with a growing habit, it was richly bound. 40

Sitting up in the bed, she took it reverently in her hands. She glanced round the glowing room as if some one might be watching her. Then, half ashamed, half joyful, she murmured 'O Machine! O Machine!' and raised the volume to her lips. Thrice she kissed it, thrice inclined her head, thrice she felt the delirium of acquiescence. Her ritual performed, she turned to page 1367, which gave the times of the departure of 45

the airships from the island in the southern hemisphere, under whose soil she lived, to the island in the northern hemisphere, whereunder lived her son.

She thought, 'I have not the time.'

She made the room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light; she ate and exchanged ideas with her friends, and listened to music and attended lectures; she made the room dark and slept. Above her, beneath her, and around her, the Machine hummed eternally; she did not notice the noise, for she had been born with it in her ears. The earth, carrying her, hummed as it sped through silence, turning her now to the invisible sun, now to the invisible stars. She awoke and made the room light.

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- Question 1 © Howard Jacobson; *Once upon a life*; The Observer; 18 July 2010; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/jul/18/once-upon-a-life-howard-jacobson;guardian.co.uk>.
- Question 2 © Matthew Link; *The Unquenchable Sea*; Travellers' Tales; <http://travelerstaes.com/carpet/002460.shtml>.
- Question 3 © E. M. Forster; *The Machine Stops*; 1909; <http://www.plexus.org/forster/index.html>.

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