

X115/301

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2009

FRIDAY, 15 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 issues surrounding our use of natural resources (**Understanding—U**);

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

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



PASSAGE 1

The first passage is from an article in *The Telegraph* newspaper in January 2007. In it, Janet Daley responds to suggestions that we should limit our use of natural resources.

A DOOMSDAY SCENARIO?

Is your journey really necessary? Who would have thought that, in the absence of world war and in the midst of unprecedented prosperity, politicians would be telling us not to travel? Just as working people have begun to enjoy the freedoms that the better-off have known for generations—the experience of other cultures, other cuisines, other climates—they are threatened with having those liberating possibilities priced out of their reach.

And when I hear politicians—most of them comfortably off—trying to deny enlightenment and pleasure to “working class” people, I reach for my megaphone. Maybe Tommy Tattoo and his mates do use cheap flights to the sunshine as an extension of their binge-drinking opportunities, but for thousands of people whose parents would never have ventured beyond Blackpool or Rothesay, air travel has been a social revelation.

So, before we all give the eco-lobby’s anti-flying agenda the unconditional benefit of the doubt, can we just review their strategy as a whole?

Remember, it is not just air travel that the green tax lobby is trying to control: it is a restriction on any mobility. Clamping down on one form of movement, as the glib reformers have discovered, simply creates intolerable pressure on the others. Londoners, for example, had just become accustomed to the idea that they would have to pay an £8 congestion charge to drive into their own city when they discovered that the fares on commuter rail and underground services had been hiked up with the intention of driving away customers from the public transport system—now grossly overcrowded as a result of people having been forced off the roads by the congestion charge.

The only solution—and I am just waiting for the politicians to recommend it explicitly—is for none of us to go anywhere. Stay at home and save the planet. But that would be a craven retreat from all the social, professional and cultural interactions that unrestricted mobility makes possible—and which, since the Renaissance, have made great cities the centres of intellectual progress.

Even devising a way of making a living while never leaving your house would not absolve you of your ecological guilt, because you’d still be making liberal use of the technology that has transformed domestic life. The working classes, having only discovered in the last generation or two the comforts of a tolerable degree of warmth and plentiful hot water, are now being told that these things must be rationed or prohibitively taxed.

Never mind that the universal presence of adequate heating has almost eliminated those perennial scourges of the poor—bronchitis and pneumonia—which once took the very young and the very old in huge numbers every winter. Never mind that the generous use of hot water and detergent, particularly when combined in a washing machine for the laundering of bed linen and clothing, has virtually eliminated the infestations of body lice and fleas (which once carried plague) that used to be a commonplace feature of poverty. Never mind that the private car, the Green Public Enemy Number One, has given ordinary families freedom and flexibility that would have been inconceivable in previous generations.

If politicians are planning restrictions on these “polluting” aspects of private life, to
45 be enforced by a price mechanism, they had better accept that they will be
reconstructing a class divide that will drastically affect the quality of life of those on
the wrong side of it.

It is certainly possible that the premises advanced by environmental campaigners are
sound: that we are in mortal danger from global warming and that this is a result of
50 human activity. Yet when I listen to ecological warnings such as these, I am
reminded of a doomsday scenario from the past.

In his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, Thomas Malthus
demonstrated, in what appeared to be indisputable mathematical terms, that
population growth would exceed the limits of food supply by the middle of the 19th
55 century. Only plague, war or natural disaster would be capable of sufficiently
reducing the numbers of people to avert mass starvation within roughly 50 years.
This account of the world’s inevitable fate (known as the “Malthusian catastrophe”)
was as much part of accepted thinking among intellectuals then as are the
environmental lobby’s warnings today.

60 Malthus, however, had made a critical conceptual mistake: he underestimated the
complexity of human behaviour. Population did not go on increasing at the same
rate; it responded to economic and social conditions. Moreover, he had discounted
the force of ingenuity in finding ways to increase food supply. In actual fact, the
introduction of intensive farming methods and the invention of pesticides
65 transformed what he had assumed would be the simple, fixed relation between
numbers of people and amount of resource. He had made what seemed to be a
sound prediction without allowing for the possibility that inventiveness and
innovation might alter the picture in unimaginable ways.

Warnings of catastrophe come and go. Whatever their validity, we cannot and
70 should not ask people to go back to a more restricted way of life. The restrictions
would not work anyway, because they are impracticable. If they were enforced, they
would be grotesquely unfair and socially divisive. If we really are facing an
environmental crisis, then we are going to have to innovate and engineer our way out
of it.

PASSAGE 2

*Leo Hickman, writing in The Guardian newspaper in May 2006, explores the ethics of leisure-
related flights.*

IS IT OK TO FLY?

I am desperate for some good news about aviation and its environmental impact.
Please someone say that they got the figures wrong. I have always loved the
freedom and access flying brings—who doesn’t?—but in recent years I have
descended into near-permanent depression about how to square this urge with the
5 role of at least trying to be a responsible citizen of the planet. Travel is one of life’s
pleasures, but is my future—and, more importantly, that of my two young
daughters—really going to be one of abstinence from flying, or at best flying by
quota, as many environmentalists are now calling for?

I recently travelled to Geneva to attend the second “Aviation and Environment Summit” in search of, if not answers, then at least a better indication of just how damaging flying really is to the environment. (The irony was not lost that hundreds of people had flown from around the world to attend.)

Speaker after speaker bemoaned how the public had somehow misunderstood the aviation industry and had come to believe that aviation is a huge and disproportionate polluter. Let’s get this in perspective, said repeated speakers: this is small fry compared with cars, factories, even homes. Why are we being singled out, they cried? Why not, they said, chase after other industries that could easily make efficiency savings instead of picking on an industry that gives so much to the world, yet is currently so economically fragile?

But even in this self-interested arena a representative from the US Federal Aviation Administration caused some sharp intakes of breath from the audience by showing an extraordinary map of current flightpaths etched over one another on the world’s surface. The only places on Earth that are not scarred by routes are blocks of air space over the central Pacific, the southern Atlantic and Antarctica.

It seems, therefore, that we who avidly consume cheap flights do indeed have to face a choice. Do we continue to take our minibreaks, visit our second homes, holiday on the other side of the world and partake of all the other forms of what the industry describes as “non-essential” travel? Or do we start to ration this habit, even if others elsewhere in the world quite understandably will be quick to take our place on the plane? My view is that flying will simply have to become more expensive. Only by becoming more expensive will ticket prices start to reflect more closely the environmental impact of flying—the polluter should always pay, after all—and therefore drive down demand. It’s easy to forget how good we’ve had it in this heady era of low-cost carriers—but surely the good times must end.

A remedy such as carbon-neutralising our flights is a nice, cuddly idea that on the surface is a positive action to take, but planting trees in Thailand or handing out eco-lightbulbs in Honduras is no substitute for getting planes out of the skies. It also carries the risk that people will think “job done” and simply carry on flying regardless.

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