

X115/101

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2007

FRIDAY, 11 MAY
1.00 PM – 1.45 PM

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 passage, the writer describes an amusing incident when his dog is taken to the vet. The "Mrs Harper" he refers to is his wife.

AT THE VET

Mrs Harper has a theory that men are big bairns when it comes to pain, even the big bruisers among us.

I think this is a foul slur on Scottish manhood. I believe that wives throughout the northern half of Scotland are well aware of how uncomplainingly we men bear pain or
5 discomfort; how unfazed we are by the prospect of a visit to the doctor's surgery or the hospital, and how reluctant we are to take to our beds, even when suffering horrendous illness.

Mrs Harper's theory is not limited to human males. She says she has amassed plenty of evidence that the males of any species are gey peer craitors when it comes to needles,
10 knives or rubber gloves. What happened last Saturday afternoon, I have to concede, lent weight to her theory.

The two of us and the dog (male) had gone out for our usual weekend walk, timing it between bursts of rain. As we passed the vet's surgery on the way to the riverside park, Mrs Harper noticed that the surgery door was open and remembered suddenly that the
15 big red beast was due his regular dose of kennel-cough medicine.

Seeing her chance, she hustled across the road. All seemed reasonably clear, so she asked if she might make an appointment. The vet proposed getting it over and done with at that moment, as he appeared to have a minor lull between one four-legged emergency and another, so she appeared back outside the surgery door and beckoned me from
20 across the road.

The dog, who had spent the short time we had waited by sizing up the surgery and slowly recalling an assortment of needles, thermometers and rubber-glove smells, showed an unusual reluctance to rise from his sitting position.

Persuaded across the road, he arrived in the surgery and went daft. The vet must have
25 thought he was thoroughly undisciplined, which is untrue. It's just that the assortment of smells in a vet's surgery must be the equivalent of those in a soap shop to a small boy.

He did as he was told and sat, but with his behind and paws quivering on the lino, and his head craning through 270 degrees.

The vet went off to charge the syringe with the medicine, turning his back to the dog
30 while he did so. Those of you who are familiar with dogs will know that a kennel-cough dose is administered not through a needle, but through a blunt squirter up the animal's nostrils.

Our normally placid beast has an abiding horror of this. Mrs Harper says this is not because it's a particularly traumatic procedure or that any vet has been rough with him
35 in the past. It's just that he's male and, consequently, affa feart for himsel.

As the vet turned round, brandishing the blunt-nosed syringe, all pretence of canine discipline vanished.

In the middle of this confusion, with the dog's lead twining my legs and the lino being gouged to destruction as he tried to head for the door, the vet looked at me. "Could you
40 sit down and hold him between your knees to try to steady him?" he said. "Then put your arms round him to lock him while I try to get close."

Not sure that my joints were up to such contortions and exertion, I made to sit down on the nearest seat, as I had been told. Just in time, Mrs Harper pointed out that the seat in question was on castors.

45 While that might not have been very dignified, look on the bright side: I could have broken the office-chair land-speed record and earned my place in history.

I opted for another seat—sturdy, mahogany—sitting against another wall, and I shochled across, rebelling dog in tow, plonked myself down, hauled him to sit between my knees and locked my arm under his chin.

50 He calmed momentarily while the vet slipped a nylon muzzle on him. Our dog hasn't so much as nipped anyone in his four years, but it's always best to be cautious in trauma.

The vet tilted the dog's head back and bore down with the syringe. To say that what followed was akin to a whirlwind of dervishes and banshees breaking loose
55 would be gross understatement. I've seen spin-driers and pneumatic drills with less vigour.

Had I not been involved myself, I would not have believed that so much struggling could come from a normally placid and passive beast.

As for the vet, it is difficult to aim for two nostrils when they are thrashing from
60 left to right, despite the animal's owner's best efforts to steady them.

However, the vet managed a quick squirt up one tunnel and half a squirt up the other, which he declared sufficient.

But it didn't end there.

Just as the vet leaned back and slipped the muzzle off the dog, the dog tilted his
65 head back, glowered up into my face and let rip the most enormous sneeze, blowing half his kennel-cough medicine back over me. Having exacted his revenge, he stepped from the surgery as bright and lively as ever. I, meanwhile, had a thumping headache within 15 minutes.

While the dog leaped and bounded and gambolled happily about the riverside
70 park, having forgotten all about his medical encounter just minutes before, my mouth had gone dry, the sky had gone dark and my throat had begun to burn.

Heaven knows what is the active ingredient in kennel-cough serum but, trust me, you don't want to tangle with it.

The headache, dryness and hazy vision persisted for the rest of that evening,
75 despite Mrs Harper's conviction that I was malingering.

Happily, I felt fine after a night's sleep, and the symptoms were but a faint memory by the time I took my place at the kitchen table with my bran flakes the following morning.

Indeed, I'm almost back to normal. The appetite has returned. I'm sleeping
80 well. Best of all, I can now go to kennels nationwide without fear of catching so much as a tickly throat.

Mrs Harper says that she has never seen me looking so healthy in all the time we have been married.

If only I could stop chasing rabbits.

Adapted from *Fortnights* by Norman Harper

QUESTIONS

Marks Code

1. “Men are big bairns when it comes to pain” (line 1). Explain what Mrs Harper means by this. 2 U
2. The writer uses humour in the second paragraph (lines 3–7). **Quote** an example. 1 A
3. Explain what the writer means by “lent weight to her theory” (lines 10–11). 2 U
4. What gave Mrs Harper her “chance” (line 16)? 1 U
5. Explain **in your own words** why the vet could treat the dog “at that moment” (line 18). 1 U
6. Look at the expression “the equivalent of those in a soap shop to a small boy” (line 26).
Explain fully how well this illustrates the “smells in a vet’s surgery” (line 26) from the dog’s point of view. 2 A/E
7. Look at lines 27–28.
In your own words explain **one** way in which the dog showed unease or restlessness. 1 U
8. What is surprising about the writer’s choice of the word “squirter” (line 31) to describe the piece of veterinary equipment? 1 A
9. Explain what “normally placid” (line 33) suggests about the dog’s nature. 2 U
10. “All pretence of canine discipline vanished” (lines 36–37).
Choose **one** expression in the following paragraph (lines 38–41), and explain how it continues this idea. 2 A
11. Explain why the writer chose “another seat” (line 47) to use when holding the dog. 1 U
12. Look at the writer’s description of what followed the vet’s approach to the dog (lines 53–56).
Choose **one** expression in these lines and explain why it is effective in describing the scene which followed. 2 A
13. Look at lines 61–62. Explain fully how any **one** example of the writer’s **word choice** helps to emphasise that the writer was unconvinced that the vet had done the job properly. 2 A
14. Explain why “But it didn’t end there” (line 63) provides an effective link at this stage in the passage. 3 E
15. What is surprising about the expressions “glowered” (line 65) and “exacted his revenge” (lines 66–67) as they are used here? 2 A
16. Look at the writer’s description of what happened after the episode at the vet’s surgery (lines 69–71).
Quote two expressions from these lines which help to point out the **contrast** between the dog and the writer. 2 U/A
17. Explain why the final paragraph (line 84) is an effective conclusion to the passage. 2 E
18. The writer uses some Scots expressions in this piece. Explain how these affected your enjoyment of the passage. 1 E

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

Total (30)

[Open out for Questions]

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