

IELTS

Ideas and Examples for IELTS Speaking

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Foreword

Dear Students,

Having taught IELTS in China for four years already, I'm here to help you understand that the IELTS speaking test is not as complicated as people seem to think. My aim with this book is to give you as many examples as possible (some kind of cheat-notes) to give you ideas on how YOU could answer the questions when your turn comes to face the examiner.

In writing, I would tell you: in this instructional textbook you will surely find that you won't need to recite a plethora of inexorably difficult words in order to achieve well on the exam. However, in speaking it means that you must keep things clear and simple-you don't need to use so many difficult words when you speak English!

Before you start reading the numerous examples for Part 1,2 and 3, it is essential that you read the Strategies section of this book as it will lay down the rules and explain to you what you must do and what you must avoid doing during the test.

Depending on your level, some answers might be too long for you but you can select parts of the answer, steal some ideas, and then make them your own.

Remember that the IELTS speaking test is based on communication, which means that you need to be interesting and clear. Don't use words you are not extremely familiar with.

"I understand the question but I don't know what to say!"= Too many students in my classes tell me they don't know what they could say to express themselves (especially in Part 2 and 3). This book will give you many suggestions on what you could say as well as show you how to fully develop your answers. The result is that you .will finally be able to express your ideas like a native English speaker would.

Remember, however, DO NOT RECITE the answers that are given to you in this book. You might want to learn one or two sentences because they are well-put-together, but the idea is for you to read the answers offered in the book, think about the meaning, and then create your own.

I am sure you will find this book useful while preparing for the IELTS test.

I hope you can enjoy studying and improving your English as much as I took pleasure in writing this book.

Remember that practice makes ... improvement. Wishing you all the success you deserve!

Best from Jeremy Chiron

Acknowledgements

Thanks to every student who joined my classes and provided the idea for this book. I enjoy teaching IELTS because it is fascinating to hear what you have to say about life in China.

I'd also like to thank Liu Hongbo and Li Ran from Beijing IELTS for making the publishing of this book possible, and Anne Meredith for going over my writing and providing her American perspective and expertise on this project.

I want to thank my parents who have always supported me and encouraged me to be curious and spontaneous. I now want to encourage my students to do the same. An affectionate thank to Tang Xiaojiao who has played a very important role in my life in China, especially during the creation of this book..

Although I've nearly forgotten, I've been reminded to offer a particular word of gratitude to my dearest Sugar. Your devotion and support have comforted me in the lengthy process of publishing this book, and your sassy quick-wit will undoubtedly be an inspiration for my next edition. I would not dream of completing it without you.

The opinions expressed in the sample answers are not necessarily my own or even similar to my own.

Good luck to all the students who strongly desire to improve their English.

Jeremy Chiron

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Who Is the Author of This Book?

—An Overview of the IELTS Speaking Test (Part 1& 2)

PART 1

1. What's your name please?

My name is Jeremy Chiron; it is spelled C-H-I-R-O-N.

2. *Where do you come from?*

I was born and raised in a small town located in central France, about one hour outside the city of Lyon. To give you a better idea, from Paris, Lyon is a five-hour drive south, towards Switzerland. My area is a quiet region, with vineyards covering the hills. It's very peaceful. It usually makes Chinese people smile when I tell them my hometown only counts 800 people.

3. *Do you work?*

Yes, absolutely. I've been a teacher here in China for the past 4 years. Wow, 4 years already! It's hard to believe how time flies! I work in a training center called Beijing IELTS, and obviously I teach students how to get ready for this test. I usually teach the speaking part of IELTS, but occasionally I help students with their writing too.

4. *How long have you been a teacher?*

I've been teaching for 5 years now. As I told you: 4 years in China. I've worked in different training schools and also 2 years at Fujian Normal University. And before coming to

Fuzhou, I was working as a French teacher in Australia. I spent a year teaching both primary and high-school French in Perth, Western Australia. It was a wonderful first experience in a picturesque background. Perth is such a stunning city! The school where I used to work overlooked pristine beaches. It was hard for students to focus!

5. Why do you like your job?

I guess I was born to teach. I am not shy and I enjoy talking to anybody who shows a little curiosity. Through my job I get to meet many different kinds of people, and I deal with every single age group, which is awesome (= great)! In class, I always try to teach practical things. I think this is why students enjoy my lessons. As a foreign language teacher, my job is

to facilitate students' learning, and in order to do this, I must give them as many examples as possible while making them talk as much as they can. It's a challenging job because Chinese students are not used to opening their mouths and giving their own points of view on things, but it is also very rewarding when it works. In addition, I get to tell my students about where I grew up in Europe; and I can share stories from my experience back in the States and Australia. Since students who take IELTS want to go overseas, they usually have lots of questions about life abroad. On top of this, as a teacher, I appreciate the fact that students in China are hardworking and well-disciplined: it makes my job much easier. It sounds natural for young students to behave, but actually it's not the case anymore in most Western countries.

6. Where did you study?

I got a Master's in Education from the University of Lyon III. I studied there for 5 years, and I got to go on exchange at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania as a junior in college. This was another turning point in my life. You know, an Ivy League school, excellent teachers and classmates. It was an invaluable privilege for the young student that I was. I majored in American History and Literature there.

PART 2

Tell me about your experience as an English learner.
--

- . Started in middle school: lots of grammar+reciting words
- . Went to the US at the age of 15: exchange program for one year: Rotary Club
- . Small town: immersed in English+no Internet+limited international phone calls
- . Took 3 months to get used to speaking and reacting English=started dreaming in English
- . The importance of making friends with locals+practice. If you have to speak, you will!

Okay, well, I started learning English at the age of 11 when I entered middle school in France. I clearly remember my first English teacher. She was a young lady who had just graduated from a teachers' college but she was extremely patient and clear in her explanations. As a result, I enjoyed studying this foreign language immediately. For the first two years, we did a lot of grammar, and of course we had to recite a lot of words in order to build up our vocabulary. I have always been good at learning things by heart, so I guess it was not a big problem for me, and my results were quite satisfactory in her class.

I studied English conscientiously all the way through school, because it seemed to come naturally, you know, pretty easily to me. At 15, my mother encouraged me to present myself at an interview with my school's headmaster in order to apply for a position as an exchange student in America. Although I was the youngest candidate at school, the

principal picked me. And before I could realize it, I was on my way to Washington State, in northwestern U.S. The program was sponsored by the Rotary Club.

I ended up in a small town of 5 thousand people called Colville. And it's definitely the best thing that has ever happened to me. I was immersed in American culture and language for a whole year, and it was without a doubt an eye-opening experience. At the time in 1997, we didn't have the Internet, and making international phone calls cost a lot of money, so I barely spoke French for a whole year, and my English improved dramatically.

I was speaking English on a daily basis, and it took me 3 months to fully get used to communicating in this language and to reacting in English. I got there late in August, and in December I stopped looking up words in the dictionary, and that's about when I also started dreaming in English.

I would recommend that anyone who's going to study overseas join some local sports teams and other social organizations in order to make friends and get to use the language as much as possible. They say that practice makes perfect, but I disagree: practice makes... improvement. But it's the only way to get considerably better. We all learn a language if we HAVE TO speak it and even a simple-minded person will learn if he or she has no other choice but to use the language.

Later on, I came back to France and decided to specialize in English and education. Because I had acquired all the foundations in the U.S. , I was able to concentrate on more specific vocabulary and to work on my writing style. It's always difficult to speak a language perfectly well, and there is always more to learn, but it's definitely possible to learn enough to keep a conversation going. I guess that's what IELTS is all about.

10 Strategies for the IELTS Speaking Test

- 1** Rule #1: Don't Be Boring !
- 2** Rule #2: Describe ! Give details !
- 3** Rule #3: Develop + Connect !
- 4** How to Prepare
- 5** Know What to Expect from the Test
- 6** Be Clear about How the Examiner Will Assess Your Level
- 7** Learn how to plan for Part 2
- 8** Three Language Tips
- 9** Master the Most Useful Words for the Test
- 10** Avoid Some Common Mistakes

1 Rule #1: Don't Be Boring!

1. The speaking module of the test is based on communication.

Keep the conversation going. Whenever you talk to somebody, you like to have your questions answered fully, don't you? Well, here it is the same, except that you are the one answering questions this time: questions about yourself or things that you have experienced. GIVE YOUR POINT OF VIEW.

2. You need to BE INTERESTING!

Would you like to study overseas?

___ "Maybe..."

How often do you read the newspaper?

___ "Sometimes"

Are you a student?

___ "Yes..."

Do you have a mobile phone?

___ "Of course..."

THESE ANSWERS ARE UNACCEPTABLE!!!!!!

Check Rules#2 & #3: describe and develop!

3. DON'T BE BORING!

Keep in mind that examiners are going to interview MANY, MANY students in one day. They do not want to ask you "Why?" and "How?" all the time. You should make their job easier by giving complete answers. In other words, DON'T BE LAZY! DON'T BE BORING!

4. DO NOT RECITE SOME ANSWERS YOU HAVE PREPARED AT HOME !

That's just boring ! And the examiners are trained to perceive it when a student repeats something by heart. They will try to trick you if you are trying to recite. BE SPONTANEOUS ! Plus, when you get to Australia or America or wherever you are going abroad, you won't be able to recite when talking to people. STUDY SMART, PRACTICE SMART !

5. Your voice can help you sound interesting!

English is a lively language, with emphasis (stress) on syllables and words. Use your voice to pass on your feelings. You can stress the important words to express emotions. This will make your speech sound more spontaneous and natural. I hate it when students speak in a very flat voice for every answer. Imagine someone saying the following sentence with a dull (=boring) voice: WHAT A SHAME !

"I like Xiamen because it is a beautiful city. The beach is gorgeous and there are so many parks too."

The test is based on communication (I can't emphasize this fact enough !), so INTERACT ! In the word interact, there is the word "ACT", which means you should NOT BE PASSIVE.

6. USE BODY LANGUAGE too.

Body language could help you to make things clear for a few questions. The "laowai" might better understand you if he literally sees what you mean.

7. DON'T BE TOO SHY.

Nowadays too much shyness indicates a lack of confidence.

2 Rule #2: Describe! Give details!

The IELTS speaking module is actually very short: around 12 minutes. You should try to GIVE PRECISE ANSWERS in order to show off your vocabulary and fluency.

“I’m from Fuzhou.” WHERE IS
FUZHOU LOCATED?

“I’m “student.” WHERE DO YOU
STUDY? SINCE WHEN?

“I like the weather in my hometown.” WHY? WHEN?

GIVE INFORMATION = BE INTERESTING!

By doing so, you will realize you can talk at length, and this will give you confidence. You don’t need to use very long sentences. Short ones are okay, but USE COLORFUL + EXACT WORDS! Learn how to DESCRIBE EVERYTHING. It is just practice. The more you describe, the faster you will realize the same words always come up:

If you talk about PEOPLE :	If you talk about PLACES :	If you talk about PAST EVENTS :
Considerate	stunning	memorable
thoughtful	impressive	unforgettable
kindhearted	breathtaking	challenging but...
helpful	spectacular	...rewarding
generous	picturesque	We had a lot of fun!
optimistic	pleasant(=nice)	=We had a ball
enthusiastic	peaceful=quiet	=We had a blast

You will see that in this book I will not give you so many big words to learn. However, when it comes to these 7 words for these 3 groups: you should REMEMBER THEM and you should LEARN HOW TO USE THEM! They work in every situation !

