
Edexcel IGCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE A

Paper 1: Non-fiction Texts and Transactional Writing

Set A

Paper reference 4EA1/01

Source booklet

Do not return this booklet with the question paper.

The sources that follow are:

Text One: *The Longest Eighteen Minutes*

An original text written for this mock paper

Text Two: From *The Explorer's Daughter* by Kari Herbert

Part 1 of the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology

Not reproduced in this booklet — use your own copy of the anthology

Section A: Reading

Read Text One below, and Text Two in your own copy of the anthology, then answer Section A in the Question Paper.

Text One: The Longest Eighteen Minutes

In this extract, the writer describes her first experience of swimming in the open sea.

The eleven of them were already on the slipway¹ when I arrived, and the moment they saw me they beckoned me over, grinning. Someone shouted a welcome across the wet concrete. A woman I had never met put an arm around my shoulders and announced to nobody in particular that they had
5 a new recruit, and the rest of them laughed and cheered as though I had achieved something remarkable simply by turning up.

I had not achieved anything. I had driven forty minutes in the dark, parked badly, and spent the last of that drive rehearsing excuses I could use to go home again. I am forty-one years old. I have swum in
10 swimming pools my entire life, competently and without incident. I had never once swum in water that moved.

The woman with the arm was called Bridie, and she had, I learned later, been doing this every Saturday for nineteen years. She handed me a bright orange tow float² and showed me how to clip the strap around my
15 waist. "In case you fancy a rest," she said, kindly, in the tone of somebody who has never once fancied a rest. The others were pulling on neoprene gloves and swapping information about the tide, the wind, a pod of porpoises somebody had seen off the point on Tuesday. They discussed the sea the way you might discuss a colleague you have worked alongside
20 for decades: fondly, warily, without any illusions.

The briefing took two minutes. Stay inside the line of yellow buoys. Keep your head up on the way out, because the swell comes from the east and you will not see it coming. If you feel anything unusual in your chest, stop immediately, roll on to your back and float, and raise one
25 arm. Somebody will reach you.

It was the word "immediately" that lodged itself somewhere behind my ribs and would not shift. Nobody says "immediately" about something trivial. I thought about my son, who is eight, and who stands at the school gate every morning arranging his face into precisely the
30 expression I was now failing to arrange mine into.

We walked in together. There is a thing that experienced swimmers say about cold water, which is that you should let it come to you gradually, and there is a thing the sea actually does, which is arrive all at once. It emptied my lungs. My first breath was not a breath at all but a
35 short, ugly gasp, the sort of noise you make when someone drops a glass behind you. For several seconds I simply stood there, thigh-deep, entirely unable to remember what swimming was, while the group moved past me with the unhurried patience of people for whom this sensation

stopped being interesting sometime around 2009.

- 40 Bridie appeared beside me. "Breathe out," she said. "Long and slow. Out, not in. Your body will stop arguing in about ninety seconds."

I breathed out. I made myself move.

- 45 The first hundred strokes were the worst of it, and I want to be accurate about this rather than brave, because I think the accuracy is the useful part. My hands hurt within seconds, a hard, bright, specific pain that had nothing at all in common with the dull ache of a long pool session. My breathing came in short uneven pulls that I could not lengthen no matter how firmly I instructed myself to. Twice I stopped, trod water, and delivered a small internal lecture on the difference
50 between panic that is happening to you and panic you are actively choosing, which is a distinction I found convincing on land and considerably less convincing sixty metres out.

- Somewhere past the second buoy a cramp took hold of the arch of my left foot, sudden and vicious and entirely uninterested in my schedule. For
55 eight or nine strokes I swam lopsided, favouring the good leg, until it released as abruptly as it had arrived. Then the swell picked up, and I discovered the particular indignity of being lifted and dropped by something enormous that has no interest whatsoever in whether you are ready. More than once the water rose high enough that the group vanished
60 completely, eleven experienced swimmers reduced to nothing but the occasional flash of orange, and I understood, briefly and clearly, how easy it would be to be alone out here.

And then, somewhere around the halfway buoy, something shifted.

- I would like to tell you it was courage. It was not courage. It felt
65 considerably more like exhaustion winning a long argument with fear. My strokes lengthened without my instructing them to. My breathing found a rhythm and kept it. The cold was still absolutely there, unignorable, but it had stopped being the only fact about my situation.

- For the first time since walking in, I looked up properly. The light was
70 coming over the headland in a thin band of pale gold. The water underneath me had turned the colour of hammered metal, and the surface, close up, was doing something intricate that I had never noticed from a beach in my life. A cormorant went past at eye level, very fast, apparently on business.

- 75 By the final stretch I was no longer at the back. Two of the group had dropped back to swim on either side of me, which I assumed at the time was concern and understood afterwards was simply procedure. Nobody swims alone here if they do not have to. It is not kindness, exactly. It is closer to arithmetic.

- 80 We came out together, all eleven of us, and stood on the slipway shaking and laughing in roughly equal measure while Bridie distributed tea from a flask of frankly heroic proportions. My fingers were too numb to register the temperature of the cup. I did not especially mind. Somebody

85 checked the time and told me I had been in the water for eighteen minutes.

Eighteen minutes. I have sat through longer meetings that achieved less. It remains, and I say this having examined the claim from several angles, the proudest eighteen minutes of my year.

¹ slipway: a sloping ramp leading down to the water, used for launching boats

² tow float: an inflatable float attached to a swimmer by a waist strap, used for visibility and buoyancy

Text Two: From *The Explorer's Daughter*

Text Two is not reproduced in this booklet. Use your own copy of the Pearson Edexcel International GCSE English Anthology, Part 1, and read the extract from *The Explorer's Daughter* by Kari Herbert.

You will need the anthology to answer Questions 4 and 5.

End of source

Sources

Text One is an original text written for this mock paper. It is not extracted or adapted from any published source. Text Two is an anthology text and is not reproduced here; students refer to their own copy of the anthology.