

Comprehension Level 13

SECTION A COMPREHENSION

Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A

How cutting down trees can help the environment

Some forest conservationists believe that you need to reduce a dominant species of tree in order to protect other species.

It's frequently suggested that culling is an appropriate method for maintaining populations of animals and controlling numbers of invasive species. For example, such measures have been taken to control the grey squirrel, which has stolen habitat and food from the red squirrel. Large numbers of deer can also cause destruction of natural habitats.

In these situations selective culling is a method of maintaining a manageable level.

The same argument can be applied to trees in forests.

This type of conservation is judged by some as a misguided attempt to save what is seen as the most important, pretty or useful of the species, with little regard for the natural progression of wildlife and the environment.

However, we must consider how this method attempts to restore balance within the environment, not just allowing the survival of the fittest and fastest to adapt, but of a well-rounded spread of species that all rely on each other for survival, including us!

The natural balancing of our woodlands was successfully maintained by various mammals in the forests. Many of these mammals no longer exist or lack the freedom they once had. Years ago, larger animals would naturally bring down trees and eat specific varieties of tree and vegetation. These mammals helped to keep habitats varied and dynamic because they roamed freely. However, since the intervention of humans, specific native and non-native species either dominate woodlands or are restricted in their movements.

As a result, conservation groups have started to remove areas of dense woodland, replacing it with wildflowers, heather and other different species. This strategy

has had a positive impact on woodland ecosystems.

It can seem incredibly destructive to cut down a 2-year-old oak or birch, but leaving them to flourish would result in fewer habitats for wildlife. The silver birch self-seeds very efficiently which causes overcrowding. Dense woodland then prevents sunlight hitting the woodland floor, which reduces the variety of vegetation that can survive. It is this vegetation that allows a habitat for insects and subsequently birds to thrive. Blue tits and nightingales are commonly found around thickets that have few trees, as these birds have easier access to their food sources, insects and berries.

Read **Text A**, *How cutting down trees can help the environment*, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on this question paper.

Question 1

(a) Give **two** examples of animals that have been culled, according to the text.

(1)

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:

(i) 'appropriate method' (line 1):

(2)

(ii) 'Large numbers' (line 4):

(2)

(c) Re-read paragraph 3, ('This type of conservation ... and the environment.'). Give **two** reasons why people might be against cutting down trees.

(2)

(d) Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5, ('However, we must ... in their movements.').

(i) Identify **two** reasons why cutting down trees is important.

(2)

(ii) Explain how mammals once helped to maintain the natural balance in the woodlands.

(3)

(e) Re-read paragraph 7, ('It can seem ... insects and berries.').

Using your own words, explain why birds like blue tits and nightingales are **not** usually found in dense woodland areas.

(3)

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B

Japanese cherry blossom season

The season in which Japanese cherry blossom trees blossom is a time much enjoyed and celebrated by many people.

Once I experienced cherry blossom season in Japan and shared in an immense rush of carefree happiness. When the first branch with five blossoms unfolded in Okinawa, in Japan's southernmost tip, the nation erupted in glee. Party season was officially on!

Along with the excited Japanese, I swooned over explosions of soft pink flowers.

Flower-viewing picnics flooded parks and religious sites, while companies dispatched junior staff at dawn to save prime spots for office parties. Traditional Japanese rice balls were staple festival food. Squid skewers sizzled on grills, as laughter grew louder into the night. Paper lanterns illuminated trees, glowing like incandescent bonfires.

Celebrations could get out of hand and I have read about city councils enforcing curfews, but I witnessed how little this abated enthusiasm. Even the shops were infatuated. Consumerism in Japan is astonishing. Shelves were flushed pink with soft drinks, cakes, biscuits, ice-cream, textiles, clothing, stationery and homewares. One fast-food outlet produced a hamburger on a pink cherry-scented bun with pink mayonnaise.

The Japanese have celebrated cherry blossom season for over a thousand years and it inspires art, music and poetry to this day. A traditional blossom song is still taught in schools, while '5 centimeters per second', a 2007 anime film, takes its title from the gentle movement with which blossom falls. It is a bittersweet tale of a young man and woman who meet in spring, then become separated over the years.

