

O level 2015 TEXT 2

This narrative piece skilfully builds up the account of the writer's bus journey by recounting his reactions to some of the characters on the bus and to the changing landscape outside. The overall structure is carefully controlled and, by the end, the careful reader has understood some of the unexpectedness and the vastness of the country.

5.

- (i) Repetition of 'he wanted to know' to show that the man asked about many things.
- (ii) The writer uses a list which ends with an ellipsis (...) to indicate an endless list.

Note: The strongest candidates were able to notice **features of language** used by the writer. (Style and technique of writing)

6. 'demanded' (Some students forgot the single quotation marks.)

Note: Almost all candidates answered this correctly

7.

- (i) 'incessant questioning' shows that the engineer was asking questions continuously/non-stop
- (ii) 'would no doubt have enlightened me, (if I had been foolish enough to ask him.)' shows that the engineer was a know-it-all/ flaunting or showing off his knowledge
- (iii) 'shut up and poke his long nose elsewhere' shows that the engineer was meddling/ interfering/ a busybody [don't use 'nosy']

Note: A number of candidates were successful in identifying the correct phrases, but then gave **similar generic explanations** for all three, often **repeating in slightly varying words** that the foreigner talks too much and so is irritating. But the description is carefully constructed so that each paragraph adds another, **different facet of the irritation**, and the strongest candidates were able to convey this with **more differentiated explanations** for each of the three phrases.

8. He refers to Marco Polo by his first name as if he knew him personally.

(Marco Polo lived from 1254 to 1324. He would not have known him personally.)

Note: Some just commented on the informal tone of the 'Oh?', **without adding anything specific**, while others were **misled by the term 'classmate'** and the reference to history books to suggest that the candidate had learnt about him at school.

9. (a)

From paragraph 5 the passage switches emphasis to the changing view through the windows of the bus and the writer's reactions to it.

(i) The word 'teased' made it seem like the road was playing a game of hide and seek, poking fun at those looking at it.

(ii) The road seemed to be an illusion like a 'mirage' is. It kept disappearing and appearing so those looking at it were not sure it was really there.

Note: Question 9(a) directed candidates to the image at the beginning of paragraph 5, that the road 'teased like a mirage', and asked in what two ways this expression is particularly effective. Many of the candidates conveyed their understanding of the core idea; rather fewer were able to explain what it seems like to the writer. A large number of candidates went too far into the paragraph and tried to relate the image to the following change of scene which is the focus of Question 9(b).

9. (b) (i) 'no bigger than toy models' (lines 29-29)

(ii) '(some) crawled like ants' (line 29)

10. There was a sudden/complete change in scenery. / The scenery had changed quickly/rapidly/in an instant. (The writer was not asleep.)

Note: The focus of the question was on the metaphor, which relates the series of 'pictures' seen through the bus window to the pages of a picture book. The majority of the candidates recognised the change of scenery. Some focused instead on the movements of the bus, or on the writer's weariness.

11. (i) 'surf' (A surf is the swell of the sea that breaks upon the shore. The foam, splash and sound of breaking waves.)

(ii) (Look at the dash that gives extra information.)

It shows that the various shades of green of the hills resemble the colours of the sea.

Note: Part (ii) then asked them to give one reason why this comparison is effective. Many candidates focused erroneously on the extent of the hills, reinforced by the writer's 'stretched as far as the eye could see', like the sea extending to the horizon. Some thought of the shape of the hills being like waves, reinforced by the writer's 'billowing'. But there is no suggestion that the hills were moving (like waves), nor any indication of the size or height of the hills.

12. (i)

The landscape is steep (and vast). (Look at the word 'precipitous' and 'clung on' as clues. 'Precipitous' is not 'precarious'. Some students thought it was the paddy terraces that they were asked to describe.)

Note: Many candidates found this question challenging. It required candidates to pay close attention to the detail in order to visualise the overall picture. Part (i) pointed out that the writer describes the paddy terraces as 'obstinate' and clinging on 'grimly', and asked what this description suggests about the landscape.

- (ii) To show that they appeared very small as they were far away from him. ('Short' not accepted.)

Note: Part (ii) asked why the writer uses the word 'dwarf' to describe how the paddy terraces appear to him. Only the strongest candidates appeared to have visualised the situation sufficiently clearly to realise that the terraces are a long way away from the writer in the bus. Even those who had commented in their response to Question 11 on the vast extent of the hills, which is in the immediately preceding sentence, did not seem to make the connection here.

