



GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

UNIT 2

**Reading and Writing: Description, Narration and
Exposition**

**Resource Material (SPECIMEN PAPER)
For use with Section A**

TEXT A shows information from the Australian Tourism Board.

Visitor profile to Australia in 2012



47% repeat visitors
68% of total arrivals are for leisure
45-59 years largest demographic
\$7,036 average spend
47 nights average stay
Oct-Jan and **May-Jun** peak booking period
Dec-Feb and **Jul-Aug** peak travel period

TEXT B is an extract taken from Bill Bryson's travel writing about his experiences in the different states in America, a book called 'The Lost Continent'. Here he describes the scene of a recent forest fire in Nevada.

The road was steep and slow and it took me much of the afternoon to drive the hundred or so miles to the Nevada border. Near Woodfords I entered the Toiyabe National Forest, or at least what once had been the Toiyabe National Forest. For miles and miles there was nothing but charred land, mountainsides of dead earth and stumps of trees. Occasionally I passed an undamaged house around which a firebreak had been dug. It was an odd sight, a house with swings and a paddling pool in the middle of an ocean of blackened stumps. A year or so before the owners must have thought they were the luckiest people on the planet, to live in the woods and mountains, amid the cool and fragrant pines. And now they lived on the surface of the moon. Soon the forest would be replanted and for the rest of their lives they could watch it grow again inch by annual inch.

I had never seen such devastation – miles and miles of it – and yet I had no recollection of having read about it. That's the thing about America. It's so big that it just absorbs disasters, muffles them with its vastness. Time and again on this trip I had seen news stories that would elsewhere have been treated as colossal tragedies – a dozen people killed by floods in the South, ten crushed when a store roof collapsed in Texas, twenty-two dead in a snowstorm in the east – and each of them treated as a brief and not terribly important diversion between ads for soap powder and cottage cheese. Partly it is a consequence of that inane breeziness common to local TV newsreaders in America, but mostly it is just the scale of the country.

TEXT C is taken from a series of articles by the journalist Jon Krakauer who describes his feelings on an expedition to climb Mount Everest in May 1996.

I stood on the top of the world with one foot in Tibet and the other in Nepal. I cleared the ice from my oxygen mask and hunched a shoulder against the wind. I stared absently at the vast sweep of earth below. I understood in some detached way that it was a spectacular sight. I'd been fantasizing about this moment, and the release of emotion that would accompany it, for many months. But now that I was finally here, standing on the summit of Mount Everest, I just couldn't summon the energy to care.

It was the afternoon of May 10. I hadn't slept in 57 hours. The only food I'd been able to force down over the preceding three days was a bowl of Ramen soup and a handful of peanut M&M's. Weeks of violent coughing had left me with two separated ribs, making it excruciatingly painful to breathe. Twenty-nine thousand twenty-eight feet up in the troposphere, there was so little oxygen reaching my brain that my mental capacity was that of a slow child. Under the circumstances, I was incapable of feeling much of anything except cold and tired.

TEXT D is taken from an article published in the TES magazine about the challenges and benefits of organising school trips.



School trips can be particularly daunting for teachers, but the benefits are worth it

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Summer term for many teachers means taking children out of the classroom. For teachers this can be worrying, particularly if you have never organised a school trip before.

Whatever the destination, teachers agree that the benefits of taking pupils on a trip compensate for the worries. A report from Ofsted called *Learning outside the classroom* revealed that pupils' participation and achievement can benefit significantly from getting involved with activities outside the classroom.

While some schools are put off by financial and workload concerns, the report shows schools that have curricular provision classed as *outstanding or *improving have overcome these barriers so it's worth going the extra mile.

Careful planning is required, which can be time consuming, but involving other members of staff can make it easier for teachers to organise school trips. Any time spent planning is worthwhile as the benefits are immense. One teacher noted that, "It's a powerful experience to give the child."

Another teacher added, "Cost is a problem. But all children have to be able to go." She introduced a weekly savings scheme which helped pupils pay for a trip at the end of term. The cost of school trips can also be reduced by visiting places that are free of charge.

*The terms 'outstanding' and 'improving' are Ofsted classifications of school performance.

TEXT E is taken from a short story, 'The Shah of Blah', by Salman Rushdie. It is about a boy named Haroun and his father, Rashid, and his mother, Soraya. It is set in an imaginary country called Alifbay.

There was once, in the country of Alifbay, a sad city, the saddest of cities, a city so ruinously sad that it had forgotten its name. It stood by a mournful sea full of glumfish, which were so miserable to eat that they made people belch with sadness even though the skies were blue.

5 In the north of the sad city stood mighty factories in which (so I'm told) sadness was actually manufactured, packaged and sent all over the world, which never seemed to get enough of it. Black smoke poured out of the chimneys of the sadness factories and hung over the city like bad news.

10 And in the depths of the city, beyond an old zone of ruined buildings that looked like broken hearts, there lived a happy young fellow by the name of Haroun, the only child of the storyteller Rashid Khalifa, whose cheerfulness was famous throughout that unhappy metropolis, and whose never-ending stream of tall, short and winding tales had earned him not one but two nicknames. To his admirers he was Rashid the Ocean of Notions, as stuffed with cheery stories as the sea was full of glumfish; but to his jealous rivals he was the Shah of Blah. To his wife, Soraya, Rashid was for many years as loving a husband as
15 anyone could wish for, and during these years Haroun grew up in a home in which, instead of misery and frowns, he had his father's ready laughter and his mother's sweet voice raised in song.