

X115/101

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2010

THURSDAY, 13 MAY
9.00 AM – 10.00 AM

ENGLISH
INTERMEDIATE 1
Close Reading

Answer all questions.

30 marks are allocated to this paper.

Read the passage carefully and then answer **all** the questions, **using your own words where asked to do so**.

The questions will ask you to show that:

you understand **what** the writer has said (main ideas and supporting details) (**Understanding—U**);

you can identify **how** the writer has said it (techniques of structure and style) (**Analysis—A**);

you can comment on **how well** the writer has achieved his purpose (using appropriate evidence) (**Evaluation—E**).

A code letter (U, A, E) is used alongside each question to identify its purpose for you.



In this extract from his autobiography, the writer, Bill Bryson, remembers and reflects upon the time he was first taken to Disneyland by his parents.

MONEY WELL SPENT

My father returned home in unusually high spirits, and revealed his startling plans to take us away on a trip over Christmas to some mysterious place.

“You wait. You’ll like it. You’ll see,” was all he would say, to whoever asked. The whole idea of it was unspeakably exciting—we weren’t the type of people to do something so rash, so sudden, so unseasonal—but unnerving too, for exactly the same reasons. So on the afternoon of 16 December, when Greenwood, my elementary school, dispatched its happy hordes into the snowy streets to begin three glorious weeks of yuletide relaxation (and school holidays in those days, let me say, were of a proper and generous duration), the family Rambler was waiting out front, steaming extravagantly, even keenly, and ready to cut a trail across the snowy prairies. We headed west as usual, crossed the mighty Missouri River and made our way past Omaha. Then we just kept on going. We drove for what seemed like (in fact was) days across the endless, stubbly snow-blown plains. We passed one enticing diversion after another—Pony Express stations, buffalo licks, a pretty big rock—without so much as a sideways glance from my father. My mother began to look faintly worried.

On the third morning, we caught our first sight of the Rockies—the first time in my life I had seen something on the horizon other than a horizon. And still we kept going, up and through the ragged mountains and out the other side. We emerged in California, into warmth and sunshine, and spent a week experiencing its wonders—its mighty groves of redwoods, the lush Imperial Valley, Big Sur, Los Angeles—and the delicious, odd feel of warm sunlight on your face and bare arms in December: a winter without winter.

I had seldom—what am I saying? I had never—seen my father so generous and care-free. At a lunch counter in San Luis Obispo he invited me—*urged* me—to have a large hot fudge sundae, and when I said, “Dad, are you sure?” he said, “Go on, you only live once”—a sentiment that had never passed his teeth before, certainly not in a commercial setting.

We spent Christmas Day walking on a beach in Santa Monica, and the next day we got in the car and drove south on a snaking freeway through the hazy, warm, endless nowhereness of Los Angeles. At length we parked in an enormous parking lot that was almost comically empty—we were one of half a dozen cars, all from out of state—and strode a few paces to a grand entrance, where we stood with hands in pockets looking up at a fabulous display of wrought iron.

“Well, Billy, do you know where this is?” my father asked, unnecessarily. There wasn’t a child in the world that didn’t know these fabled gates.

“It’s Disneyland,” I said.

“It certainly is,” he agreed, and he stared appreciatively at the gates as if they were something he had privately commissioned.

For a minute I wondered if this was all we had come for—to admire the gates—and if in a moment we would get back in the car and drive on to somewhere else. But instead he told us to wait where we were, and strode purposefully to a ticket booth where he conducted a brief but remarkably cheerful transaction. It was the only time in my life that I saw two \$20 bills leave my father’s wallet simultaneously. As he waited at the window, he gave us a broad smile and a little wave.

45 “Am I ill or something?” I asked my mother.

“No, honey,” she replied.

“Is Dad ill?”

“No, honey, everybody’s fine. Your father’s just got the Christmas spirit.”

