

X115/101

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2009

FRIDAY, 15 MAY
1.00 PM – 2.00 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, John Simpson, looks back with surprising affection on an occasion when he was cheated.

ROBBED IN PRAGUE

I have only once in my life been robbed by experts.

It happened in Prague, the capital of the old Czechoslovakia, a few days after what everyone now calls the Velvet Revolution of 1989, when the Communist government was overthrown without a drop of blood being shed. Six years earlier, in 1983, I had made a
5 film there about the way the secret police treated political and religious dissidents, those people who disagreed openly with the government. After that, not surprisingly, I was banned from the country.

When I flew in this time, without a proper visa, I gambled on the fact that the revolution
10 was just starting, and I hoped the government officials I encountered would realise that things were about to change. At Prague airport the man behind the immigration desk looked at me and my passport very long and carefully. Then he examined a message which had come up on his computer. Presumably it told him I was “an enemy of the state”. In the end he made up his mind to ignore it. He stamped my passport, and gave me a little wintry smile. I was back.

15 The next few days were wonderful. I had a ringside seat, from which I could watch the end of the whole unpleasant, rotten police state which the Russians had created in Czechoslovakia. Still, it took some time to introduce a new system, and many of the old laws still applied. For instance, changing foreign money into the local currency, called crowns, still had to be done in the long-winded, expensive way of the past. I was short
20 of time, and so I decided to change my money with a tout on the street. That was still illegal, but I decided to take the risk.

I wandered down into the Old Town. Today this is the part that stays open until past midnight, but in those days the streets were quiet by seven-thirty. Most of the shops had closed. It was getting late to find anyone to change money. I walked up and down in my
25 expensive coat, looking exactly like what I was—a Westerner looking for a deal.

It worked. A man came out of an old house and walked beside me. He spoke quietly and looked straight ahead. “You want to change money?” he said in good English.

I said I did.

“How much?”

30 Two hundred dollars, I told him. That was a lot of money in Prague.

“I’m working on the house here,” the man whispered. “Come into the hall. It’s safer.”

I stepped into the hall. It was dark, but the light from the room with the workmen in it was enough for us to see to change money.

“So, two hundred dollars, that’s 140,000 crowns,” the man said.

35 I showed him my two bills of a hundred dollars each. He looked at them carefully, then handed them back to me and began counting out the Czech notes.

At that instant there was an explosion of rage, and a stocky man came charging down the stairs.

40 “Oh, no!” shouted the man who was counting out the money. “It’s my foreman! He’s a real Communist. Quick, give me the dollars. Here’s your cash.”

He shoved a thick wad of notes into my hand. “Run for it! He’ll call the cops!”

I ran for it. What if the authorities caught me? Even now, when Communism was collapsing, I could be in trouble. It would be embarrassing for me, and for the BBC.

45 And yet, even while I was running, something was working away inside my head. How come, if it was so dangerous to be doing a deal with a Westerner, the man had shouted out a warning to me in English? That, surely, would be proof to the foreman that he was up to no good.

50 I slowed down. No policemen were running through the streets in search of me. I stopped in an alley and pulled the wad of money out of my pocket. There were a couple of one-hundred-crown notes on the top. But the rest seemed less familiar. I had a hollow feeling in my stomach as I looked at them. These notes were all Polish. There was huge inflation in Poland at that time, and the whole thick wad of money I held in my hand was worth about five dollars. If, that is, you could find anyone who would accept them.

55 I had been well and truly robbed.

I turned round and ran back. In the old house the workmen were just packing up, and I spoke to one of them. Yes, there had been a couple of men hanging around. They were probably up to no good, he said. One of the men had gone upstairs, though neither of them was supposed to be there. They weren't working on the house, or
60 anything like that. They just came in off the street. He'd heard one of the men shouting. Had they stolen something from me?

"No, not at all," I said, "nothing like that. No, I'd just been asking the way."

"Oh, asking the way," said the workman with a little grin. "I hope he told you. So why did you come back?"

65 I didn't say anything and walked off. At first I was angry. Two hundred dollars was quite a lot of money to have lost. I felt such an idiot.

As I walked, the spires of the old city shone in the damp evening air. Everything seemed so beautiful. Now this country that I loved so much was free, and I had had the privilege of watching it happen. That was worth vastly more than two hundred dollars.

Adapted from John Simpson, *Twenty Tales from the War Zone*

QUESTIONS

Marks Code

1. (a) Explain **in your own words** why “the *Velvet* Revolution of 1989” (line 3) was unusual. 1 U
- (b) Why does the writer include the expression “those people who disagreed openly with the government” in lines 5–6? 2 A
2. The writer says he “gambled” (line 8) when he flew into Prague “this time”.
Explain **in your own words**
 - (a) why he thought he might **not** get into the country on this occasion; 1 U
 - (b) why he thought he might get in. 1 U
3. Explain the humour of the sentence “Presumably it told him I was ‘an enemy of the state’” (lines 12–13).
Your answer may focus on **content** or **tone**. 1 A
4. Explain what is surprising about the expression “wintry smile” (line 14). 2 A
5. Comment on the effectiveness of the **metaphor** or **image** “a ringside seat” (line 15). 2 E
6. The writer knew that changing money unofficially was “illegal” (line 21).
Write down the expression from earlier in the paragraph which introduces the idea of this activity being against the law. 1 U
7. Look at lines 22–25, and then explain in your own words what problem the writer came up against when he tried to change his money. 1 U
8. Explain how one example of the writer’s **word choice** in lines 26–36 shows that the Czech man changing the money wanted to be cautious. 2 A
9. Lines 37–41 convey a different mood from the quiet caution shown in lines 26–36.
 - (a) Show how an example of the writer’s **word choice** effectively conveys this new mood. 2 E
 - (b) How does the **punctuation** of the words spoken by the Czech man contribute to this mood? 1 A
 - (c) How does any feature of the **sentence structure** of the words spoken by the Czech man match this mood? 1 A
10. The writer tells us “something was working away inside my head” (line 44).
Using your own words as far as possible, explain fully what was worrying him. 3 U
11. (a) According to lines 49–55, how had the man swindled the writer? 3 U
- (b) How did the writer feel when he realised he had been swindled, and how does he emphasise this? 2 A
12. The workman asks the writer if he has had something stolen from him (line 61).
What does the workman think of the writer’s answer, and how can we tell? 2 U/A
13. From line 67 to the end of the passage, the writer reflects on this experience with pleasure.
Why is this feeling quite understandable or appropriate? 2 A

Total (30)

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

[Open out for Questions]

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