

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

English Language B

Component 1

Sample assessment material for first teaching
September 2016
Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference
4EB1/01

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SECTION A: READING

Read the following texts carefully and then answer Section A in the Question Paper.

Text 1: *First impressions – an Englishman in New York*

In the passage, the writer describes his first experience of New York.

In May of 2011 I fulfilled one of my many travel goals by travelling to New York for the first time. With a place to stay (a friend's apartment in Manhattan, no less) I was looking forward to seeing what the city was really like. Despite a rather rough flight over and the first signs of jetlag kicking in, my spirits were as high as the skyscrapers poked through the clouds as we descended.



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The approach to JFK

The views when circling the city and coming in to land at JFK airport are spectacular; having flown over Long Island I could clearly make out several of the most famous buildings of central New York. As I was right at the back of the plane I decided not to stress about getting out quickly. I took my time and was the last to disembark which was a mistake as I was then at the back of the queue when we'd passed through the sweaty tunnels on the way to the immigration hall.

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The immigration process

I could see it was going to take time as the entire human content of our 747 was waiting in line in front of me. There was little to do except wait. We were at least entertained by a video selling the delights of New York on a continuous loop on one of several television screens. The actual passport check procedure was quick and painless, although I did find it unusual to be both photographed and finger-printed.

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The view on the way from the airport

Terminal 7, which British Airways use at JFK, is a little run-down but small and manageable. The first sight to greet me on exiting the baggage hall was of a Starbucks and a McDonald's. Years ago this would have seemed like a 'Welcome to the USA' in itself but these days it could be practically anywhere in the world. With both signs and announcements warning not to use dodgy taxis but to go to the taxi office, I took the hint and found a classic yellow cab to take me into Manhattan. On the way I noticed how most Americans drive the same kind of cars as we do in Europe, although there were a few big Jeeps, a couple of stretch limousines and lots of those vans favoured by FBI agents running surveillance. But the real 'wow' moment was when I saw that iconic Manhattan skyline as we crossed the Queensboro Bridge with the sun setting. I had arrived...

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The skyscrapers

I woke early the next day in my host's apartment. The view from the living room was certainly not quite what I was used to, being 29 floors up as opposed to one. The Midtown location was amazing, right round the corner from the UN building and surrounded by even taller buildings. I think this is the first and most obvious sign of someone who has just arrived in New York – that they keep looking up all the time. Now it was time to check out the city in daylight – and with the benefit of a few hours sleep.



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The feeling of being on a film set

This is a classic cliché that most people who have been to New York talk about – but like a lot of clichés it's also true. The Big Apple is of course the backdrop to countless movies and TV shows and you'll find something that you recognise or which looks familiar round most corners. You'll see those yellow fire hydrants, newspaper vending machines and 'Walk/Don't Walk' signs.

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The sheer level of noise on the streets

When you walk along the busy streets of New York it's like somebody turned the volume up. It's also (to my ears) amazing how people just do not care who hears their conversations, whether in person or on the phone. You get a fascinating insight into the private lives of New Yorkers in the form of ten second clips as you pass and they move out of range.

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The scale of the place

Finally, it's only when you get up high that you fully appreciate how mind-blowing New York architecture really is. Both the Empire State Building and the Rockefeller Center offer fantastic views and both are recommended. Next time I'm planning to save my money for a helicopter ride over the city; that would be the ultimate way to see New York. As my plane left the tarmac for my return flight I was already thinking about coming back. New York lived up to – and in fact exceeded my expectations – it should be on everyone's list of places to visit.

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Text 2: Notes from a Small Island

In the passage, the writer describes the journey to Dover in England.

