

X115/201

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2007

FRIDAY, 11 MAY
1.00 PM – 2.00 PM

ENGLISH
INTERMEDIATE 2
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 as far as possible**.

The questions will ask you to show that:

you understand the main ideas and important details in the passage—in other words, **what** the writer has said (**Understanding—U**);

you can identify, using appropriate terms, the techniques the writer has used to get across these ideas—in other words, **how** he has said it (**Analysis—A**);

you can, using appropriate evidence, comment on how effective the writer has been—in other words, **how well** he has said it (**Evaluation—E**).

A code letter (U, A, E) is used alongside each question to identify its purpose for you. The number of marks attached to each question will give some indication of the length of answer required.



Come fly with me

In this passage, the writer reflects on his fascination with birds and flight.

I was going through Monken Hadley churchyard and there were lots (note scientific precision) of house martins whizzing round the church tower. House martins are dapper little chaps, navy blue with white, and they are one of the sights of the summer: doing things like whizzing round church steeples and catching flies in their beaks. Later in the
5 season the young ones take up whizzing themselves, trying to get the hang of this flying business. So I paused on my journey to spend a few moments gazing at the whirligig of martins. It was nothing special, nothing exceptional, and it was very good indeed. Note this: one of the greatest pleasures of birdwatching is the quiet enjoyment of the absolutely ordinary.

10 And then it happened. Bam!

Gone.

From the tail of my eye, I saw what I took to be a kestrel. I turned my head to watch it as it climbed, and I waited for it to go into its hover, according to time-honoured kestrel custom. But it did nothing of the kind. It turned itself into an anchor. Or a
15 thunderbolt.

No kestrel this: it crashed into the crowd of martins, and almost as swiftly vanished. I think it got one, but I can't swear to it, it was all so fast.

It was a hobby-hawk. Perhaps the most dashing falcon of them all: slim, elegant and deadly fast. Not rare as rare-bird-addicts reckon things: they come to Britain in
20 reasonable numbers every summer to breed. The sight of a hobby-hawk makes no headlines in the birdwatching world. It was just a wonderful and wholly unexpected sight of a wonderful and wholly unexpected bird. It was a moment of perfect drama.

Birdwatching is a state of being, not an activity. It doesn't depend on place, on equipment, on specific purpose, like, say, fishing. It is not a matter of organic
25 trainspotting; it is about life and it is about living. It is a matter of keeping the eyes and ears and mind open. It is not a matter of obsession, not at all. It is just quiet enjoyment.

Flight is the dream of every human being. When we are lucky, we do, quite literally, dream about flying. They are the best of all dreams—you are free, you are miraculous.

The desire to fly is part of the condition of being human. That's why most of the
30 non-confrontational sports are about flying, or at least the defiance of gravity. Gymnastics is about the power of the human body to fly unaided; so is the high jump and the long jump. The throwing events—discus, shot-put and hammer—are about making something else fly: a war on gravity.

Golf always seems to me a trivial game, but every one of its legion of addicts will tell you
35 that it all comes back to the pure joy of a clean strike at the ball: making it defy gravity. Making it climb like a towering snipe. Making it soar like an eagle, at least in the mind of the striker, as it reaches the top of its long, graceful parabola.

Think about it: all these sports are done for the joy of flying. Skating is a victory over friction, and it feels like victory over gravity; it feels like flying. Its antithesis is
40 weightlifting: a huge and brutal event, the idea of which is to beat gravity. All the horsey events come back to the idea of flight: of getting off the ground, of escaping human limitations by joining up with another species and finding flight. For every rider, every horse has wings.

And birds fly in all kinds of ways: the brisk purpose of a sparrow, the airy detachment of
45 the seagull, the dramatic power of the hawk. Some birds specialise in flying very fast;
others in flying very slow. Great hunters such as the barn owl work on the edge of the
stall all the time. Kestrels are very good at flying without moving at all. Some birds are
not so great at flying. Pheasants just about get off the ground into a safe place in a tree
for a night. They are poor flyers, but they are unquestionably better than us humans.