Example:

PEOPLE:

- Let me tell you about my father: he's extremely considerate and thoughtful. For example, ... In addition, he always worries I don't have enough money to spend at university. He's so generous.
- Yao Ming is a great athlete, but he's also, very generous and thoughtful. He always gives to charity.
- My English teacher is very helpful. In addition, he's always enthusiastic and optimistic with us. He gives us energy and confidence.

PLACES:

- I climbed Huang Shan in May. It was hard but the view up there was spectacular: really impressive !
- Yunnan Province is a stunning region. The mountains are so impressive, and the food really makes your mouth water. The rice fields and the forests were absolutely picturesque: what a memorable trip !

PAST EVENTS:

- When I was 9, I climbed the Great Wall. It was unforgettable because it's such a spectacular monument!
- Two months ago, we celebrated my mother's birthday. It was a memorable party and everyone had a blast because...
- I studied very hard to graduate from high school. It was challenging but my hard work was rewarded when I got admitted to Xiamen University. I was so excited! My parents organized a memorable dinner.

3 Rule #3: Develop + Connect!

“How are you today?”

___ “I’m fine, thank you.”

When the examiner asks this question, most students simply answer that they are fine, but this is boring! Everyone says the same: it’s not original, and it’s too short! You are missing a great opportunity to show the “laowai” your English is much better than this!

In order to be interesting and to give details, you need to develop your answers. ALWAYS GIVE MORE info, and be precise. CONNECT YOUR SENTENCES with these linking words:

...and...
...but...
...so...
...because...

Example:

How are you? (=How are you doing?)

I’m fine, thank you, and you?	= YOU ARE BORING!
I’m doing well, thank you. But I must admit that I feel a bit nervous (=stressed=tense). because this is my first time taking this test, and it is extremely important to me.	= YOU SPEAK ENGLISH

For most IELTS questions, you will have more than one thing to say. **LEARN HOW TO USE:**

...in addition...	=and...
...on top of this...	=and what's more...
...as a result...	=so...
...however...	=but
...on the other hand...	=but
...although...	=but

Example:

I love my hometown for many reasons. First of all, I was born and raised here and all of my relatives and most of my friends live here. So I feel at ease in Fuzhou. In addition, I find the weather here in the south very pleasant because it's warm all year round. On top of this, the food here is stunning. It's a mix of colors and flavors. It's so tasty. I highly recommend the sea food to you! And although many people complain about the traffic, I know it's not as bad as in many other cities, and they're working on building a subway here. However, it won't be ready before another 8 years, but the city is definitely modernizing.

You will find hundreds of similar examples in this book. The linking words will always be bold.

4 How to Prepare

By Yourself

- 1. Read as much as possible:** news articles on the Internet on a daily basis, IELTS textbooks, magazines, anything and everything written in English.
- 2. Work on your listening:** because if you don't understand the questions, you can't answer them! Watch movies with English subtitles (NO CHINESE!), listen to the BBC on the Internet, and get some material for IELTS listening.
- 3. Read this manual slowly and carefully.** Take notes if needed. Highlight the new words or the structures you find useful.
- 4. Talk to yourself, especially for Part 2 of the test. Speak out loud.** Don't worry about making mistakes. You should be more concerned with fluency and the vocabulary you use in your answers. Whenever you realize you can't say a word in English, paraphrase using other words to express the meaning you are looking for. Later on, you can look it up in the dictionary and learn new vocabulary.
- 5. Prepare 5 points (5 main ideas) for as many Part 2 topics as possible.** Once you figure out how to plan these ideas, you will realize it's a similar process for most topics. Once you have your 5 points, you develop 2 or 3 sentences for each of the 5 ideas, and you will find out it takes you 2 minutes: perfect! Practice again and again until you feel comfortable (See page 20).
- 6. Time yourself for Part 2. You only have 2 minutes.** When time is up, the examiner will interrupt you. The more Practice you do at home, the better you will get at time management. Two minutes go by fast. Make sure you don't repeat yourself though (hence

the importance of Planning your 5 ideas). Don't forget to use words like:

First ...
In addition...
On top of this...
However...
In the future....

7. Read as many Part 3 questions as Possible (and the answers in this book) in order to avoid surprises. Practice answering using the linking words “In addition...On top of this... However...” (Refer to Rule # 3.)

8. Make a Plan for yourself or follow the Plan given to you in this book.

9. Go to an IELTS training center, and ask to have your peaking level assessed by a teacher. It should not take the teacher more than 5 minutes to find out what your level is.

.If you are estimated a band-4 student, you need 3-4 months of intensive work to get to 6 Points.

.If you are estimated a band-5 student, you need 2-3 months of intensive work to get to 6 Points.

.If you are band 6 already, you need 2 months of intensive work to get to 7 Points.

With A Partner

In order to improve your speaking, YOU MUST SPEAK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ! Most students worry too much about the mistakes they might make, instead of focusing on pronunciation, clarity and fluency. Speak to a partner, a classmate, your mother, anyone whose English level is similar to yours, and make sure that your partner understands what you are saying.

1. Get in pairs, and ask each other questions. This book gives you almost a thousand questions categorized in different sections. Jump from one topic to another. You need at least 40 minutes of pair work in order for the practice to be efficient. Remember: the more, the better !

2. USE ENGLISH ONLY ! It's your chance to practice, and you already have all the questions given to you in this book. If you don't understand what your partner is saying, ask him/her to rephrase in English once again. Pretend to be the examiner. It will be fun, and most important, very useful !

3. Surprise each other with unexpected questions. The IELTS speaking module could be about anything and everything. You never know what is going to come up. So definitely surprise each other ! Open the book at random, and ask your partner the first question you see. Encourage your classmate to develop his/her answers. Make sure he/she explains everything clearly (Why? How?)

4. Focus on particular question types: Ask "How often...?" questions for 10 minutes. Ask "Why...?" questions for 15 minutes. Concentrate on one structure and hammer it into your brain ! Drill, drill, drill ! Check the Question Types right after this section.

5. Focus on the PAST TENSE for Part 2: get some topics about your childhood or whatever is related to the past (something difficult you did well; a trip you took; a gift you received...). Ask your partner to answer, and interrupt him/her every time you notice he/she doesn't use the past tense.

6. Go to English corners organized at Beijing IELTS and in other training centers all over your city. Go with a partner just in case the teacher in charge organizes pair work during the session.

7. Make sure you understand what your partner is saying. Pronunciation is fundamental!
If you don't understand, make him/her repeat. Clarity is essential !

8. Be spontaneous! Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Everyone does. I have been speaking English every day for the last 10 years and I still get confused with some prepositions or the stress in words I don't often use.

RELAX, BE YOURSELF, BE CLEAR and TALK AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ASOFTEN AS POSSIBLE!

5 Know What to Expect from the Test

PART 1

(4-5 minutes)

The examiner will ask you very straightforward questions. Part 1 is the easiest part of the test. The foreigner will ask you 3 or 4 questions about one topic, and then move to another one.

Expect to talk about yourself, your professional situation, your studies (now or in the past), your family, your hometown, your hobbies, or your daily routine.

Develop your answers, give details, be interesting, and everything will be fine. The questions are not tricky. Simply stick to the question, and show the examiner you can talk. Don't make things complicated. Simply fully answer every question.

PART 2

(1 minute to prepare + 2 minutes to speak)

The examiner will give you a card with a main question and some ideas about what to talk about. You are given one minute to think about what to say. You can take some notes (AND YOU SHOULD!!!). Candidates who do not write anything often get stuck after 1 minute and 30 seconds, and frequently repeat themselves or hesitate too much. Once the minute is over, the foreign examiner will ask you to start talking.

You have 2 minutes to answer the question. Once the 2 minutes are over, the examiner will interrupt you, and whether you still have things to say doesn't matter. No one is allowed to speak for longer than 2 minutes. Try to speak at least 1 minute and 50 seconds if you intend to get at least 5.5 points.

After 2 minutes, the examiner might ask you one or two follow-up questions based on your answer. Examiners might want more details, or they might ask you to clarify a thing you may have said.

PART 3

(4-5 minutes)

The examiner should ask you questions related to the topic you were asked about in Part 2. The questions in Part 3 should be more "abstract and conceptual" (=the questions are a bit harder). If you read all the questions I provide in this book, you will know what to expect.

The examiner will ask you to compare situations, to give advantages and disadvantages of various things, or to describe places or memories. You might have to speculate about the future, and share your opinion on different beliefs and actions.

Work on your listening! If you understand the question, you will be fine: the examiner expects to hear your point of view on different topics. There is no right or wrong, as long as you explain yourself clearly.

Don't hesitate to give examples to illustrate your arguments (just like when you write), and make things as clear as possible.

6 Be Clear about How the Examiner Will Assess Your Level

The examiner will evaluate each candidate according to five linguistic areas:

1. Fluency

You should be able to speak at length. You must develop your answers without hesitating too much or pausing too often. Always go into detail and explain everything to the examiner.

DO NOT SPEAK TOO QUICKLY! Fluency is not the same as speed. But you need to THINK FAST!

In order to gain confidence and fluency, YOU MUST PRACTICE! I can't emphasize enough how necessary it is for you to get to speak as frequently as possible before you take the exam. You should be able to REACT QUICKLY to questions. Foreigners hate it when the student takes forever to say one sentence: "I like... I like... hmmm... I like football...

because...because, because, it is... hmmm... what's the word?" (Be careful: "how to say? " = Chinese English!!!! In English we say "what's the word?")

hmmm... I like football... because... because, because, it is... hmmm... what's the word?

2. Coherence

First you must make sure you are answering the question the examiner asks you. If you don't, it's probably because your listening is not good enough. In addition, YOUR ANSWERS MUST BE LOGICAL.

“Do you like sports?” “No, I don’t like sports because it makes me tired.” And then 20 seconds later: “Do you ever play basketball?” “Yes, I often play basketball with my friends. It’s a lot of fun.”=ILLOGICAL!

“Are you very busy with your studies?” “Yes, you know, school in China is always busy.” Later on: “Do you have a lot of classes every week?” “No, not so many. My schedule is quite good.”=ILLOGICAL!
YOU SAID YOU WERE BUSY WITH CLASSES!

3. Vocabulary (Lexical Resources)

First you should be able to talk about a wide range of topics. Try to learn a few words for each topic given in this book. Practice DESCRIBING EVERYTHING around you: people, places, objects around you.

The best way for you to improve your vocabulary is to LEARN SYNONYMS (= 2 words which have similar meanings. Example: rich=wealthy=well-off). By learning synonyms, you will avoid repeating yourself.

In addition, be very careful with the different forms of words: students often get confused between verbs, adjectives and nouns. (Example: to succeed, to be successful, to meet with success; to communicate, communicative, communication)

4. Grammar (Grammatical Range and Accuracy)

Pay attention to tenses (PAST TENSE!!!!!! I went, I did, I gave, I wrote... Come on! You have been studying grammar every day at school since middle school! You have NO excuse!) and TRY TO USE MODALS as much as possible (might, may, should, have to, can, could.)

