

**Pearson Edexcel International GCSE**

# **English Language B**

**Paper 1**

Wednesday 10 June 2015 – Afternoon

**Extracts Booklet**

Paper Reference

**4EB0/01**

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**PEARSON**

## Text One

### The Northern Lights

by Margo Fallis

During the autumn and winter months in the northern areas of the world, the sun sends out its particles into the galaxy. When they collide with Earth's atmosphere, it is usually near the magnetic north, causing a display of lights known as the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights. The midnight sky lights up with beautiful shades of green, pale blue and sometimes pink. The light ripples back and forth across the heavens giving the lucky few who are able to witness them a display of colour and beauty.

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I grew up in a small town in the highlands of northern Scotland. Winter nights are long. The sun goes down in early afternoon and comes up late in the morning. My bedtime was at eight o'clock at night, no matter if it was summer or winter. This was strictly enforced by my mum and there were no arguments. One night my mum was called out of town to the city, to visit her sister. My dad would be looking after us. "Cheerio, Mum," I called, waving at her as the taxi whisked her away. I smiled. With Mum gone, Dad would surely let me stay up late. He did during the other times she'd been gone. So, when eight o'clock came, I begged and pleaded with Dad to let me go outside with my pals.

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"It's freezing out there," he said. "What on earth do you want to go outside for on a night like this?"

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The truth is, I didn't care what the weather was like. It was so rare that I was able to go out at night that I was willing to brave rain, sleet or snow. "We want to go and get some fish and chips. There's no school tomorrow. Can I please?" I asked.

"All right, Jamie. Go on, but don't tell your mum!" he warned.

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We went to the fish and chip shop and stuffed ourselves with deep-fat-fried haddock, greasy chips and peas. It was delicious. I think the taste of the food, mixed with the taste of freedom, made it all the more enjoyable.

We came out of the restaurant and I looked up at the sky. "What is that?" I asked my pals.

"It's only the Northern Lights. Don't tell me you've never seen them before," Alex teased.

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The truth of the matter was that I hadn't. I'd always been confined to my bedroom before it was late enough for them to be seen. I lied, "Oh, I just forgot what they were called. Of course, I've seen them before." I don't think either of my pals believed me.

We ran down to the seashore. The waves rolled in, small and gentle, but I couldn't take my eyes off those lights that danced across the sky. They were magical, supernatural, and amazing to me. We gathered seashells, threw stones into the water and gathered driftwood on the beach. We then found a dry spot on the sand and lay on our backs, gazing up at the Aurora Borealis. It was one of the best nights of my life.

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The next day my mother returned and I immediately went back to my scheduled bedtime. The only difference now was that when I was supposed to be in bed sleeping, I'd sit at the window and watch for the Northern Lights to appear. Some nights I'd sit for hours.

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The years went by and I left the highlands, moving to southern England to work. My job, wife and children kept me busy and I didn't get back to Scotland often. When I did go, it would be in summer.

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One day, one of my boys came home from school and asked me about the Northern Lights. I decided it was time to take my family back home to see them. Even though it was winter, we drove up to the highlands to visit their gran and granddad.

First, we stopped at the fish and chip shop, which was still there, even after all these years. We filled up on fish and chips and burgers. We ran down to the sea and gathered driftwood. After finding several pieces for their mum, we lay on our backs in the sand and watched the light display.

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"This is so cool, Dad. Thanks for showing us this," the boys said.

I felt a tear trickle down my cheek. "It's good to be home," I whispered.

**Text Two****The Cornish Total Eclipse 1999****by Martin J Powell**

The eclipse started at around 9:57 am, but to look at the people around us you would have no reason to think that anything unusual was happening. However, we couldn't see the sun because of the clouds and only had our watches to guide us in the progression of events. The start of the eclipse seemed to pass unnoticed by most.

The sky to the west was darkening and it began to feel a bit colder. The light level had now dropped to a point that seemed unnaturally low, a dimness that could not be achieved by thick cloud alone. I thought the colour of the light was orange-yellow, but my friend later disagreed. By now it was obvious to everyone that we were heading towards totality (when the sun is totally hidden by the moon).

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With the sky now darkening noticeably, I glanced at my watch in the fading light and I could see it was 11:11 am. Totality was almost here!

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Darkness fell very suddenly. Most people remained silent during the darkness, which I sensed was darker than anyone had expected it would be. One of the sheep was bleating in the field behind, evidently confused, and there was an eerie stillness in the air. I glanced at my watch again and I was interested to see that I could still just about read the time. After a minute and a half, my friend said, 'Is it getting lighter?' I looked towards the distant hills and I could see that the light was returning quickly. The suddenness of the light changes had surprised us all. It seemed as though someone had been operating a light switch for the whole sky: a sunset and sunrise speeded up a million times. I had not sensed any movement in the moon's shadow, as one would expect, as it passed from west to east over us and this is one thing I felt I had missed out on. But then, perhaps, I had just not been observant enough. Or maybe the cloud masked the whole effect anyway.

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It was at this point that I began to feel that I had missed out on something really big. We could see the changes in the light and the effect on the landscape, but it was frustrating that we had been unable to see what had been causing it. The image of the eclipsed sun was still just that – an image in my mind and strangely hard to connect with what I had just witnessed beneath the clouds. As one astronomer later put it, I felt we had been

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cheated. The sense of anti-climax for me was immense. It was a feeling of something not complete, of many unanswered questions. And I also had a nagging feeling that I might have had a better view if I had been just a few miles further south.

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After daylight had returned, people slowly made their way back to their cars and no doubt exchanged their feelings about what they had just witnessed. Reactions to the totality over the next few days were interesting to hear. One observer described the atmosphere as almost primitive, of humanity crowded on a hilltop watching nature's awesome spectacle. Patrick Moore (a famous astronomer) had never witnessed a total eclipse under cloudy skies, so it had been a new experience for him. He thought the sudden fall in light had been eerie, as though we had all been transported to another world for a few minutes. Another person described the event as 'humbling', a description with which I would certainly agree.

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In conclusion, I can only say that, despite my overall disappointment at the events of the day, I did feel privileged to have stood under the moon's shadow at the precise moment it had passed. In a sense, it is as though I was there by special invitation of the Moon itself. When the eclipse was over, I felt a great respect for astronomers' ability to predict precisely the exact second when the eclipse would happen. For just that one day, *everyone* was able to share this experience, and their sense of wonder was awakened.

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