In the morning, I breakfasted early, settled my bill and stepped out to another promising day. Clutching an inadequate little map that came with my ferry ticket, I set off in search of the ferry terminal. On the map it looked to be quite nearby, practically in the town centre, but in reality it was a good 2 miles away at the far end of a bewildering wasteland of oil



refineries, derelict factories, and acres of waste ground strewn with old girders and piles of jagged concrete. I found myself squeezing through holes in chainlink fences and picking my way between rusting railway carriages with broken windows. I don't know how other people get to the ferry at Calais, but I had the distinct feeling that no one had ever done it this way before. And all the while I walked I was uncomfortably aware – actually in a whimpering panic – that the departure time was drawing nigh and that the ferry terminal, though always visible, never actually seemed to get any closer. Eventually, after dodging across a dual carriageway and clambering up an embankment, I arrived breathless and late and looking like someone who'd just survived a mining disaster, and was hustled aboard a shuttle bus by an officious woman.

I boarded the ship perspiring freely and with a certain disquiet. I'm not a good sailor, I freely admit. I get sick on a rowing boat. The boat was crammed with people, all of them English. I spent the first quarter of an hour wandering around wondering how they had got there without getting filthy, inserted myself briefly into the mayhem that was the duty-free shop and as quickly found my way out again, strolled around the cafeteria with a tray looking at the food, searched for a seat among hordes of dementedly lively children, and finally found my way out onto the breezy deck where people with blue lips and dancing hair were trying to convince themselves that because the sun was shining they couldn't possibly be cold.

Before long, the White Cliffs of Dover rose from the sea and began creeping towards us and in no time at all, it seemed, we were sailing into Dover Harbour and clumsily nuzzling up to the dock. I was eager to see Dover again after all these years. I strode into the centre along Marine Parade and with a small cry of pleasure spied the shelter I'd slept in those many years ago. It was covered in about eleven more layers of bile-green paint but otherwise unchanged. The view out to sea was likewise unchanged, though the water was bluer and more glittery than when I'd last seen it. But everything else looked different. Where I recalled there being a row of elegant Georgian terraces there was now a vast and unbecoming brick apartment block. Townwall Street, the main through road to the west, was wider and more menacing with traffic than I remembered, and there was now a subway to the town centre, which itself was unrecognizable.

The main shopping street had been pedestrianised and the Market Square had been turned into a kind of piazza with show-off paving and the usual array of cast-iron trimmings. The whole town centre seemed uncomfortably squeezed by busy, wide roads of which I had no recollection and there was now a big tourist attraction called the White Cliffs Experience, where, I presume from the name, you can discover what it feels like to be 800-million-year-old chalk. I didn't recognize anything. The trouble with English towns is that they are so indistinguishable one from another. They all have a Boots and W.H. Smith and Marks & Spencer¹. You could be anywhere really.

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I plodded distractedly through the streets, unhappy that a place so central to my memories was so unfamiliar. Then, on my third grumbling pass through the town centre, on a lane I would swear I had never walked before, I came across the cinema, still recognizable despite refurbishment, and everything suddenly became clear. Now that I had a fixed point of reference, I knew precisely where I was. I strode purposefully 500 yards north and then west – now I could almost have done it blindfolded – and found myself square in front of Mrs Smith’s establishment. It was still a hotel and looked substantially unchanged, as far as I could remember, except for the addition of a parking area in the front garden and a plastic sign announcing colour TVs and en-suite bathrooms. I thought about knocking at the door, but there didn’t seem much point. The dragon-like Mrs Smith must be long since gone. She couldn’t possibly have coped with the modern age of British guesthouses, with their en-suite bathrooms and coffee-making facilities and people having pizzas delivered to their rooms. 50

Cheered by this thought, I strolled up the Folkestone Road to the station and bought a ticket for the next train to London. 55 60

¹ Typical British shops

Source information:

Text 1 adapted from *First impressions – an Englishman in New York*, by Andy Higgs

<http://grownuptravelguide.com/first-impressions-englishman-new-york>

New York images: from: http://grownuptravelguide.com.c.presscdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DSC_1411-640x428.jpg

and http://grownuptravelguide.com.c.presscdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/DSC_0821-640x428.jpg

Text 2 adapted from *Notes from a Small Island*, by Bill Bryson, Black Swan 2015

Ferry image: taken from <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/original/46328870.jpg>