5. Pronunciation

DON’T SPEAK TOO FAST! You will make mistakes, and the examiner might find it hard to follow you. OPEN YOUR MOUTH; BE CLEAR! Don’t try to be too American by mumbling your words. You were born in China; and the examiner knows you have an accent: everyone does. Don’t think about it. JUST FOCUS ON CLARITY!

7 Learn how to plan for Part 2

In Part 2 of the Speaking Test the examiner will hand you a cue card with one main question and some ideas about what to talk about. You will be given one minute to prepare.

MAKE SOME NOTES!

In this book, you will realize that I have organized my thoughts into 5 POINTS, 5 IDEAS before I started developing any Part 2 question. YOU SHOULD DO THE SAME! This is why I have given you space next to my five ideas to MAKE YOUR OWN!

Once you get used to it, you will be able to plan these 5 ideas very quickly. Each point can be developed into 2 or 3 sentences.

And you can connect each idea with... In addition... On top of this... What's more...
However...

Example:

Tell me about a sports activity you have never done but, you would like to try.

1. Which sport? Is it famous?... skiing. Extremely famous in Europe USA (not in China)
2. Where did you get this idea?... last winter Olympics. Stunning international event

3. What's so special about it?	· snow ! Beautiful + smooth + peaceful + beautiful landscapes
4. Advantages?	· I love speed + looks really exciting (thrilling) = great regimes
5. In the future?	· Next year I will be overseas = good chance to try out t need\$

Tell me about a birthday you enjoyed.	
1. Whose birthday? When?	· my last birthday. When?
2. Who? Guests + dinner	· family + best friends. Dinner in a restaurant (taste?)
3. Activity? Cake	· cake. candles. birthday song + gifts
4. Compare with other birthdays	· previous birthdays were always boring: why?
5. In the future?	· I hope next year will be even better: What would you do?

GET YOUR 5 POINTS FOR EVERY TOPIC and you will find out it is no problem to keep on talking for 2 minutes.

If you intend to reach band 5 or 6, I suppose that you will say around 15 to 20 sentences in 2 minutes. You don't need to count the number of sentences exactly, **but practice with a watch at home**. After a couple of weeks of giving short presentations for 2 minutes straight, you will feel a lot more comfortable.

For a lot of topics, feel free to **talk about the future as your last point**. It is easy to say 2 more sentences about your hopes, your expectations and your ambition for the future. It will make you sound smart and fluent if you can smoothly connect one idea to another.

Once you have written your 5 points, 5 ideas, **DO NOT LOOK AT THEM ALL THE TIME WHILE TALKING!** Look at the examiner! Make eye contact. In addition, if you want to read, you will be influenced by the next idea you wrote down, and you will go through your 5 points too quickly. **Take your time to develop each point into at least 2 or 3**

sentences. Since you have just written these 5 ideas down, everything is fresh in your mind. Only look at your notes when you completely forget what to say next. Just have a quick peek at your notes, and keep going.

8 Three Language Tips

1. IT'S A GOOD CHANCE TO...=IT'S A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO...

Whenever you are talking about something you enjoy doing or the benefits of an action or a situation, you can use the above phrases to EXPRESS THE ADVANTAGES. By using these phrases you will explain as if the question was “Why is it good?” or “Why is it beneficial?” or “Why is it important?” or “Why is it enjoyable?”

Example:

How important is it for families to eat together?

It's extremely important because dinner time is a great chance for everyone to get together and talk. You know, nowadays, parents are busy with their job, students with their studies, so it's essential to eat together in order for relatives to catch up with each other. It's a great opportunity to strengthen family ties.

Do you like sports?

Yes, I do. I frequently play basketball and badminton with my friends. First of all, I need to exercise in order to stay fit and healthy. In addition, playing sports is a good chance for me to forget about my homework and the pressure of my studies. Whenever I play basketball, I can get rid of stress. So it is useful: On top of this; it's a great opportunity for me to spend time with my friends. We laugh together and share stories after the game. It's just a lot of fun.

2. To GET To do something...

Idiomatic phrase foreigners use very often=smooth English.

Example:

How often do you speak English?

I get to speak English every day at school=I get a chance to speak English every day at school.

Do you live with your parents?

Yes, I am still a high school student, and my school is not a boarding school. So I still live with my parents. But my father works in another city, so I only get to see him once a month (or We don't often get to see each other).

Why do you want to go overseas?

I want to go to Australia for different reasons. First, I really want to study economics there and get a Bachelor's from a good university. This degree will give me more opportunities for my future. Once I graduate, I should have more options in terms of career. I could work in Australia or in Singapore, or come back to China. In addition, I will get to meet a lot of people, and experience a new culture. It will definitely be a great chance for me to become more independent and to see the world. On top of this, I will get to speak English every day. So you see, going overseas will benefit me in many ways.

3. Something BRINGS PEOPLE CLOSER TOGETHER.

In many questions, the examiner will ask you about the benefits of certain things. it's easy for you to say:

Music can bring people closer together.

Laughing can definitely bring people together.

Good food can bring people together.

English can bring the world closer together.

Sports can without a doubt bring people together.

Festivals bring people closer together.

9 Master the Most Useful Words for the Test

This book was written in order to give students as many examples and ideas as possible to show them how they could develop their answers. Remember that the test is going to be very short (around 12 minutes). As a result, you should seize every opportunity to show how good your vocabulary is:

- . Use sophisticated vocabulary
- . Display specialized terminology
- . Do not repeat yourself=USE SYNONYMS !

In this book, you will find a list of synonyms at the beginning of each topic: make sure you learn them.

Here are the most important words for you to describe your actions and feelings:

- . **difficult= challenging =complex= complicated= tough**
I find it tough to express myself in English.
- . **important =necessary= essential=fundamental =vital =indispensable.**
Good pronunciation is vital.
- . **interesting= fascinating= captivating**
This book is absolutely fascinating. I can't wait to finish it!

- **useful= practical =handy= convenient**

I bought this electronic dictionary. It's very handy in class.

- **boring =dull= monotonous =tiresome**

You sound so boring ! Your voice always sounds monotonous.

- **good for your future/health/studies =beneficial positive**

Going to the U.S. will be beneficial to me.

- **nice =pleasant =enjoyable**

I had dinner with Stacy last night. We had a pleasant conversation about...

- **popular=common =widespread=well-accepted**

English is very widespread nowadays, even in Asia.

- **fashionable=trendy=cool=stylish=in**

I bought this cell phone because I find it very stylish.

- **amazing=stunning=splendid=spectacular**

I love this place. The view is stunning !

- **happy=pleased=satisfied=glad=delighted=ecstatic (=overjoyed)**

I was delighted to hear from her !

- **exciting=thrilling=awesome**

I tried skiing for the first time last weekend. It was absolutely thrilling !

- **fun=entertaining=relaxing=enjoyable=pleasant**

Playing basketball is fun ! Reading is entertaining.

- **to relax=to take it easy=to unwind=to chill**

I've been under so much pressure. I need to unwind.

- **to represent=to symbolize=to stand for=to reflect**

The Great Wall reflects our historical heritage.

- **to think=to believe=to assume=to guess=to reckon**

I reckon he'll become a successful man soon.

- **a place=an area=a region=a spot=a location=a site**

What a great site to picnic !

10 Avoid Some Common Mistakes

. **He ____s / She ____s**

My mother often forgets her birthday. ✓

. **Simple past.** Use the simple past with "yesterday,...ago, last...". Study the irregular verbs !

In high school, I stayed in a boarding school. ✓

I'm a little homesick. ✗

I **WAS** a little homesick!!!! ✓

. **more better** ✗

The chocolate cake is (much) better than the apple pie in this restaurant. ✓

. **People is...** ✗

In China some people are very traditional! ✓

• **Women is...men is...** ✗

Women are more meticulous. ✓

. **foreign/foreigner**

Jeremy is a foreigner (noun). ✓

I like to watch foreign (adjective) programs. ✓

foreigner programs ✗

. **he/she, him/her.**

If you go overseas, a woman won't be too pleased if you call her "him! "

. **How to say?** ✗

This is Chinese English! In English we say "What's the word?" or "What is it?" .

"How to say?"

"What's the word?"

"What is it?"

• **must to** ✗

I must do my homework. ✓

I must TO do... ✗

• **should to...** ✗

They should study more! ✓

• **I will go TO there.** ✗

I will go there. ✓

I will go TO Xiamen. ✓

• **Germany/German; Japan/Japanese; France/French**

Compared to that country, Japan offers a good welfare system. ✓

He's from France: he's French! ✓

• **responsible/responsibility**

A parent must responsibility for his child. ✗

A teacher should take responsibility for his/her students. He must be responsible for them. ✓

• **to communicate/communication**

Students usually use the noun instead of the verb:

学生常使用名词，而不使用动词。

The telephone is a great tool to communication. ✗

The telephone is a great tool for communication. ✓

Parents find it difficult to communication with their child. ✗

Parents find it difficult to communicate with their child. ✓

• **know/learn**

If we talk more, we can know each other better. ✗

...we could GET TO know each other better. (=better English) ✓

If I study abroad, I can know more about my major. ✗

...I could learn more.../... I could get to know... ✓

• **It could be happen** ✗

It could happen! Anything's possible! ✓

• **In North** ✗

In the North, the weather is usually colder! ✓

In Northern China the weather is... ✓

For the holiday I'm going to go up North (= towards the Northern regions). ✓

•**country/city**

Students often say "France is a beautiful city." ✗ (It's a country.)
or "Fujian is a great city." ✗ (It's a province!)

•**in there** ✗

My parents live in Fuzhou. They have a job there. (NOT "in there"!) need/require
The job needs them to stay in the city.)(Their job requires them to stay in the city (although they'd
rather live in the countryside). ✓

•**funny/fun**

Basketball is fun! (NOT "funny"! A funny thing will make you smile or laugh.)

•**funny/interesting**

Basketball is not interesting. However, a game could be interesting because a lot of things happened
in the last 2 minutes!
interesting = you want to know more = suspenseful!

•**most of** foreigners... ✗

Most foreigners wouldn't dare to try chicken feet. ✓
Most women want a rich husband. ✓
Most foreigners in Fuzhou cannot speak Chinese. ✓

•**It's depend** ✗

It depends on many things. ✓ (Pronounce the "s"!)

•**In nowadays...** ✗

Nowadays people's lives are fast paced. ✓

•**He speaks English good.** ✗

He speaks good English! ✓
He speaks English well! ✓

•**My English is not well.** ✗

My English is not good. ✓
My English is not as good as it should be. ✓

• **interesting/interested; boring/bored**

The teacher is boring. I feel bored! ✓

• **Our China, our Chinese...** ✗

There are a lot of foreign companies in Fujian. That's a good thing because it offers more job opportunities to us Chinese people. ✓

• **to compete/competitive** (adjective)

Getting into Xiamen University is very competitive. ✓

High-school students must compete against each other to enrol. ✓

• **memory/to memorize**

My memory is not very good. I don't know how I will memorize 100 new words for the English exam. ✓

• **success/succeed/ successful**

a success person ✗

a successful person ✓

Failure is the mother of success. ✓

• **dormitory**

Be careful with the pronunciation! Many students say "dormiStory". ✗
"dormitory".