13

- (i) an interesting companion
- (ii) investigating the unfamiliar
- (iii) building for the future

(Look at topic sentence at the end of the paragraph 'A brand new highway...the countryside'. The question is asking about the bus journey. He didn't actually stop to watch the people work. Paragraph points at quickly changing scenes, rather than watching for an extended period of time.)

- (iv) a peaceful interval

Note: A substantial majority of candidates did not choose the correct answer, ignoring the clear tone of what the passage says about the foreigner and his questioning, and despite having already answered Questions 5, 6 and 7 which explored his irritating nature. Many also had apparently not realised that in building up his account of the bus journey, the writer moves deliberately from impressions of the past to thoughts of the future, an important theme in the structure of the passage.

TEXT 3 (This is a factual article about rice production)

14i Rice is thought to be the descendants of wild grasses that grew along the shore of lakes in India. [1]

14ii Genetic research has shown that rice was first grown domestically in China. [1]

Note: Paragraph 1 summarises some of the history of rice growing. Question 14 asked in which ways, according to this paragraph, India and China were associated with the origins of rice. Most answered correctly. The majority conveyed their understanding that genetic research has shown that rice was first grown domestically.

15 'flooding is not mandatory' (line 14) [1]

Note: Question 15 asked which group of words tells us that it is not essential for the fields to be under water to grow rice. **The correct answer to this depended on knowing the meaning of 'mandatory'**, and the majority of candidates recognised this successfully

16. 'edible' (line 18) [1]

17a i. It is a long process . [1]

From passage: 'time-consuming'

ii. It requires many workers. [1]

From passage: 'labour-intensive'

Note: Question 17(a) asked candidates to use their own words to identify two problems associated with the process of 'laying the rice out in the sun'. Almost all candidates were able to give the first issue; some, **however, had difficulty with the second**. Only a few forgot to use their own words.

17b 'continuous flow dryer' (line 27) [1]

NB: Must have 'continuous'

Note: Question 17(b) asked candidates to give the example of modern technology which the writer says is used instead. Most candidates gave the correct answer.

- 18a i. It provides one-fifth of the calories we consume worldwide annually. [1]
ii. It prevents famines in some of the world's poorest places. [1]

Note: For Question 18(a), which asked for two pieces of evidence for the benefits, candidates had to recognise that **the first piece of evidence is stated in the passage three times in different ways**, but it is the same idea each time and could be credited only once. For the second piece of evidence **they had to find the idea of preventing famine.**

- 18b **Children who eat rice are susceptible to diseases like kwashiorkor.** [1]

Note: For Question 18(b), almost all candidates recognised the problems that come from eating only rice. Most candidates gave the words of the passage, but attempts in the candidates' own words were also credited.

19. Summary

1. soak the seeds first as rice requires plentiful water supply to grow
2. Rice is propagated in special seed beds so that the plants are easy to handle
3. Seedlings are planted out in paddies to keep out pests and weeds
4. Young plants left to grow in the sun till seeds ripen
5. Before harvesting, paddy fields are drained to make them accessible
6. Rice is then cut by hand (sickle) or machines (combine harvesters)
7. Rice is dried quickly to prevent mould formation
8. Once dried, rice grains are milled to remove outer layers
9. And polished to prolong its shelf life (white rice)

The majority of candidates made a reasonable attempt at the summary question. They had **more difficulty with the early points about growing the rice**, where the successive stages of seed/seedling/plant needed to be kept distinct, but they **generally reproduced more accurately the points about the processing**. There were very few irrelevant responses and almost all candidates worked from paragraphs 2 and 3 as directed. Most candidates wrote close to the 80 words required; in fact, many produced exactly 80.

The summary question asked candidates to summarise **the methods**, as outlined in the passage, which are **used to grow rice** and to **process it to make it ready for cooking**. The two parts of the question, the growing and the processing, **needed to be linked by the idea of the rice being ready to harvest. Not all candidates managed to convey this link.**

A particular difficulty in this summary, which was **a sequence of processes to be carried out, was the choice of verb form**. The given opening words required an infinitive form to follow the 'to'; weaker candidates tended to continue with this, which perhaps they thought of as an imperative, but the effect was often closer to note form. **Stronger candidates realised that subsequent sentences needed a complete verb form in a different construction**. The better summaries were those from the candidates who had given thought to **using a range of constructions to achieve succinctness, while using their own vocabulary as much as possible.**