50 And flight attracts our eyes, lifts our heart with joy and envy. Flight, to us earthbound
creatures, is a form of magic—one of the great powers attributed to decent wizards and
witches throughout history is the ability to fly, from the persecuted sorcerers of the Dark
Ages to the players of the game of quidditch.

Take a basic urban moment—a traffic jam, a train becalmed. A sigh, a look away from
55 the road or the newspaper, out of the window. A skein of geese in the sky; probably,
almost certainly, “just” Canada geese. Too far away to hear them honking to each other,
urgent instructions to keep the formation tight and to help the leader out with the hard
work. A daily sight, a common sight, an ordinary sight. But just for one
second—perhaps even two—you are let off the day’s hassles. At least that is the case if
60 you take the trouble to look up. It will probably be the most inspiring thing you will see
all day. The day is the better for those birds.

And so we look to birds for a deep-seated kind of joy. It goes back to the dawn of
humankind: ever since humans first walked upright, they were able to turn their eyes to
the heavens and observe the birds. The birds have something we can never have. But
65 merely by existing—by flying before us—they add to the daily joys of existence. Birds
are about hope.

Adapted from *How to be a Bad Birdwatcher* by Simon Barnes

QUESTIONS

Marks Code

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Explain what is odd or ironic about the expression “note scientific precision” (lines 1–2). | 2 A |
| 2. “It was nothing special, nothing exceptional, and it was very good indeed.” (line 7). | |
| (a) What is surprising about this statement? | 1 A |
| (b) Show how the writer continues this idea in the next sentence (lines 8–9). | 2 U/A |
| 3. Identify two techniques used in lines 10 and 11 which help to convey the idea of speed described in the next two paragraphs (lines 12–17). | 2 A |
| 4. (a) What is the author suggesting about the bird when he says “It turned itself into an anchor” (line 14)? | 1 U/A |
| (b) Why is the comparison of the bird to a “thunderbolt” (line 15) an effective image or metaphor? | 2 E |
| 5. Explain with clear reference to the whole sentence why the writer uses a colon in line 19. | 2 A |
| 6. “The sight of a hobby-hawk makes no headlines in the birdwatching world” (lines 20–21). Explain in your own words what is meant by “makes no headlines”. | 1 U |
| 7. Write down the word from later in the paragraph which continues the idea introduced by “trainspotting” (line 25). | 1 U |
| 8. In what way does the author’s use of “quite literally” (line 27) help to make his meaning clear? | 1 U/A |
| 9. (a) What does “trivial” (line 34) tell us about the writer’s attitude to golf? | 1 U |
| (b) Explain how an expression later in this sentence makes it clear that the author is aware that others do not share his opinion. | 2 U/A |
| (c) Why are the comparisons the writer uses in the rest of this paragraph appropriate? | 2 A/E |
| 10. The writer mentions a variety of sports between lines 29 and 43. What challenge does he think these activities have in common? | 1 U |
| 11. The writer refers to equestrianism (“horsey events”, line 41), as related to the pursuit of flight. What is the difference between this and all the other sports he mentions? Answer in your own words . | 1 U |
| 12. Why is it appropriate to introduce the paragraph consisting of lines 44 to 49 with the expression “And birds fly in all kinds of ways”? | 2 A/E |
| 13. The writer refers to “wizards and witches throughout history” (lines 51–52). Explain by referring to either word choice or structure how the rest of the sentence continues this idea. | 2 U/A |
| 14. What do the writer’s examples of “a basic urban moment” (line 54) have in common? | 1 U |
| 15. What is the effect of the inverted commas round “just” in line 56? | 1 A |
| 16. Explain fully why the last paragraph (lines 62–66) provides an appropriate or effective conclusion to the passage. | 2 E |

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

Total (30)

[Open out for Questions]

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