• **colleague/college**

different pronunciation 发音不同

• **His father is died.** ✗

His father died. His father is dead. ✓

• **for myself/by myself**

I like to work by myself (=on my own). ✓

for myself (=for my own benefit/profit)

I work for myself. =I'm my own boss.

Question Types

- 1** Do You Like...?
- 2** How Often...?
- 3** How important...?
- 4** Do You Think...?
- 5** Why...? (Causes)
- 6** What Effects...? (Results)
- 7** Compare... (Advantages and Disadvantages)
- 8** How Could..? (Solutions)
- 9** How Might...? (Possibilities in the Future)

1 Do You Like...?

Whenever you have a question about your likes and dislikes, don't be boring- use adverbs to describe how much you enjoy it or not:

I really enjoy playing basketball

I'm quite fond of this teacher.

Remember that the IELTS test is a test based on communication: show your feelings! If it's great, say it with passion! If you dislike something profoundly, make sure the examiner understands:

I really can't stand the traffic in my home town!

I loooove the food in my hometown!

SPEAK FROM THE HEART

I really like... I really dislike...

I especially like... I especially dislike...

I love... I hate...

I quite enjoy... I can't stand

I'm quite fond of... I'm not too keen on...

I'm a big fan of... I'm not a big fan of...

I find it great to... I find it annoying to.../ I find it tiring to...

1. Do you like your name?

Well yes, I quite like the way my name sounds in my language. In addition, it is very meaningful because my grandmother picked it for me. It means...

Well, I must admit I'm not a big fan of my name. I think it sounds a little bit stupid and boring. In Chinese my name means...

2. Do you like flowers?

Yes, definitely! I find them colorful and beautiful. I think they look great in a garden or in a house. I especially like roses but I'm also a big fan of daffodils and water lilies. But

I must confess that I really dislike plastic flowers, you know, the fake ones. I think they just look terrible. They reflect bad taste.

3. What types of music do you like to listen to?

Well, I listen to many different kinds of music, but I particularly enjoy listening to pop music, and I really think that Michael Jackson was the king! In addition, I'm a big fan of a Chinese singer called__ because he's very creative and his voice sounds amazing.

4. What is your favorite sport?

Basketball, without a doubt! I'm a huge fan of the NBA, and I watch basketball on TV on a weekly basis. In addition, I try to play as often as possible. I really like this sport because it's fun and exciting. I love learning new moves from my friends and trying them out after school. On top of this, basketball is a great chance for me to hang out with my friends and socialize.

I have become addicted to yoga. I really enjoy this sport because it's relaxing and very healthy. I practice every day and attend lessons twice a week at a gym near my house. It's a great chance for me to exercise, and forget about my daily problems at the same time. I would recommend it to anyone without any hesitation.

5. What do you do in your free time?

Well, it really depends, but I'm a big basketball fan, so I try to play as much as possible. I also enjoy reading, and of course I spend quite a bit of time chatting with my friends online or over dinner. On some occasions, I find it great to go hiking in the mountains that surround my hometown. It depends on the weather and on my mood.

6. What sorts of things make you happy?

Well, a lot of things make me happy. It could be anything, really. I find it nice to get together with my friends. I always enjoy having a great dinner and watching a good movie with them. In addition, I can get some satisfaction from my job when my customers are pleased with the service I provide. Or whenever I have dinner with a pretty girl: that's always enjoyable, and it definitely makes me happy!

7. Do you enjoy spending time with friends?

Yes, definitely! I love hanging out with my good friends. They are so much fun to be with! We have dinner and we occasionally go shopping. We often get together to watch a movie or play sports sometimes. I really trust them, and it's great to have someone to share stories or laughter with.

8. Do you like studying English?

I'll be honest with you: not really. I can't say I dislike it, but I can't say it's a lot of fun either. I find it hard to remember a lot of new words. In addition, the grammar is very tricky, especially with the prepositions at, by, for, and to. I never know when to use the right one. On the other hand, I really like watching foreign movies in their original version. I find it great to be able to understand what they are saying.

9. What do you enjoy writing most?

I'm keen on writing emails to my friends or short messages on my cell phone. I can type very quickly, and I don't need to worry about the style. It's always very casual. On the other hand, I really dislike writing about literature or philosophy at school. My mind usually goes blank, and I find it hard to come up with new ideas. Most of the time, I just recite what I have read. I think it's so boring (=soooooo boring)!

2 How Often...?

On a daily basis = every day
a

Frequently = very often

Occasionally = on some occasions

From time to time = sometimes
every

Hardly ever = rarely = almost never

Never

You can say "every day", but "on

daily basis" is better!

- Do you often speak English?

- Yes, on an almost daily basis at
school. I have an English class

day, but I must admit we only speak
occasionally. We spend more time
writing and doing exercise.

You can use these terms every time you describe day-to-day actions or hobbies

▲ Example:

Do you like sports?

Yes, I'm a big sports fan. I frequently play basketball with my friends. I try to go running as often as possible. In addition, I occasionally play badminton with my workmates, but I like team sports better. From time to time, I do push-ups and stomach crunches in order to get stronger.

How do you spend your time with your family?

Well, we frequently have dinner together. It's a great chance for all of us to talk and catch up. We also like to watch TV or play mahjong with each other. I occasionally go shopping with my mother, but I must admit I only do it to make her happy. I'm not big on shopping. A few years ago, I used to go running with my Dad on a weekly basis, but I have been busy with my job lately so, I haven't had much time to do so lately.

1. How often do you use a computer?

On a daily basis. I turn on my computer every morning at work. I work as an accountant so I need a computer to do my job. In addition, I also surf the Internet when I get home. I frequently read the news online and chat with my friends. I occasionally download music or movies. I really use computers a lot for both work and entertainment.

2. How often do you go dancing?

Hardly ever. I don't often go out clubbing, and to tell you the truth, I can't dance. Although some of my friends frequently go dancing, I'm not a big fan of night clubs. It's usually too loud and smoky there. On the other hand, my grandparents get together with their neighbors on a weekly basis to go dancing in the park in my neighborhood.

3. Do you often celebrate festivals in your culture?

Yes, definitely! We have different festivals on almost a monthly basis. The most important is of course the Spring Festival. We celebrate the Chinese New Year, but we also get together on other occasions, such as Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, Lantern Festival, or Tomb Sweeping Day. In China, we frequently organize big dinners for significant events.

4. Do you often play games with your family or friends?

Yes, quite frequently, especially with my friends. We often play cards as well as video games. Occasionally, when we go out to a bar or karaoke, we play dice and we make some simple bets. On the other hand, in my family, we play mahjong whenever we get a chance, particularly during the holidays. My father and I enjoy playing chess, but we hardly ever play nowadays, since I have been going to college far away from my hometown.

5. How often do you exercise?

I try to work out as much as possible. Usually I go running twice a week, and I frequently play basketball with my friends. From time to time my friends invite me to play badminton, and I think it's also a great way to keep fit. In the summer, I really enjoy swimming, and I go to the pool on an almost daily basis during my holiday.

6. How often do you go shopping for things apart from food?

Not that often (= not so often). I'm not a big shopping fan. I find it annoying to go window shopping, wandering in a mall for hours. My friends used to complain about the fact that I never wanted to go shopping with them... but now they've gotten used to it.

Quite frequently! I like going shopping with friends, or with my mother. I think it's a great chance to hang out with the people I like to be with. We often go to a new shopping mall in the city center. There are so many shops and restaurants that we can spend the whole afternoon there. In addition, shopping for clothes is a lot of fun, although I seldom buy the clothes I try on because my budget is a bit tight as a college student.

7. Do you often go to the theater or the cinema?

Not really. I might go to the movies 3 or 4 times a year. On the other hand, I frequently download movies on my computer. It's free and extremely quick. I know that some people frown upon this practice, but we all do this in my college. Going to the cinema is fun, but it's quite expensive nowadays. It costs around 50 yuan per person so I can only afford it occasionally.

8. How often do you get together with your classmates after class?

Quite frequently! At university, we have a lot of freedom, and since we all live together in the same dorm, we have dinner together on a daily basis. After class, I frequently do my homework with my roommates. Occasionally, we go shopping just outside campus. But most of the time, we go for a walk, and talk about, you know, girl stuff.

9. Do you think that young people spend too much time on the Internet?

Yes, definitely! I think that many teenagers are addicted to online games. They are constantly playing on their laptops or their mobile phones. In addition, whenever the teacher gives them a project, they go online to look for an answer, instead of thinking on their own. They frequently read the news online instead of in the newspaper, and they spend an incredible amount of time chatting with their friends on Instant Messenger. I think they depend too much on the Internet.

10. Do you often buy the newspaper?

No, hardly ever, but I read the news online on a daily basis. I guess it's more convenient. I have access to the main headlines in just a click, and actually I have more choices: I can pick any newspaper I want to have a look at, and the articles are always freshly written. On the other hand, I occasionally buy 21st Century, you know, the Chinese newspaper published in English. I get the newspaper because I need more time to read it. It's a bit like doing homework. I circle the new words; I take some notes. Since I spend a lot of time on it, reading on paper is better for my eyesight.

3 How Important...?

It's extremely important because...

It's definitely very important...

It's essential because...

It's fundamental because...

It's not that important because...

(=It's not so important because...)

EMPHASIZE how important it is!

SHOW the examiner YOUR FEELINGS

Your voice should BE ENERGETIC!

Don't be boring!

In order to explain why it is extremely important (or not), don't hesitate to give examples.

You can give an example by using "If..." most of the time.

Example:

1. How important is English to you?

English is extremely important to me, because next year I plan to go to the U.S. I'll need English in order to communicate with the people over there, you know, to make friends at university. If my English is limited, I won't be able to understand my teachers either, so my results at school won't be satisfactory.

2. How important is age as a factor in learning?

I think it depends on what you are learning. For example, if you want to learn how to play an instrument, I don't think age is that important. But I believe motivation is fundamental. On the other hand, if you are learning a foreign language, I think it's essential to start as early as possible, because kids have a better memory, and the younger you start, the better your pronunciation will be.

3. How important are credit cards nowadays?

Well, in China, credit cards are not that important when you go grocery shopping because many small shops don't accept them, but they are definitely very useful when you purchase something expensive. For example, if you buy a computer, or a pricey piece of furniture, you can just swipe your Visa card, instead of carrying a huge amount of cash on you. It's much safer. In addition, they are very convenient because you can buy something even if you don't have the money on your card. You can get credit from a bank, which you can pay back later: it's very practical. Credit cards are also necessary/indispensable if you want to buy something online.

4. How important are friends to you?

Friends play a significant part in my life. I try to see my friends as often as possible. We frequently get together to chat and have a good time. My friends are a fundamental part of my life and I really depend on them, especially when I have good news, or whenever I don't feel so cheerful. I think it's essential to have friends you can trust and rely on.

