

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER 1

PART B2

Reading Passages

8:30 am – 10:00 am (1½ hours)
(for both Parts A and B)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Refer to the General Instructions on Page 1 of the Reading Passages booklet for Part A.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PART B2

- (1) The Question-Answer Book for Part B2 is inserted in this Reading Passages booklet.
- (2) Candidates who choose Part B2 should attempt all questions in this part. Each question carries ONE mark unless otherwise stated.
- (3) Hand in only ONE Question-Answer Book for Part B, either B1 or B2, and fasten it with the Question-Answer Book for Part A using the green tag provided.

PART B2

Read Text 4 and answer questions 42-62 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B2.

Text 4

Graham Norton: “The letters I can never forget”

- 1 [1] As the Telegraph newspaper’s longstanding agony uncle, he has heard it all over the last decade. Comedian and chat show host Graham Norton reveals why his personal brand of tough love often proves effective.
- 5 [2] I’m not sure who it was that once claimed there are no problems, only solutions. All I can say is they’ve never opened my Pandora’s postbag of woes. Broken hearts, family troubles, work traumas, embarrassing body functions, I’ve seen them all, in a manner of speaking, and sometimes, let me tell you, it’s a pretty disturbing sight.
- [3] And as a result, I do feel as though I have my fingers on the throbbing pulse of the Telegraph readership and a soothing ice pack at its pounding temple.
- 10 [4] Am I properly qualified for this vocation? Well not really, my calling has been thrust upon me. But I am ready to serve, smelling salts in one hand, a sticking plaster for the soul in the other.
- [5] Let me make no bones about it: my tough love diagnosis isn’t for everyone and I’m aware that there are those who have written to me in the expectation of a kind word and a couple of aspirin and have instead received a tongue-lashing and a slap in the face.
- 15 [6] But I’m not sure the doctors’ Hippocratic Oath was tailored to some bloke huffing because he was going to have to share the stage during his best-man speech. And in a way, it’s this sort of self-obsessed whingeing that makes the genuine, urgent cries for help stand out all the more.
- 20 [7] Because there are ‘problems’ and there are problems. And then, I’ve discovered, there are problematic problems. Sometimes, where it’s clear that my correspondent is so low or so grief-stricken by bereavement they could be suffering from clinical depression, I see my role simply not to make it any worse and gently refer them on to an expert who can give them what they need.
- [8] Then there are letters like the one when a librarian from Manchester says, “I am going to marry a young Italian farmer half my age and my friends all think I’m crazy,” and I think to myself well, they are right, probably – but not definitely, because, who knows, hers could be the one young Italian farmer scenario that ends happily ever after. So all I can do is point her in the direction of the potential pitfalls and wish her luck.
- 25 [9] Some issues come up again and again and it’s difficult to rummage around in my medical bag and come up with a prescription that is constructive and original. When someone is lonely or distressed about being single, the obvious, banal advice is to tell them to get out there, find an interest and meet like-minded people.
- [10] But then part of me thinks there are some individuals who just don’t make friends, and they are lonely. And some individuals never find a partner and wish they could, and beyond that there’s not much more to say about it.
- 30 [11] That would be a bit brutal though, so I sort of skirt around it and hope that the letter to me will be a starting point, a springboard to some sort of positive action.
- [12] On a physician-heal-thyself note, I have found that thinking about other people’s troubled lives has stopped me being so reactionary and self-righteous, which, believe you me, is a good thing.
- 35 [13] Telegraph readers, I know you are perceptive enough to take my wisdom in the spirit in which it is intended (pass the whisky). I really want to help and I think I do, but, in truth (and I think you all know this) as often as not you need to search deep inside yourself for your own solution (and no, before you ask, bile doesn’t count).
- [14] I understand some of you feel battered and bruised, like you’ve been in the wars. But you haven’t. Unless you actually have, in which case you should really call the Healthcare Advice Line.

40 [15] As for the rest of you, go on, out of the clinic with you. You might be wounded, but you're walking, so pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile. Chuckle at adversity, wink at disaster, laugh at your problems. God knows everybody else does.

Serious to silly, two letters from my postbag

Dear Graham,

45 [16] I'm an American getting ready to take up a job offer in Sweden. I'm 19 and have no idea what I want to do with my life long-term, but I still have an idea in my head that if things don't work out with this move I'll have failed in some way. I'm going all in for it, however, because it's a chance that doesn't come around a whole lot.

[17] Still, I've never been away from home for this long before and I'm terrified. I know this is the right move for me. But I love my family and I don't want to leave them behind. I have friends in Europe but it's a pretty big place. What advice can you give me?

50 *David, Illinois, USA*

Dear David,

[18] You have a ticket to Sweden in your hand. You aren't embarking on the first manned mission to Mars. So take some deep breaths and calm down. Obviously things will be very different when you get to Sweden; but that is why you are going.

55 [19] I'm not saying it will be all plain sailing. There will be lonely nights when you miss your friends and family, but this is 2020 so you have the luxury of calling or Skyping them. Before long you will be having so much fun you wish the people back home could be with you to share it all.

60 [20] The most important thing to remember is that you are 19 and no decisions you make now are forever. Come to Europe and explore all it has to offer, knowing that you could still return to the States and build a whole life and career there. You are a very lucky young man. You have opportunities and time, two things that most people long for.

[21] I would also strongly suggest that when things are proving challenging in your new home, you don't give up at the first hurdle. Persevere and make sure that if or when you leave it feels like a decision you are in charge of rather than simply running away.

65 [22] This is an exciting time for you, full of anticipation, but also trepidation. Feeling fear doesn't mean that you aren't brave. Doing something that frightens you is the very definition of courage. Go and embrace the differences. There may be ketchup on the table – but don't forget to try the lingonberry jam!

Dear Graham,

70 [23] The past 40-odd years have for me been an often fruitless search for a barber who can do a good job on my challenging hair. Now I have found one with whom I am perfectly satisfied, but while he cuts my hair, he continually picks his nose. I would appreciate your advice.

P Smith, Bracknell, UK

Dear P,

75 [24] What comes out of the top of your head? Steel wool? But you aren't driving a car or operating heavy machinery, so next time, why not do this thing I've discovered when confronted with something I don't want to see – shut your eyes! A longer fringe may also help.

END OF READING PASSAGE

Sources of materials used in this paper will be acknowledged in the *HKDSE Question Papers* booklet published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority at a later stage.