



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1115/02, 1120/02

1123/02, 1125/02

Paper 2 Comprehension

October/November 2008

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for comprehension.

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Benjamin

- 1 The alarm clock buzzed into life. Benjamin resisted the temptation to switch it off and snuggle back into the pleasant dream he had been enjoying. He experienced the familiar nagging feeling of anxiety as he thought of another day's teaching ahead of him. Still, it was nearly the end of the working week, he remembered, as he reluctantly got out of bed.
- 2 It had seemed only logical that Benjamin should become a teacher of literature, as his grandmother had been. She had filled his boyhood imagination with tales of wonderful students, and sacrifices had been made by his parents to ensure his education. He had a passion for literature, nurtured by a series of excellent teachers. 5
- 3 However, thinking of the senior class in general and of Ahmed in particular, Benjamin realised that his preconceptions of the job were different from its reality. He admitted to himself that yesterday's poetry lesson had been a disaster. How confident he had been, remembering the hours of preparation that had produced the worksheets. His own love of poetry could not fail to win over the students; he had been sure of that. 10
- 4 But Benjamin had scarcely finished reading the poem to the class when Ahmed's hand shot up. 'Sir, I don't understand this.' This was accompanied by a smirk to the rest of the class, who giggled obediently. Ahmed was the entertainer and the classroom was his theatre. Benjamin continued the lesson with dogged determination, but more unnecessary questions from Ahmed were followed by his exaggerated coughing fit. Gone was Benjamin's aim of inspiring these young people with an appreciation of great literature. Instead, Ahmed had stolen the show. Benjamin was unwilling to involve the school principal in disciplining Ahmed because, in his mind, it would be an admission of failure. It was apparent that a sensible strategy in dealing with Ahmed was crucial. Clearly, he was the class's role model and, if they took a lead from him in poor behaviour, then they might do likewise if he behaved well. 20
- 5 Still recollecting the events of yesterday, Benjamin began the short walk to school. Then there was another problem, he thought. Just because he had happy memories of his former teachers did not mean it was a good idea to accept a teaching post in his former school. He thought of Mr Tullen, the physical education teacher, who had appointed young Benjamin as the school cricket team captain, and of old Mr Hemu, the science teacher, who had astonished young Benjamin with his bunsen flames and test tubes. Now, however, these men were just some of the teachers who treated Benjamin as an over-grown student rather than as a colleague. 30
- 6 And what about Miss Siti, the school librarian? She had reminded Benjamin of his days as a student at the school and, although there was no doubting her fondness for Benjamin, her action had the opposite effect to the one intended. Certainly, she remembered him as the backbone of the school debating club, but her list tailed off into unfortunate anecdotes, like the school award ceremony when he tripped as he went forward to shake hands with the school principal. What else could Benjamin do but respond to Miss Siti's cues and manage some hollow laughter? Miss Siti continued to reminisce, clearly oblivious to Benjamin's true feelings. 35
- 7 After Benjamin's first lesson that morning, with the junior class, he made his way to the staffroom for coffee and, seeing Miss Siti approaching from the opposite direction, swerved to avoid her. Later, he made his way back to the classroom, his stomach lurching at the prospect of the senior class, who, however, settled down unusually quickly to the task Benjamin set them. Even Ahmed was writing furiously without, for once, scowling at him. 40
- 8 As Benjamin went over to the bin to sharpen his pencil, he was surprised to see a movement among the papers inside. At first it was an almost imperceptible twitch, so that Benjamin wondered if he was deluding himself. Suddenly, the paper lifted gently upwards. Benjamin glanced at the class to gauge their reaction, but they were all busy writing. Then Benjamin 45

froze – there was no mistaking the hissing sound which was coming from the bin. Rooted to the spot, his heart racing, Benjamin watched in fascinated horror as two small eyes, like tiny black beads, stared back at him from under the paper. The class continued to write; from somewhere in the distance came the high-pitched whining sound of a grass-cutting machine; more closely could be heard the unmistakable voice of Mr Tullen on the cricket pitch. Suddenly, a head darted from the paper, with a quick, graceful movement from side to side, as if its owner were looking for something specific. This was enough for Benjamin to confirm what he had suspected for several long seconds – there was a snake in the classroom! As if to offer further proof to Benjamin of its presence, the snake’s tongue shot out, a thin ominous black dart, causing Benjamin’s heart to race even faster. 50 55

9 By now, Benjamin was not the only person in the classroom aware of the unexpected guest. Ahmed was pointing at the bin. Here was a transformed boy; there was no smirking now. ‘Sir, sir... there’s a snake in there!’ he stammered. At that point, chaos ensued. Even those students who attempted at first to appear nonchalant picked up Ahmed’s mood and rose to their feet in alarm. Amidst all the confusion, the fact that Ahmed’s entire body was shaking in terror was not lost on Benjamin. 60

10 ‘Right, class!’ said Benjamin sharply. ‘Sit down and be silent.’ All the students, including Ahmed, complied with his request. ‘It is crucial that we do not infuriate our guest,’ Benjamin continued, hoping to maintain a dignified but assertive demeanour. Wide-eyed and solemn, the students nodded, a model of a well-disciplined class. ‘He is warm and comfortable where he is, but we must avoid disturbing him by loud noises or sudden movements.’ Benjamin realised that he was enjoying exactly the sort of relationship with his students that he had read about in his teacher-training textbooks. 65 70

11 In a flash, Benjamin noticed on the classroom shelf the box containing the worksheets which had been used in yesterday’s disastrous lesson. Aware of the necessity for prompt action, he removed the worksheets from the box, remembering yesterday’s attempts by Ahmed to thwart his plans. Pushing that thought from his mind, he crept over to the bin with the empty cardboard box. There was neither sound nor sight of the snake now – it was almost as if it had never been in the classroom at all. Benjamin hesitated – would the box be broad and deep enough for the job he planned for it? With a quick flick of his wrist, he covered the bin with the box. Relief flooded over him as he realised that the box was, fortunately, large enough to cover the top of the bin completely. He picked up the bin with his right hand, fervently hoping that his plan would work. Holding the lid in place with his left hand, he nodded to Ahmed to open the classroom door. With uncharacteristic meekness, Ahmed followed the instruction, and watched as Benjamin strode purposefully along the corridor to the school exit, carrying the class visitor and his new found home. Leaving his burden in the empty playground, Benjamin made his way to the school caretaker’s office to report the matter and have the snake removed. 75 80 85

12 Wondering what mischief Ahmed might have planned for his return, Benjamin hurried back along the corridor. The class sat in total silence, exactly as he had left them. Ahmed was still standing at the door. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘you were brilliant just now. You’re our hero. And I’m sorry about everything... you know...’ Benjamin reflected that this was what teaching was all about. ‘Tomorrow will be the first day of the rest of my life,’ he thought happily. 90

BLANK PAGE

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (UCLES) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

University of Cambridge International Examinations is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.