5. How important is sport in children's social and physical development?

I think that sport is an essential part of children's daily routines, because sports can make kids stronger and healthier. They need to run and jump to make their muscles work. In addition, there is no doubt that playing sports is a great way for them to socialize. They can make friends through sports. On top of this, they can learn the notions of "team-work" and "team-spirit", which are fundamental in today's world.

6. How important are clothes as an expression of personality?

Well, I think that clothes can definitely reflect a person's tastes since everyone usually picks his or her own clothes. Someone who likes to wear dark clothes all the time might want to keep a low profile: he might be a little shy. On the other hand, it's extremely important to remember that it would be a mistake to judge someone's personality according to his or her clothes only. A man wearing a suit might look serious and cold, but he may well be a party-animal as soon as he leaves work! Frequently, clothes represent someone's profession more than their personality. As you say in English, "You shouldn't judge a book by its cover."

7. How important is it to have free time on the weekend for students and working people?

It's fundamental to allow yourself some rest every so often, because if you work too much, you will get tired, and you might not be as efficient as you could be. You might even get irritated and angry because of all the stress you can't get rid of. Workaholics and studentaholics might even get sick in the long term; I mean both physically and psychologically sick. It's essential to take breaks on a regular basis in order to recharge your batteries and be able to work more efficiently later on.

8. How important is tourism for a country?

Tourism can be extremely important for a country's economy, because the tourist industry often creates many jobs and can bring a lot of money to a region. When foreigners visit China, they spend their money in restaurants, hotels, organized tours and transportation. It's extremely beneficial to the local economy. In addition, tourism is definitely an essential way for local cultures to spread outside their borders. If a Frenchman comes to China, he will learn about Chinese traditions and history. When he goes home, he will share his pictures and insight on China with his friends and family, who will find out more about our country. Tourism is very important in many ways.

9. How important is it to laugh together in a relationship?

Well, it's essential to laugh with friends and relatives. Laughing means that we are in a healthy relationship. When my friend or my father says something funny, I am going to pat them on the shoulder, or slap their leg to tell them it's a good story. Laughing can bring people closer together. If you have a boyfriend, and you never laugh together, you definitely have a problem...

10. How important is it to save money for the future?

I think it's fundamental to save money for the future because you never know what could happen. In case of emergency, if our parents get sick or if we get into an accident, we will need money to cover the damage. In addition, if you want to enjoy life, if you want to go on holidays, or buy a new car, or even get married, it's essential to have money set aside.

11. How important is music for a country?

Well, music is a significant aspect of a culture. Every country produces its own distinctive music, so we could say that music represents one's identity. For example, a national anthem can create feelings of nationalism. In addition, music can definitely bring people closer together, in happiness or in sorrow. Music is essential for the people of each country.

12. How important is it to have a room of your own (for yourself) ?

I think it's extremely important for people to have their own personal space. Especially in China, since our country is so populated and crowded, I think it's essential for people to find a quiet place of their own where they can relax and do their private things. A teenager might want to be able to talk to his friends on the phone without his mother overhearing the whole conversation. A student needs space to study efficiently; same for a businessperson who could be more productive in his or her own office.

4 Do You Think...?

Yes, definitely!=Yes, absolutely!=Yes, totally!	No, definitely not.
Yes, without a doubt!= Yes, undoubtedly!	No way!
Yes, for sure!= Yes, no doubt!	to some extent =not completely

Your answers should be spontaneous! SPEAK FROM THE HEART! Show the examiner you have energy!

If you really want to balance things, use "to some extent." Otherwise, don't hesitate, and be direct!

1. Do you think that English is a difficult language to learn?

Yes, definitely! It's so difficult to remember all the words, especially the long words like "sophisticated", and "longevity." In addition, the grammar is tricky because of the tenses and the prepositions by, at, for, and of. I never know which one to use. And whenever I speak, I don't feel as comfortable as when I use my native language, of course. It's quite challenging. I guess it requires a lot of practice.

2. Do you think that the pace of change will continue to increase in the future?

Yes, without a doubt! Because of scientific development, the pace of life will keep on getting faster. Ten years ago in my country, very few people had the Internet, but nowadays, everyone has the possibility to be online at any time using their mobile phones. Ten years ago, roads were still narrow, and the number of cars was almost limited to taxis, but nowadays, most households own a vehicle. In the future, things will almost certainly keep on changing. Children may stop writing on paper and only use a computer in high school. People will definitely be able to travel more often thanks to new forms of transport. Who knows, we might soon move to another planet... Anything is possible!

3. Do you think that people's attitudes towards traditional celebrations have changed in recent years?

Yes, definitely! I guess that nowadays people have more money than in the past, so they don't depend on anyone to help them celebrate national festivals. In the past, the government used to organize parades or events within the local community. Nowadays people stay home, watch TV, and fix their own dinners. People used to be very excited about Spring Festival. Nowadays, we all feel a bit bored with the food we get, or the CCTV Gala we watch on New Year's Eve. Everything has become too common. People are used to having whatever they want when they want it. We have undeniably been spoiled.

4. Do you think that art should be taught in school?

Yes, definitely! Art is one aspect of the culture, so it's important for teenagers to learn about their national art since it represents their national cultural heritage. In addition, when they are younger drawing and painting can definitely help children develop their imagination and creativity. Teachers should definitely guide students to develop their artistic skills.

5. Do you think that most people in your country eat healthily?

Yes, to some extent. People in China have always eaten a lot of vegetables and cereals (like rice). And that is definitely healthy. In addition, people are richer than in the past, so they can buy many different kinds of products. It's become possible to drink milk and to eat meat or fish on a daily basis. The food we get these days is definitely very nutritious. But on the other hand, many people also buy a lot of junk food, lots of snacks like chips or candy. This is detrimental to people's health. On top of this, people don't cook at home as much as families used to, and the food in restaurants is usually very oily. New lifestyles, new problems...

6. Do you agree that advertising can be dangerous?

Dangerous? Well, I think the word "dangerous" is too strong here: But I definitely agree that advertising could mislead customers from time to time, or tempt people to buy more. But this is the aim of advertisements. As long as the advertisers don't lie to the public, I think people should use common sense in order to realize how serious an ad actually is. I read in a magazine that a man in America sued a beer company because the commercial said that he would attract girls if he drank that particular kind of beer; but unfortunately for him, nothing happened, even though he drank many bottles. People should not be too naive.

7. Do you think that parents and children can be good friends?

Yes, it's definitely possible, but also difficult. In my country, many parents are strict with their child. They expect a lot from their kid, and they also want to control what the child does all the time. So it's impossible for such parents to become friends with their son or daughter. But if they communicate, and trust each other, and if the parents give some space and freedom to the child, then they can definitely build a friendly relationship.

8. Do you think that people behave differently when in a group ?

Well, yes, to some extent. Some individuals might be shy when they meet new people. Some might try to be nicer than they really are, because they really want to make a good impression. But I think that some people who are confident and relaxed will definitely act the same whether they are at home with their family or out with new acquaintances.

9. Do you agree that you can't understand today's world without knowing about the past?

Yes, totally ! Whatever happened in the past definitely has an influence on today's situation. This is why it is so interesting to study history. History can explain today's economical situation; it gives an explanation for the geographical borders of countries or the traditions we follow during the national festivals. If we look at American history, we can clearly understand why people think it's such a big deal to have a Black President for the first time, because 150 years ago, they still considered African-Americans as slaves in most states. The past definitely explains today's world and our attitudes towards it.

10. Do you think that men and women want the same things in a relationship?

No way ! Well, at least in China, men want a beautiful girl who can get along with their parents and do the housework, whereas women wish for a considerate and smart husband who can make them happy. Our expectations are totally different !

5 Why...? (Causes)

...for a number of reasons...

...for a great variety of reasons...

Several factors contribute to...

There's a combination of factors...
that...

I guess that=I reckon that=I assume that=I think that...

The main reason is that...

The most significant reason might be
that...

That's due to the fact that...

The main contributing factor is

1. Why do you want to take the IELTS test? (= one reason only)

Well, I am taking the IELTS test today because I intend to study overseas next year. I have applied to 3 different universities in Australia, and they all required me to take this test in order to prove my ability to use English in different situations.

2. Why do the people in cities want green spaces?

Well, I think the answer is very obvious: it's due to the fact that parks and green areas are pleasant places for people to relax, and people in urban areas don't have so many opportunities to get away from the city with its noise and traffic (=hustle and bustle). If there is a park not far from their house, families can go for a walk and children can play there safely. In a word, everyone can enjoy a better lifestyle.

3. Why are writing skills so important in education and learning?

Well, it's due to the fact that writing is the basis of all knowledge. Writing is always associated with reading. Our society's education system depends on books and reading. I mean, we teach knowledge through books, and teachers test their students' ability to think through writing. Because our educational institutions are based on those two skills, a young student who cannot write well won't be able to receive a proper education in my country. I guess our tradition of education is very different from that of people like the Australian Aborigines, for example, who used to educate their children through oral stories only.

For most “Why...?” questions, you should have more than one reason to give. It is a good opportunity for you to use “First...In addition...On top of this...” Be precise! Give details!

4. Why do you want to study abroad?

I chose to study in Australia for a multitude of reasons: I plan to get a Master’s Degree in Computer Engineering, and after doing some research, I know that Sydney University offers a great program in this field. In addition, Australian universities have a great reputation in my country. This experience overseas could open up a lot of doors for my future. I will definitely have more choices in terms of career. I could either stay in Australia, or work in another country, or come back to China to find a good position. Studying abroad will be a great chance for me to experience something new: I will meet new people, speak English every day, experience a new culture, and get a chance to travel.

5. Why is it sometimes important for people to be alone?

Well, I guess that we all need time to ourselves at some point. I am sure I can think of a variety of reasons why people might need time alone: some people might need tranquility to think carefully. A lot of students need time alone in order to focus on their lessons before an important test. Some others might just not feel like talking because they are grumpy, or sad, or irritated. We definitely all want time on our own to make a private phone call, or simply relax. There could be multiple reasons why people sometimes need privacy.

6. Why do many people want to be successful?

Well, the most significant reason might be that, nowadays, success means wealth. If people become successful in business, or sports, or science, they will be more likely to get a high salary. With that money, they could lead a very comfortable life, travel, buy anything they want, in other words make their dreams come true. In addition, I guess that being successful must feel great deep inside. It must create a sense of achievement, you know, your family and friends must be proud of you. People who are very successful might enjoy being recognized too, although I am sure that fame also comes with some disadvantages.

7. Why is it important for companies to plan ahead?

Well, companies must plan ahead for a number of reasons. First of all, in business, if you don’t know where you want to go, you will never get there. If they want the company to be successful, the managers must fix some goals for everyone to achieve. In addition, planning ahead makes everything simpler: you can control costs, prepare schedules for employees, and also motivate staff to reach targets.