50 At no point in all my life before or since have I been more astounded, more gratified,
more happy than I was for the whole of that day. We had the park practically to
ourselves. We did it all—spun gaily in people-sized teacups, climbed aboard flying
Dumbos, marvelled at the exciting conveniences in the Monsanto All-Plastic House of
the Future in Tomorrowland, enjoyed a submarine ride and riverboat safari, took a
55 rocket to the moon. (The seats actually trembled. “Whoa!” we all said in delighted
alarm.) Disneyland in those days was a considerably less slick and manicured wonder
than it would later become, but it was still the finest thing I had ever seen—possibly the
finest thing that existed in America at the time. My father was positively enchanted with
the place, with its tidiness and wholesomeness and imaginative picture-set charm, and
60 kept asking why all the world couldn’t be like this. “But cheaper, of course,” he added,
comfortingly returning to character and steering us deftly past a souvenir stand.

The next morning we got in the car and began the thousand-mile trip across desert,
mountain and prairie to Des Moines. It was a long drive, but everyone was very happy.
At Omaha, we didn’t stop—didn’t even slow down—but just kept on going. And if there
is a better way to conclude a vacation by not stopping in Omaha, then I don’t know it.

From Bill Bryson, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* (slightly adapted)

QUESTIONS

- | | <i>Marks</i> | <i>Code</i> |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| 1. In the opening paragraph, we read that the writer’s father returned “in unusually high spirits”. | | |
| Explain in your own words what this tells us about the father’s character. | 2 | U |
| 2. Look at lines 3–6. | | |
| (a) The writer tells us that the trip was “unspeakably exciting” (line 4). | | |
| In your own words , give two reasons why the family found the prospect of the trip “exciting”. | 2 | U |
| (b) As well as exciting, how else did the family find the prospect of the trip? | | |
| Answer in your own words . | 1 | U |
| 3. Look at lines 7–9. | | |
| Explain how any one example of the writer’s word choice in these lines helps emphasise the fact that the writer has pleasant memories of Christmas time when he was a boy. | 2 | A |
| 4. Look at lines 9–10, where the author mentions the family Rambler (a make of car). | | |
| What is surprising about the way he refers to it? | 1 | A |
| 5. What does “endless, stubbly, snow-blown” (lines 12–13) suggest about the plains? | 1 | A |

QUESTIONS (continued)

Marks Code

6. Look at the sentence in lines 13–15.
- (a) What is the function of the words in parenthesis (dashes)? 2 A
- (b) What does the fact that he did not give “so much as a sideways glance” suggest about the writer’s father? 1 U
7. The writer tells us that when he saw the Rocky Mountains, this was the first time he “had seen something on the horizon other than a horizon” (line 17).
What does this hint about the appearance of the countryside where he lives? 1 U
8. Look at the expression “a winter without winter” (lines 21–22).
- (a) What is surprising about this expression? 1 A
- (b) Show how **other words** in the context make clear what the writer means by “a winter without winter”. 2 U
9. Show with clear reference to the paragraph in lines 23–27 how the writer puts emphasis on the idea that his father is mean with his money. 2 A
10. Show how any **one** example of the writer’s **word choice** in lines 30–35 effectively conveys the idea that Disneyland was an impressive place. 2 E
11. Look at lines 40–44.
Explain why it is appropriate for the writer to use the expression “remarkably cheerful” when referring to the “transaction” his father conducts. 2 A
12. Look at lines 51–54.
The writer tells us that his family “did it all”.
How does the **sentence structure** in these lines help convey this idea? 2 A
13. What is the effect of the inclusion of “actually” (line 54)? 1 A
14. The writer says (line 55) that Disneyland was not as “slick and manicured” then as it was to become.
What does this expression suggest about Disneyland today? 2 U
15. The writer says that his father steered the family “deftly past a souvenir stand” (line 60). Why does this suggest the writer’s father was “returning to character”? 1 U
16. Consider the passage as a whole. Explain why any **one** aspect of this extract helps to make it an effective piece of autobiographical writing. 2 E

Total (30)

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

[Open out for Questions]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reading—Extract is taken from Pages 93-96 of *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* by Bill Bryson—ISBN 9780 38560 8268. Published by Doubleday. Permission is being sought from Random House Group.