



# Cambridge International AS Level

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ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER

8021/23

Paper 2 Comprehension

October/November 2021

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

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## INFORMATION

- This insert contains all the resources referred to in the questions.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

## Material for Section A

### Introduction

Jackson and Xavier are good friends and have known each other since school. Now in their thirties, they have met up to discuss Jackson's recent decision to try to climb Mount Everest. An extreme sports fanatic, he has accomplished many daring feats since he left school at 18 and joined the army, including scuba-diving on wrecks, paragliding, free-fall parachuting, base jumping and extreme skiing. He has now set his sights on climbing the highest mountain in the world. Xavier is a doctor and works for a children's medical charity called Sunshine.

The friends are having a conversation about the proposed adventure:

**Jackson:** So, what do you think – amazing idea, right?

**Xavier:** Well, I know you love extreme sports but I have to say I'm not sure.

**Jackson:** Really? I thought you would think it was a great idea. You know how I love to push myself.

**Xavier:** Yes, of course, but ... Mount Everest? Didn't you see the recent news article about the number of climbers who get seriously injured by avalanches up there? Every year hundreds of climbers lose fingers, toes and noses through frostbite – others break limbs. Not to mention the fact that a certain number actually die on the mountain every year.

**Jackson:** I did see that news article but it's only a small number each year. There's a lot of training to do to prepare for it and this reduces the risk. I've skied in dangerous mountain locations for years. I know how to cope with an avalanche.

**Xavier:** Really ... have you ever been in one? I read the weather on Everest can be unpredictable and there is only a small window of opportunity to climb to the top. From what I could see from the article it's also a crowded experience. Not so much 'top of the world' as 'back of a queue' to get to the peak. Also, there are lots of reports about the expeditions polluting the environment – leaving litter and human waste which sherpas\* spend weeks cleaning up after the climbing season is over.

**Jackson:** Yes, I know these arguments but there's nowhere else like it. It'll test me to my limits and I was hoping to raise money for Sunshine by doing it. Surely that is a good enough reason to try?

**Xavier:** Of course, the money raised would be welcome, but didn't you see the report about having to walk past climbers who had died up there and had been left frozen on the hillside? Are you OK with doing that? I'm not sure the charity would want to see you take that risk. I'm not sure you've understood the moral ...

**Jackson:** Well ... I have to say I'm surprised at your reaction! You know that I love adventure and there are few places on earth that will challenge me like Everest. It's the chance of a lifetime!

**Xavier:** Listen, I know you love the sense of adventure, and potential risk gives you a buzz. I'm just not sure it's a good idea. What about the training? How will you manage that? And isn't it very expensive to do it – travel over there, acclimatise, fund the equipment, get insurance? What happens if you go through all the effort and expense and find you can't get up there because of storms? Have you thought about how disappointed, not to mentioned how broke, you'd be?

**Jackson:** Yes, I have thought about those things. There are companies that organise this. I know there are significant expenses but I'm hoping to get a sponsor to help with that. I thought that raising

money for a children's charity would be a good reason for the local media company, Telnote, to sponsor me. I am sure that I could raise loads of sponsorship for Sunshine as people will want to support me taking on such a challenging experience to help sick children. I am just about to write a letter to the boss of Telnote. He's a keen climber too. His company has supported extreme sports enthusiasts in the past ...

### **Additional information**

1. Mount Everest is 8848 metres in height and part of the Himalayan mountain range.
2. Every year hundreds of climbers make it successfully to the top of Mount Everest. Since 1953, when the first successful ascent was made, over 4000 climbers have reached the peak.
3. More than 300 climbers have died on the mountain since the first successful ascent in 1953. Many climbers' bodies have been left there as it is too difficult and dangerous to retrieve them.
4. The national press has been full of articles recently about whether climbing the mountain is becoming unsustainable for moral and environmental reasons.
5. The Chinese authorities recently closed their Everest approach camp due to the problem of food and human waste remaining on the mountain. The low temperatures mean it does not decompose easily.
6. At Telnote, the boss's wife, who is also the finance director of the company, is a prominent supporter of environmental charities.
7. Jackson suffered altitude sickness on previous climbing expeditions.
8. Telnote does a lot of business in China and the Far East.
9. Millions of dollars have been raised for charity by climbers sponsored to ascend Everest.

\* Local people who help guide climbers to ascend Mount Everest. They come from villages in the foothills of the Himalayas. The mountains are a sacred place for them.