For the Japanese, cherry blossom season is a cyclical marker of time. They can reflect on the revolving carousel of family, friends, lovers and colleagues

over a lifetime of basking under powdery canopies. As I discovered, these delicate blooms emit an innocent blush while wielding a mighty nostalgic punch.

Japan's recent industrial growth has delivered dazzling technology and prosperity, but also environmental degradation that continues today. About three-quarters of Japan is mountainous and uninhabitable. Most people live in crowded cities in flat, coastal regions. Once a year though, Nature declares its sovereignty in the cities and bestows its gift of the year's biggest social and cultural event.

The jubilation lasts only one to two weeks. Warm weather coaxes buds out of hibernation, then ushers in rainstorms that knock the petals off. When the last petals drop in the most northern part of Japan the show is over.

Read **Text B, *Japanese cherry blossom season***, and then answer

Question 1(f)

on this question paper.

QUESTION 1(f)

According to Text B, what makes the cherry blossom season in Japan so popular?

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form) and **use your own words** as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

'You have to jump,' our guide Maria says, holding out her arms in a circle the size of a manhole cover. Then she laughs impishly at our surprised faces and agrees to an alternative: climbing down the eight-metre steep bank of brittle shrubs and loose dirt.

Then we swim upstream, over fallen logs, to reach the pool below the crash of falls.

We are cradled in frothy, azure luxury – the best swimming hole I've ever been in.

A couple of hours later we are on a boat trip where we eat vegetable tacos as Maria

constantly spins round, showing us crocodiles on the banks. Howler monkeys groan

from treetops on either side of the river. We also pass a temple with dark tunnels where fruit bats huddle and squeak above us, and eventually reach a wide shaded area where 30-metre-tall trees share space with temples well over a thousand years old.

Once off the boat, Maria, who learned to hunt by bow and arrow as a child in the 1970s, leads us through the jungle, over root-laced trails – and occasionally off them. We pass over a series of log bridges, and ford one river by foot. I quickly see how over-packed I am. Some of our party are gamely walking barefoot with just one small bottle of water each. My bag, meanwhile, is filled with four water bottles, some chocolate cookies, hard-boiled eggs, some electrolyte powder, and a waterproof jacket I was never going to need. Then, in the first 15 minutes, my strap breaks.

But it's a fun walk. After two hours, at Maria's brisk pace, we reach a camp at a shady crest above a reed-filled lagoon just as dusk approaches. Crocodiles are out of sight on the muddy beach below. Nearby is the start to a new home Maria is building with materials she hauls in on foot.

Maria has built a fire and mentions that a TV crew came to shoot a 'how to survive the jungle' show once, but a few of the participants quit after getting infected by some ivy.

'But it's easy to survive here,' she insists. To demonstrate, she chops off an arm-size

branch of a native tree, letting us sip the sweet, running sap. She whittles the bark and boils fragrant shavings of the branch, soon producing a bubbling gold broth. 'Jungle coffee,' she says. I have two cups' worth. It's delicious.

The darkness is all-encompassing now. Above, stars flicker gently through the shadowy outline of treetops. I wonder when we'll be starting back, and what sort of lurking life will come out at night, but Maria is distracted. She catches and hands over a sudden visitor – a beetle with fluorescent yellow-green lights that glow from its eyes like a penlight. Its head sharply clicks between three positions.

And then she starts leading us back in the dark.

Read **Text C, *Walking in the jungle***, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** on this question paper.

Question 2

Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

(a)

(i) The very loud noise of the waterfall.

(1)

(ii) Maria keeps turning around very quickly to point out crocodiles.

(1)

(iii) Some of the group bravely and willingly cross the river without footwear.

(1)

(iv) Maria walks at a quick pace.

(1)

(b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:

Howler monkeys groan from treetops on either side of the river. We also pass a temple with dark tunnels where fruit bats huddle and squeak above us, and eventually reach a wide shaded area where 30-metre-tall trees share space with temples well over a thousand years old.

