

X270/12/11

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2012

THURSDAY, 17 MAY
9.00 AM – 10.45 AM

ENGLISH
HIGHER
Close Reading—Text

There are TWO passages and questions.

Read the passages carefully and then answer all the questions, which are printed in a separate booklet.

You should read the passages to:

understand what the writers are saying about the Olympic Games (**Understanding—U**);

analyse their choices of language, imagery and structures to recognise how they convey the writers' points of view and contribute to the impact of the passages (**Analysis—A**);

evaluate how effectively they have achieved their purpose (**Evaluation—E**).



PASSAGE 1

Permission has been refused to publish this passage.

PASSAGE 2

James Lawton, writing in The Independent newspaper just before the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, considers the Olympics in the light of drug scandals.

A CHILL IN THE SUNLIGHT

If you stand on the Acropolis you can see the new stadia glinting in the fierce sunlight, and you understand why the Greeks are so proud of staging the 2004 Olympics. A gnarled old man with a flowing moustache welcomes you to the soil of Zeus and says you are going to enjoy the best days of your life. He says he has never felt so much pride.

5 So why don't you feel his warmth? Why is it so hard to share in the joy of a people who believe so fervently they have delved into their past, at potentially ruinous cost, and found the best of themselves? It is because it is hard to warm your hands – or your heart – on a lie, the stupendous, never-ending lie which the Olympics have become and which no amount of breath-taking ceremony and superb sports architecture can obscure.

10 If you think that is too bleak a view, that people who care about sport as a metaphor for some of the most inspiring qualities in life have a duty to believe in the Olympics, where have you been for the last 30 years – or, for that matter, the last 30 hours? Here, a few days before the Olympic flame shoots up towards the ancient gods, is the latest smorgasbord of drug cheats: an Irish distance runner who was suddenly carving vast
15 chunks out of his personal best times, an American sprinter, a Swiss cyclist, a Spanish canoeist, a Kenyan boxer.

It is the Spanish canoeist who perhaps shocks the most. We know about the impurities of athletics. We know about cycling and its serial drug scandals. But a canoeist! Why, Jovano Gonzalez, why? Not for the big money that follows an athletics or cycling medal,
20 we know that. For what then? Maybe to show your children, and their children, a medal that you would always know was false.

The trouble is that such questioning has long been abandoned in the culture of sports drugs. You do not dope to cheat, you do it to stay in the race, to give yourself a chance. It only deepens the unease, the sense that when you have been around the Olympics for
25 so long, when you have been deceived so many times, these may well be one Games too many, and that they should be happening here, in Athens, of all places, only deepens the feeling that we are party to an ideal that is all played out. That is the killer, the dragging of the spirit.

30 So what do you do at these Olympics? Cherry-pick moments of glory and grace, and hope you have not been deceived? What, when you really think about it, is the alternative? You could reel back the years of Olympic history and, sure, only a dead soul would not feel surges of excitement: Seb Coe coming back at Steve Ovett in Moscow; Carl Lewis winning gold in Atlanta in 1996 with his last jump; Michael Johnson in his gold shoes after Muhammad Ali came blinking into the spotlight and lit the flame.

35 But nowadays only a fool digs into the past without questioning, however fleetingly, what was true and what was false. You couldn't go through the 1988 Olympics in Seoul and ever abandon the need to ask that question. There was never a betrayal like Ben Johnson's. He took us to the stars with that 100 metres run, which etched disbelief
40 on the face of second-placed Carl Lewis. He shattered the world record, and you knew when it happened you would never forget the coiled power that was released so astonishingly. And then, in the grey dawn of the following day, you saw him exposed as a drugs cheat, hustled to the airport, a stunned, inarticulate man, who for the rest of his life will say, in a halting voice forever invaded by bitterness, that he committed athletics' only unforgivable sin—being caught.

45 We should have known then, finally, that the Olympics would never truly outrun the sin of Johnson. The truth is that the Olympic lie has simply become too flagrant; the drugs battle is unwinnable. That is why there is such little uplift as the Olympics come home to Athens, to the city that stretches below you in its glory of dazzling stadia. That is why there is such a chill in the sunlight.

[*END OF TEXT*]

[OPEN OUT]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Close Reading Passage 1—Text is adapted from “*The Meaning of Sport*” by Simon Barnes, ISBN 978 1 904977 85 8. Permission is refused to by Short Books.

Close Reading Passage 2—Article is adapted from “*Why Believers in Olympic Dream make Dopes of us all*” by James Lawton, taken from The Independent, 11 August 2004. Permission is being sought from The Independent.