## Material for Section B

### The remote community living off-grid

On a remote peninsula in the northwest Highlands of Scotland is the small off-grid community of Scoraig.

Accessible only by boat or a five-mile walk, the residents of Scoraig live in relative isolation, partly powering their homes and school with wind power. Among the inhabitants are those looking after cattle and sheep, a violin maker, a Russian translator, volunteers and a part-time postal worker. Several residents were recently interviewed and described their life and the reasons for choosing such a place as home.

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*Lisa, 54*

'I have been here 23 years. I don't think it is very remote, really, in the sense that people think about remoteness – but it is inaccessible, which I think is appealing. It's by no means idealistic and it has its own hardships of the wind and the rain. You are exposed to the elements – but that's good also, as you are aware of what the weather is doing all the time and you're very much in touch with nature and the elements and life. We're an ageing population but I guess the bulk of us are between 40 and 65. There are not so many people who are younger than us, apart from the kids, obviously. I am the postperson three days a week, sub-contracted by the Royal Mail. I am responsible for everybody's important post and for transporting it across the lake as dryly and as safely as possible. I have a sea-taxi business, which runs a regular sea-ferry service, but a lot of people have their own boat and there is also a communal boat.'

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*Hugh, 65*

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'I came here in 1975. I was brought up in Edinburgh and my background is in maths and physics. When I first came to live here, we didn't have electricity in the first few years. Wind seemed like an obvious way to make power and was a very exciting way to produce renewable energy. I was active earlier than a lot of others with wind power. There was a time when if you typed "wind power" into a search engine, my web page was on the first page that came up – but those days are long gone. Through the internet, I have a large international network of design enthusiasts who follow, like and continue to use my design approach and teaching courses. I live here because it is very beautiful and I like the off-grid lifestyle. It's not about moral superiority – it's more to do with having more control over your own hands-on environment. It's attractive to me to grow my own vegetables and make my own power rather than be part of a big machine.'

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*Luke, 36*

'I grew up on the Isle of Wight and didn't leave until I was 17. After my apprenticeship, I built aluminium catamarans for offshore wind farms and large blades for wind turbines – but I was after something that was more manageable and easier to build for myself. A friend of mine stumbled across this place. He was travelling across Ireland and Scotland and came across Hugh's name and that he was building windmills. So that was how I found out about here and it inspired me. My family also used to come up to Scotland on holiday, although we only moved four years ago. It was good for us to move up here – no regrets really. The biggest downside is the high school being in Ullapool, so the kids will have to go and stay away all week and that will be difficult for us as we are a close family. As the children get older we want them to have the independence to build their own dwellings here. They might all want to move away and

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do their own thing – but it is a great stepping stone to have their own land and it's a big achievement from a young age.'

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*Chisa, 28*

'If you speak to anybody here, they will all say that they are getting away from the value system where your peers tell you how you ought to behave, which doesn't resonate with everybody. They are trying to create their own idea of a perfect world. I'm here for more selfish reasons – I don't want to be surrounded by other people's judgements. I have now been here for five years. We came here as a couple, with our son, but we have now split up, though still both live here. Every year, I return to Russia and leave my son with my ex-partner. I love it because I enjoy the ballet I can do there and I prefer the Russian mentality, the toughness and resilience to change.'

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*Bev, 79*

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'My wife Gill and I came up here for a holiday and we got hooked on the idea of living here. For one thing, I'd always wanted to build my own house and Gill liked the idea as there was a good primary school here for our three children. Many of the roads were single-track and we didn't have reliable motors on our boats. There was only one telephone box and no mobile phones. When we had visitors, they'd write a letter to us and we'd tell them to drive on to the pier in their car and we'd look out for them with our binoculars. I got a job as the postman when we moved up here and did that for eight years, by which time I had got a reputation as a violin maker, so I gave up the post. Most people go to a violin school to learn how to make violins, but I had a young family at the time, so I couldn't afford that. I taught myself from books and other makers – I used to go to exhibitions and competitions. I won a national violin-making competition in 1986 that gave my career a boost. The census records in 1871 say there were over 380 people here, all Gaelic speakers.\* You can see just how many ruins there are around here and each one would have been supporting a large family. It was worrying a few years ago when the primary school population went down to two but now it is seven and a lot of babies are on the way too.'

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\*Gaelic is a Celtic language spoken mainly in the Highlands and Islands of Western Scotland.

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