8. Why do people buy newspapers?

Several factors contribute to the fact that people still buy newspapers (=There's a combination of factors that causes people to continue to buy newspapers) nowadays. First of all, newspapers are reliable. They offer clear and precise articles on a daily basis. In a few pages, you have access to everything you need to know about current events. In addition, newspapers are very cheap in my country: they only cost 1 or 2 yuan. On top of this, they are interesting and fun to read. Compared with mobile phones or computers, I'm sure that people enjoy reading the newspaper more because it's more comfortable for the eyes. Finally, it creates a special feeling, especially when it's your own newspaper and no one else unfolded it before. A newspaper is like a gift, where every page is a surprise.

9. Why do some people enjoy traveling?

People enjoy traveling for a variety of reasons. First of all, it's fun and relaxing. People can forget about their work or their studies. They can leave their stress behind. In addition, we always travel to see some new places, usually some impressive scenery, and we can also try some new activities. Tourists are curious and adventurous. On top of this, traveling can be a great opportunity to learn new things about another region or country. Travelers can find out about local history, local food and local customs. It's quite refreshing and enriching..

6 What Effects...? (Results)

Think about the consequences of each problem. Whenever you come across a question such as “What effects... / What impact... / What consequences...? ” try to list the results triggered by the situation.

...As a result.....	Therefore.....	...Consequently...	...In that case..
I guess that...	I suppose that...	I assume that...	...I think that...
It will influence...	It will cause...	It will trigger...	It will affect...
It sets off a series of consequences...		It has a huge impact on...	
It generates...	It definitely results in...	It pushes people to...	

1. What effects could using technology have on a child's personal development?

Well, I guess that using technology is a double-edged sword. On the positive side, using a computer or a mobile phone can help children think independently. I have heard that spending time on a computer could trigger healthy activity in the brain. A lot of computer programs or games require children to make decisions on their own. In addition, technology has become part of our daily lives, so whatever kids learn from a young age will very likely be useful in their future studies and career. On the other hand, I think that technology is addictive for children. You can always see kids playing with their portable PSP or their parents' mobile phones. If parents don't control the amount of time their children spend in front of a screen, this will have negative consequences for the children's social life. Kids need to go out and socialize and interact with people.

2. What impact have international products and brands had on local cultures?

That's a tough question. I guess that international products generate competition in any country. And competition is usually beneficial for customers. However, imports like international food, clothes, and house appliances have modified (=changed) local cultures.

I suppose that French people don't only eat French food anymore. Chinese teenagers don't wear traditional clothing anymore, and European basketball players frequently get to play in the NBA. International products and brands influence people's daily habits and tastes. It's the result of globalization, the fact that the world's cultures are all blending together and losing their particularities. To some extent it might eradicate regional diversity.

3. What effects can newspapers have on society?

Newspapers definitely have a huge impact on society. They keep people informed of what is going on across their country and the whole world. I guess that journalists can make people believe anything they write, because people take it for granted that journalists write after investigating the facts. Newspapers can definitely influence public opinion. Consequently, in many countries the press is controlled by the government. As a result, newspapers are often written to generate feelings of patriotism (=nationalism) in the readers' mind. If too many articles are pessimistic, the society might worry, and this could influence the national mood, and might even affect the economy.

4. What effects does climate have on what people do outdoors?

Well, the weather has a great influence on people's activities. If the temperature is too hot, people stay home, because they don't want to get sunburned or sweat too much. On the other hand, if it's freezing outside, or pouring rain out, the result is the same: people don't want to go out. I think that mild weather is the most appropriate for outdoor activities. In my country, most teenagers like to play basketball, but they can only enjoy this sport if the weather conditions allow it. A few months ago, for Spring Festival, most of my relatives did not go to the temple because it was raining hard... You see, the weather can even have an impact on ancient traditions!

5. What impact do leaders have on people?

Well, leaders usually motivate their staff or teammates; as a result, people can work with more passion, you know, more enthusiasm. Leaders should be able to inspire everyone else, so the team can reach higher goals. In addition, leaders, and especially political leaders, should be good at guiding people. They make decisions that will influence people's lives. They create laws and policies that definitely have a huge impact on our lifestyle.

6. What do you think are the positive effects of competition?

Well, competition is a powerful source of motivation. It can push people to work harder in order to achieve better results. For example, in my country, students are really eager to get

into a prestigious university, but it's very challenging. So they study more in order to beat the harsh competition. I guess that somehow competition can be beneficial for some students. In terms of business, I think that competition can generate a lot of ideas, because it requires a lot of innovative ideas to remain competitive.

7. What effects can a person's standard of living have on their happiness?

Well, in theory, money should not have a huge impact on people's happiness. But in practice, it's a whole different story. I think that in modern society, everyone understands that the more money you have, the more freedom you get, and consequently the more fun you can have. Technically, people should just worry about having enough money to lead a comfortable life. But the problem is that a lot of people are ambitious and sometimes greedy: the more they have, the more they want. And this might be why some rich people aren't able to be happy. Too many people compare their salaries to what their acquaintances get, and as a result they sometimes become jealous or envious. This is not healthy. People should probably worry more about who they spend time with, and how much they laugh, rather than counting how much money they have.

8. What do you think people in the future will find hardest to understand about our world today?

Well, if we believe all the articles published about environmental issues, it seems very likely that the next generations will find it hard to believe how stupid and careless we were about the planet. I am afraid that our great grandchildren might just not understand why we had to exploit the Earth so much, and pollute it so badly when we actually had a gorgeous environment to start with.

Now it's your turn to answer!

9. What are the effects of increased automation on people's lives?

10. What are the problems that old residential areas can cause in a modern city?

7 Compare...(Advantages and Disadvantages)

Advantages:

It's beneficial because...

It is beneficial for a variety of reasons...

That is beneficial primarily because...

Its most obvious advantage is....

...also come with the added benefit of...

There are both distinct advantages and disadvantages of...

Also, another thing when it comes to... is that... But on the flip side,...also comes with its share of disadvantages.

While there are many perks, there are also many disadvantages...

The truth of the matter is that both are excellent for certain things while both also have serious! limitations.

But

However...

Yet...

On the other hand...

...although...

Disadvantages:

there is also a disadvantage...

it also comes with a few disadvantages...

they also come with a couple of problems...

When it comes to disadvantages,...

1. Compare the health advantages of working indoors and outdoors.

Okay, well, I would say that usually working indoors offers more advantages when it comes to health. It really depends on the job, of course. Working in a factory is obviously very different from working in an office, but in general, if you are working indoors, chances are that your job will be more comfortable. You might get to sit down; in addition, you could probably regulate the temperature in your office. On the other hand, working outdoors also comes with distinct advantages. First, farmers, gardeners, construction workers or other engineers who work outdoors can enjoy fresh air, especially if they work in the countryside. They probably have more freedom too: they can move around, and they are not confined (restricted) to one small area only.

2. Compare the influence of parents and friends on young people.

Well, in my country, parents are more influential on their children than friends are. You know, in China, people are quite traditional, and children are taught to listen to their parents. Parents always have the last word, especially in terms of making decisions. But when it comes to talking about their problems, or their feelings, I think that young people will be more likely to confide in (=open their hearts to) their friends. I would say that parents guide teenagers, while friends cheer them up.

3. Compare the popularity of national and international film stars in your country.

Okay. In my country, although everyone watches foreign movies on a regular basis, I still think that national actors and actresses are the most famous. You know, in China, we know of famous celebrities from Hollywood, but since they don't speak Mandarin, they rarely give interviews for Chinese newspapers or TV programs. So we tend to know more about Chinese superstars. Also, another thing is that our Government tries to limit the amount of foreign movies at the cinema and on national channels, in order to promote more Chinese films instead.

4. Compare going on short trips with going on longer holidays.

Well, when you go on a short trip, you can't go too far. Your choices of a destination are limited. The most obvious advantage of taking a long holiday is that you will have more time to appreciate your visits. You will definitely get to see a lot more than if you were only going on a day-trip. On a short trip, you might be rushed, while on a long trip you'll get plenty of time to relax and soak in (=think about) everything you see and learn. However, as with anything, benefits do not come without consequences. A longer vacation will definitely cost a lot more money.

5. Compare the advantages of having a big wedding and a small wedding.

Okay. Small weddings are more intimate (=private). I think that the most obvious advantage to having a small ceremony is that the bride and the groom get to talk to everyone, and this will create a very special atmosphere, and enforce the bonds (=relationships) between everyone. On the other hand, a big wedding will be more impressive and striking. It also comes with the added benefit that no one will feel left out from this special occasion, and the atmosphere could quite possibly be more exciting. However, as with anything, benefits do not come for free. Organizing a big event always costs a lot of money.

6. Are there any disadvantages of being part of a community?

Yes, while there are many perks, there are also some disadvantages to being part of a community. For example, your neighbors might know your schedule, and they will judge you if you come home very late, or if you go out at night without your wife (or husband): people gossip. In addition, being a member of a group also comes with its share of obligations: you might need to take part in some activities that you would actually rather avoid. You might need to attend some meetings or some boring get-togethers for example, as well as take responsibility for organizing different events for the community. As with anything, benefits do not come for free.

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working as a journalist?

There are both distinct advantages and disadvantages to working as a journalist. First of all, the job is fascinating, because journalists have to meet many people and travel to many different places in order to find out what's happening on the field. In addition, journalists or reporters can get invited to many significant events. For example, when a new movie comes out, or when someone gives an important speech, journalists will usually get a free pass to get in. But on the flip side, being a journalist also comes with its share of disadvantages. The work is tiring and stressful. They must meet deadlines, frequently write at night, and sometimes they must cover stories they might not be so interested in. It's your turn to answer!

8. What are some of the advantages of being a teenager?

9. What are the advantages and disadvantages of driving a car?

10. What are the advantages and disadvantages of allowing the public to visit protected areas?

8 How Could...? (Solutions)

Be ready to give your point of view on a social issue. Explain how to tackle the problem, and why it is difficult to handle it. These are usually hard questions, so take your time to think about it, and organize your ideas as if you were writing: First... Second... In addition... Thankfully you only need one or two sentences for each point you are making.

I guess the best would be to...

I guess that requires...

They should definitely do...and...

It is indispensable (=essential) for the government to...

In order to solve this problem, the government should...

The most effective way to solve this problem might be to...

They could also arrange to do...

A number of actions should be taken...

In theory...But in practice...=**Theoretically...But actually...**

This issue should be taken care of (=tackled) step by step...

Initially... Then...And probably most importantly...

1.How could students considerably improve their English in a short span of time?

Well, there is no miracle method, but students should definitely hit the books pretty hard, and study as much as possible. I guess the best thing would be for them to get immersed in an English speaking environment in order to practice on a daily basis. You know, if they could move to Australia or America for a month, they would improve a great deal without a doubt.

2. How can individuals achieve a balance between work and leisure?

Well, initially people need to understand that they need time to rest and enjoy themselves if they want to remain efficient when they do their work. Then in addition,

workaholics should arrange their schedule ahead of time in order to plan time for leisure. I really think it's a matter of being both organized and able to say "no" to work. Finally, if their boss makes them work too much, employees should have the courage to face their supervisor to discuss the problem, or find a different job.