(i) groan

(1)

(ii) huddle

(1)

(iii) shaded

(1)

(c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests what the jungle coffee was like.

Use your own words in your explanation.

To demonstrate, she chops off an arm-size branch of a native tree, letting us sip the sweet, running sap. She whittles the bark and boils fragrant shavings of the branch, soon producing a bubbling gold broth. ‘Jungle coffee,’ she says. I have two cups’ worth. It’s delicious.

(25)

SECTION B
COMPOSITION WRITING

Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A

eSports in the Olympic games?

eSports is the short name for electronic sports, where players play video games against each other with fans watching them. This article discusses whether eSports should be included in the Olympic Games.

eSports currently enjoys enormous attention and funding. Last year, the global audience for eSports grew by millions with global revenue for the eSports industry huge and still rising. In many countries, audiences pack stadiums and concert venues to watch teams compete against each other in a range of video game tournaments. People from around the world also watch from the comfort of their homes thanks to entire channels dedicated to streaming live footage of people playing video games.

Fans argue that eSports athletes are athletes in the real sense of the term – citing shooting, archery and dressage as examples of Olympic sports where the skills and talents of individuals are recognised. It takes dexterity, intelligence, reflexes and coolness under pressure to succeed in gaming. eSports athletes are legitimate competitors who happen to wield a joystick. How's that so different from a pole vault?

Experts on sports law are cautious: 'Many sports want to get Olympic recognition. It's a public demonstration to the world, and a surge of interest often follows. Although eSports is growing, that still doesn't necessarily make it widely accepted.'

eSports is young, its players and audiences are young. The dismissal of eSports, its sponsors argue, is just another example of older people scoffing at what occupies young people as 'fads' or unimportant activities. eSports is an opportunity for young people to take an existing passion, competitive gaming, and make something more of it, even earning a living from it – after all, this is often given as a reason to celebrate and support sports in general.

eSports, it is claimed, is the real deal. But arguments around popularity and difficulty only go so far. Becoming a prima ballerina is so difficult it's virtually impossible: as a sporting endeavour it is far harder than qualifying for the Olympics in any sport. Should dancing to *Swan Lake* be an Olympic sport? No. This activity knows to stay in its own lane.

There's a logistical problem too, one that threatens eSports as an Olympic event far more than narrow-minded traditionalists like myself. The different games played in various eSports competitions have definitive lifespans and age quickly. Games are frequently replaced by sequels and upgraded versions. It is an impressive effort to call playing video games 'eSports' and hope that saying it enough will convince people it is actually a sport. But, no. Moving a joystick simply has no athleticism, physicality or exertion – things that make something a sport. Competitive eating sounds good too, but no one is suggesting that features in the Olympics.

Text B

Resistance is futile: eSports is massive ... and growing

This text discusses the popularity of eSports.

Imagine a stadium full of screaming fans. Zoom in on the contestants, sweating from the intensity of the competition. This is not football, basketball or boxing. It's eSports, and the 'athletes' are headset-wearing, energy-drink-guzzling video-gamers. Couldn't happen? Think again.

More than 20 years after the first video game tournaments, top eSports tournaments now draw audiences that rival the biggest traditional sporting events; popular midweek live streams routinely attract more than 100000 online viewers. Massive global brands have weighed in as sponsors. Gaming is what every traditional sports league is desperate to become: young, global, digital and increasingly diverse. eSports is here. It is real. It is growing – and we have the numbers to prove it.

So how big is this gaming thing? Let us start with this: according to market research so many millions of people watched or played eSports that if the eSports nation were actually a real nation, it would be the fifth largest in the world. eSports has long been biggest in Asia. Now North America and Europe also claim tens of millions of eSports fans, with numbers growing by 21 per cent a year.

The most popular video-streaming site boasts 55 million users and is arguably the most important contributor to eSports' recent growth. It offers streams of games and tournaments, and access to gaming's stars. It's also where the next generation of would-be gamers post their own streams.

Apparently someone's watching.

Although the gamer stereotype is young, single, male and living in some sort of basement, the reality is that more than half of eSports fans are employed