3. How could greater cooperation between countries be encouraged?

That's a tough question. Well, I guess that presidents from different countries should meet as often as possible in order to discuss economic relationships, as well as international issues. I think that prime ministers and other leaders should meet their counterparts from neighboring countries. For example, Education Ministers from both Japan and China could meet to discuss projects related to research, as well as foreign exchange programs between the two nations. I am sure they could come up with a lot of other ideas that would help develop international collaboration.

4. How could safer driving be encouraged?

Well, initially we should teach young people, that is to say future drivers, that driving can be dangerous and deadly if people don't respect road regulations. School headmasters could organize a slide show in every class of secondary school to show pictures of accidents to young students and make them understand the consequences of unsafe driving. In addition, the government should pass legislation to encourage safe driving. Policemen should enforce the law, and severely punish drivers who run red lights, speed or drink and drive. I really think that such measures are indispensable (=vital) if we want to make sure people get the message.

5. How could people be encouraged to stay in rural areas?

Well, this issue should be approached step by step. The initial thing that should be done is to make sure that young people in the countryside receive a good education. It means that good teachers should be enticed to go to the rural areas to work. Then, universities should also be opened in smaller towns. Universities attract companies and all kinds of businesses. These companies could then recruit their staff from these colleges. However, it is indispensable for the government to give a hand to these companies: they could cancel taxes for the first few years, or even give some generous grants to entrepreneurs who want to set up their business in rural areas. In addition, the government should definitely develop the transportation networks between cities and rural areas to facilitate business relations. It seems easy theoretically, but in practice it's a whole different story (=it's very difficult, it takes time).

6. How could learning to read be made more enjoyable for children ?

Well, I guess that parents should read fascinating stories to their kids from a very young age, and later on, spend time with them to help them read. In addition, parents should definitely set an example for their kids. If the children often see their parents reading, they will imitate them. On top of this, parents and teachers should use some fun books, with colorful illustrations (=drawings). They should also introduce new stories to the children in order to feed their curiosity. You know, they could maybe tell them about the beginning of the story, and let them read the end by themselves.

7. How could galleries and museums attract more visitors?

Well, I guess that first of all art galleries should be free, or very cheap. I also think that we should find a way to make museums more interesting, I mean less boring. Usually these places are very quiet and sometimes even run-down. It's not a good place for young people to learn something practical. Art and history should be considered as practical subjects, so tour guides should interact with the public. They should tell some anecdotes (short stories) to make the visitors think. You know, sightseers could have a chance to take a quiz before and after the museum tour. They could install computers with big screens that tell stories or ask questions to the guests. And probably most importantly, the museum curator (leader) should organize some partnerships with local schools to explain to students why these places are meaningful.

It's now your turn to answer!

8. How could the living conditions of animals in the zoo be improved?

9. How could parents control the amount of time children spend online?

9 How Might...? (Possibilities in the Future)

Try not to use “maybe” too much. Instead, it’s better to say: “We might...People may...
It’s likely that...”

Remember to use these modals (might, may, should, would, must) whenever you are talking about the future or hypothesizing. You can always start your sentences with:

I’m not quite sure yet...

I haven’t made up my mind yet.

Of course, we don’t know what could happen in the future, but I think that...

It’s just an hypothesis, but people might...

“(Next year?) I might go to Australia” is much better than “maybe I will go to Australia.”

In the future, newspapers might disappear because young people prefer reading the news online.

Hypothesis: “Wow! He’s wearing a Rolex on his wrist. He must be rich!” is better than “maybe he is rich.”

It might happen...	They might even invent...	People might stop doing...
It may improve our future...	we may learn...	The government may decide to...
It’s quite likely that...	It’s very likely that...	It’s extremely likely that...
There’s no doubt that...	We’ll definitely see...	We’ll most certainly witness...
We should expect to see...	It shouldn’t be a surprise if...	It would be no surprise if...
...guess that...	I assume that...	I suppose that...

1. How might shopping change in the future ?

Well, of course we don't know what is going to happen in the future, but it seems very likely that more people will buy stuff on the Internet, because it offers more choices and better prices. In addition, people might be able to pay using their mobile phones, you know, just like we use credit cards right now. I think that our cell phones may very well come to replace our wallets. I think that it wouldn't be a surprise if cash disappeared and was replaced by electronic money only. You know, we would just need to connect our mobile to a payment machine, and that would be it. It would be very convenient.

2. What effect might the Internet have on the future of newspapers and magazines?

Well, some people say that newspapers might disappear in the future. They may be replaced by mobile phones and computers. Already nowadays, fewer people read magazines and newspapers compared to the past. There is no doubt that the sales of newspapers will continue to drop in the next few years. Are they going to vanish (=disappear)? I am skeptical because a lot of people find it pleasant to read the news on paper.

3. How might attitudes to reading change in the future?

Well, I am afraid that people might read less in the future, because there are so many other hobbies available nowadays. Young people already don't read half as much as the previous generations because they can watch TV or play computer games, or play a lot of different sports. We have a lot of other choices, and people are definitely getting lazier. In the future, people might listen to audio books instead of reading them themselves. People have already started reading online, but it's not so pleasant for the eyes, and reading a thick book seems scary for many young people...So, yes, I am a little bit pessimistic about the future generations' attitude towards books and reading.

4. How might the level of urban noise be reduced?

That's a good question because noise in my city has become almost unbearable in the last 3 or 4 years. I guess that all the noise is related to traffic as well as the road construction going on everywhere across the city. So in my opinion, the best way to limit noise is to facilitate smoother traffic flow and to forbid drivers from honking their horns. You know, they always do that at red light junctions when traffic is congested. It's so irritating! In addition, a lot of motorbikes are equipped with alarm systems that go off whenever someone touches the bike. This kind of equipment should definitely be forbidden! It's so annoying and no one even pays attention to it anymore, so it's totally useless.

5. How might technological advances change transport in the future?

Well, I think that the first thing that will change is the form of energy we use to power cars and buses. There is no doubt that petrol will be replaced by electricity or solar or hydrogen energy. In addition, flying will become more popular for sure. And in the future, we can imagine that our children might get to travel in small, environmentally-friendly rockets. It's quite likely that researchers will come up with new machines. It's only a matter of time.

6. What might be the social effects of people working very long hours?

Well, I can guess that if people work long hours, they will be tired and most likely stressed. They might not feel like going out with their relatives, or hanging out with their friends after work. I suppose that, if they work too much, people might just go home and watch TV, or go online. That means they won't socialize much, and this will have an impact on people's relationships. I guess that if a husband is always tired or grumpy because he works too much, divorces might happen more frequently. Work habits can definitely influence the whole society.

7. What might people mean when they say that the world is getting smaller?

(No guessing here; don't say "YOU SHOULD KNOW", use "might, may, it's likely that.')

Well, the saying "the world is getting smaller" is related to globalization. Nowadays, companies do business throughout the world; you know, Chinese companies export to places all around the world. People can travel and fly in and out of the country very easily. In addition, we can find out about international news in one single click on our computer; I can talk live to my cousin who lives in Australia through my webcam. And most importantly, different cultures and ideas spread all across the world. We listen to British rock in China; people eat Chinese specialties in France... The world is becoming one: it's easy to about the rest of the world. Globalization brings people closer. That's what it means.

8. What new features would you like to see on personal computers ?

It's your turn to answer!

(In the future... I would love my computer to have... We might be able to... Who knows, we might even...)

Part 1

of the IELTS Speaking Test

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Yourself | 13 Reading |
| 2 Your Family | 14 Writing |
| 3 Your Hometown | 15 Newspapers |
| 4 Your Home | 16 TV and Films |
| 5 Your Studies | 17 Computers |
| 6 Your Work | 18 Nature |
| 7 Food | 19 Pollution |
| 8 The Weather | 20 Traveling |
| 9 Your Hobbies | 21 Languages |
| 10 Sports | 22 Festivals |
| 11 Music | 23 Going Overseas |
| 12 Shopping | 24 Your Future |

DON'T FORGET:

Be yourself.

Develop your answers. Give details.

Don't be boring !

1 Yourself

1. What is your full name please?

I'm Tang Xiaojiao, but you can call me Jenny. That is my English name and I chose it a long time ago.

2. How do I spell your last name please?

(Last name = surname = family name. Be careful!)

It's Tang, T A-N-G.

3. Does your Chinese name have a special meaning?

Yes, it does. My first name Xiaojiao means "little crying.", guess that when, was a baby I used to be pretty loud.

My parents chose to call me Xin Zhang, and it's a pretty common name. Xin means "heart" and Zhang means "articles", you know, "essays." My folks (= parents) wanted me to be smart and well-read, you know, knowledgeable. They put a lot of pressure on my shoulders with this name.

My name is Yaning. Ya means that I am the second child of the family, and Ning means "silence." I guess that when I was a child I used to be very calm.

4. Do you like your name? And will you change it in the future?

I quite like my name, Xiaojiao, and there is no need for me to change it. My name is very unique. I don't think that anyone else in China was ever given the same first name. My father really wanted to be original. My name is who I am. It's part of my identity, and it's meaningful to me.

I like my name because of its meaning, and I wouldn't change it for the world. Although my name is very common in China, I got used to being called Yaning, and changing my name now would just be weird (= strange).

5. Why do some people change their names?

Well, most probably because they simply dislike them. They might not be happy with the way they sound. Actually, I have heard of some people who have changed their names because they did not match their *feng shui*, you know, the belief that you can receive positive energy from different things. It's an ancient Chinese thing. In my country, a name could bring you good fortune. It's all about destiny. Personally, I have never met anyone who has changed their name, only in movies when some people need to create a new identity for themselves, or a new life to escape from a horrible situation in their past.

6. Very good, thank you. Miss Tang, when were you born?

I was born in 1991. My birthday is on December the 3rd. This year I am turning 20.

7. Tell me a few things about yourself.

Okay, no problem. I was born in a small town in Fujian Province, about 300 kilometers north of Fuzhou. I was raised there until the age of 18 when I moved to Fuzhou to attend university. I am currently studying accounting, and I have another two years to go before I get a Bachelor's degree. I am sitting in front of you today because I intend to continue my studies in Australia, possibly next year. As far as my hobbies go, I like listening to music and exercising. I enjoy jogging and playing badminton with friends. I am a little shy depending on the situation, but I can also be very talkative when I hang out with my classmates.

TRY TO USE:

I have been studying at university for two years.

I have been living in Fuzhou for 3 years now.

I have been working in the same company for 6 years now.

I have been studying English for along time, even though I don't often get a chance to practice my speaking.

8. What would your friends say about you if I asked them? (for a girl)

Ha! That's a good question; I should ask them. I believe my friends would say that I am considerate and sweet. I consider myself a kind person. I think that most of the people who know me would say that I am a responsible student who works hard to get what she wants. They would probably also add that I should relax more instead of being so careful with everything all the time. I am quite meticulous.

9. What would you like to change about your personality?

I definitely stress too much. I always worry too much about stuff. At school, I get very tense before the exams. Today in front of you I have sweaty hands and a Knot in my stomach. I always want to do well so I suppose I put pressure on myself. It's quite common in China. In addition, I would like to be able to react faster, to be more quick-minded. Sometimes I am too slow; I always think of a good thing to say too late.

10. Do you have any regrets about the past?

Yes, definitely. Who doesn't? I should have studied harder in high school to get into a better university. I should have arranged my schedule in a different way. I think I was not efficient enough at the time. In addition, a few years ago, my grandfather passed away. I was only 15, and I never really asked him any questions about his youth, or other things he experienced. I wasn't curious enough when he was alive. That's one of my main regrets.

11. Would you say that you look and act more like your father or your mother?

Well, people say I really look like my mother. We've got the same eyes and lips. But in terms of personality, I think I am a lot more like my Dad. We are both very calm and patient. We like things to be done well, whereas on the other hand, my mother is more energetic and impulsive (=spontaneous). I am a mix, a combination of the two of them. Unfortunately, I inherited my father's shyness. You know, in today's world, being shy is not always an advantage.

12. Do you have any bad habits?

It's your turn to answer !

(Eating junk food, spitting, arriving late, smoking, going to bed late, being addicted to computer games...)

2 Your Family

1. *How big is your family?*

There are three of us at home. You know, because of the one-child policy my parents were entitled to only one kid. Occasionally my grandmother comes and stays with us. If you are asking about my extended family, I have many uncles, aunts and cousins. But as for my immediate family, just my parents, I have no siblings.

There are four of us at home. I live with my parents, and I also have an elder brother. My brother's going to turn 21 pretty soon. I am still in high school so I get to stay with my folks (= my parents), but my brother has been studying at college in Wuhan for the last three years.

2. *Can you tell me something about your family members ?*

Okay, no problem. My mother is a very considerate and thoughtful person. She works as a math teacher in middle school, so she has always been able to help me with my homework. She's generous and very kind-hearted. My father on the other hand is a businessman. He set up his own company a long time ago. They manufacture (=produce) shoes, and export all over the world. I don't get to see my father very often. He's often away on business. But we often call each other. He's a hard-working and responsible man. He would do anything for my family. I told you I also have a brother. He is a college student. He's a fun guy to be with. He's enthusiastic and always optimistic. He likes to laugh and enjoy life.

TRY TO USE:

I don't often get to see my parents because my university is far away from my hometown.

I don't often get to speak English because I don't know any foreigners (= laowai!) in Fuzhou.

During the holiday, my younger brother usually gets to play computer games whenever he wants.

3. What kind of work do members of your family do?

BE PRECISE! It's a great chance to show your vocabulary: DON'T BE BORING!

My Dad is a businessman — What kind of business? Since when? Is he busy? His salary?

My mother is a nurse — Does she like her job? What makes her a good nurse? (considerate, patient...)

My mother is a doctor — What's her specialty (pediatrician, gynecologist, cardiologist, psychiatrist...) ?

4. How much time do you manage to spend with family and relatives?

I only get to see my parents on the weekend, because from Monday to Friday I stay on campus at university. My college is located in the suburbs of my city. It's like 45 minutes away from my home. I usually get home on Friday night. On the weekend we (my parents and I) have a big dinner together. It's a good chance for us to catch up. We frequently watch TV together, and occasionally we go for a walk.

DON'T SAY: “in my university”	×	YOU SHOULD SAY: at university	✓
“in my school”	×		at school ✓
“in my high school”	×		in high school
✓			

I only get to see my parents twice a year because my university is located in Sichuan Province, far away from my hometown. It's a four-hour flight. I come home for Spring Festival, you know, Chinese New Year, and during the summer holiday. Otherwise my parents often call me, and I try to send them emails as often as possible.

5. Do you get on well with your family?

Yes, we get on pretty well. Of course, we occasionally disagree and fight (=quarrel), but my parents are quite open-minded and relaxed. They always support me and encourage me. You know, I plan to go overseas next year, and they will pay for my studies. They are extremely helpful, and I consider myself very lucky to have such parents. One of my classmates has big issues with his parents. He says there's a huge generation gap between him and his folks. At least I don't have to worry about that. My parents always listen to what I have to say.

6. What sorts of things do you like to do together?

Well, we frequently have dinner together. You know, in China, food is an important

aspect of our culture. Meals on the weekend are a great chance for all of us to chat and catch up with each other. In addition, we often watch TV, especially the NBA on Sunday morning with my Dad. We are both big basketball fans. We support different teams, and sometimes we make some bets on the games. Occasionally the three of us go for a walk or go shopping. We used to go to the cinema a lot, but now that I am in college, we have less time to do that.

7. Did you have a lot of contact with your grandparents when you were a child?

Yes, when I was a child I used to see my grandparents on a daily basis, because they used to live with us. I guess that when I was very young, my parents needed someone to look after me since they were both busy with their job. My grandpa passed away a few years ago, and my grandma is our neighbor now. My Dad bought the apartment next door for her to be with us whenever she feels like it.

8. Is it common for grandparents to live with their children and grandchildren in your country?

Yes, definitely. It's very common. In China, children take it as their responsibility to look after their parents when they get old. In addition, nowadays, because both parents often work, grandparents can lend a hand when it comes to raising the kid in the family. Hiring a nanny costs money, and putting a child in a day-care center is not that popular so popular) here.

9. What part do grandparents play in family life in your culture?

As I told you, grandparents are very important in my culture. The whole family listens to and respects the grandparents' points of view. They are like the wise people in the house. In addition, these days, they play a major role in the family, because they very often get to raise the child when both parents are working.

10. How can grandchildren benefit from knowing their grandparents ?

It's your turn to answer!

(Children can learn from experienced grandparents + increase respect for elderly people traditions)

3 Your Hometown

1. Whereabouts did you grow up ?

I grew up here in Fuzhou (if you take the IELTS in Fuzhou, use your hand to point at the ground). I was born and raised here. Actually I have lived here my entire life (= my whole life).

I was born in a small town in Fujian Province, about 300 kilometers north of Fuzhou. It's pretty much a four-hour ride from here. I was born and raised there. I only moved out when I went to university. For the last 2 years I have been attending school in Shanghai.

2. How long have you lived there (or here)?=How long did you live there ?

I have lived here my whole life. I have never left my hometown.

Just be careful with the tenses:

have lived=You still live there.

I lived=You don't live there anymore.

3. Does your family still live there?

Yes, they do. Most of my relatives still live in my hometown. This is why I go back there as often as possible. They all have jobs there, and my parents built a house just outside my hometown. They don't intend to move away.

4. Tell me about the town or city you come from.

Use the same words for your city:

pleasant

expanding

mild weather

architecture

renovated

worth a visit

Well, Fuzhou is a middle-sized city as Chinese cities go, in spite of its 6 or 7 million inhabitants. Fuzhou is located only 30 kilometers from the ocean, and it is surrounded by mountains. As a result, it is a very pleasant place to live. Because we live in Southern China, the weather here is pretty nice (= quite nice) all year round. Even in the winter the temperatures are quite mild. Fuzhou has been developing a lot, and recently the city has been expanding every year. Although Fuzhou is an ancient city, it looks quite modern nowadays. There are many skyscrapers, and new shopping malls, as well as large streets in the city center. There is an old quarter with old buildings and architecture, but it is being renovated at the moment. In addition, the food here is excellent. There are quite a few parks and temples for tourists to visit. I think the city is definitely worth a visit. It's typically Chinese: it's a mix of ancient and contemporary (= modern).

5. What kind of place is your hometown?

You must define the place:

exciting = lively

quiet = peaceful

nice = pleasant

boring, noisy...

I would say my hometown is a small and peaceful city compared to other huge metropolises in China. I think that nowadays people always complain about traffic and noise, but Fuzhou is a quiet and pleasant city in which to lead a comfortable life and raise a family. However, I agree that it can also get a bit boring sometimes. Fuzhou is not as exciting as Shanghai or Hong Kong of course, especially for young people.

6. What's the most interesting part of your hometown?

Well, that's a tough question because there isn't just one nice place in my city. There's a famous mountain called Gu Shan. It's a quiet place in the outskirts of the city. There's a path that goes up into the hills, and you can reach a stunning temple at the top. From up there, there's an impressive view over the whole city. In addition, I love the architecture and the park around the temple. But there are other places just as good, like West Lake Park, or places along the Min River. My city has a lot to offer.

7. What's the best thing about your hometown?

Well, I must say I love the food in my hometown! Fuzhou is famous for its sweet food. We have a lot of different specialties, such as fish balls. They're a mix of fish and meat together that are served in soup. They're really quite tasty. You should try them. In addition, we eat a lot of sea food since we are very close to the coast. We get a lot of crabs and

shrimps, amazing fish, and jelly-fish too. The local cuisine is really delicious, and it's a mix of flavors: sweet and sour, sometimes a bit spicy, with many kinds of salty snacks too.

8. Is your hometown a good place for young people ?

I think it's a great place to study because we have some good high schools and pretty good universities. In addition, there are not so many temptations (=distractions) in Fuzhou. You know, the night life is pretty boring, and there aren't that many great places to go shopping either. I think that the young people who were born here get tired of the city, but those who come from smaller towns in Fujian Province find Fuzhou fun and lively. It's a question of perspective (=point of view).

9. Has your hometown changed in recent years ?

Yes, a lot. You wouldn't believe the changes that my city has undergone in the last 10 years. First of all, the city has modernized a lot. So now there are plenty of new buildings and new residential areas everywhere. As a result, the city has been expanding every year. Ten years ago, Fuzhou was an old-fashioned looking place, with narrow streets and alleys everywhere. Everyone used to ride a bicycle; we even had rickshaws everywhere. But nowadays, roads count three or four lanes on each side; everyone owns a car, and the government even ordered a subway to be built. Restaurants and shopping centers have mushroomed all over the city. I think that business is booming, and it's only the beginning.

10. What changes would you like to make in your hometown ?

I would definitely try to improve the traffic situation in my hometown. Every day traffic gets congested around rush hour. It drives people crazy! I guess that the roads are not wide enough at some junctions, and there are simply too many people and too many cars nowadays. You can get stuck in traffic on your way to work and easily lose 30 or 40 minutes. In addition, traffic jams cause severe pollution problems. Cars and buses emit exhaust fumes (=exhaust gas). It's really gross disgusting. The government should really encourage people to use public transport.

11. Which places in your province would you suggest a tourist visit?

Now it is your turn to answer

4 Your Home

Make sure you learn these words:

spacious=large

pleasant=nice

well-decorated

well-equipped(=TV, computers +

appliances)

bright(=we have big windows)

comfortable= comfy =cozy

quiet =peaceful

in the suburbs =on the outskirts

1. What kind of place do you live in?

(NOT "where"! What kind flat, house, dorm...)

I live in a pretty spacious big) apartment in the outskirts of my hometown. My family bought the flat a long time ago. We live on the 10th floor of a high-rise. It's a three-bedroom apartment. I think it covers pretty much 130 square meters (一时). It's a fairly nice place.

2. Who do you live with?

I live with my parents and my grandmother. Our apartment is pretty big, so there is enough space for everyone. My grandmother moved in with us a few years ago when my grandpa passed away.

3. Do you like living there?

Yes, definitely. It's a great place to live. First of all, the neighborhood is very pleasant. There are many shops and restaurants around our place. There's also a nice park just 2 minutes away. In addition, our house is very comfortable. You know, it's spacious and bright. My mother bought a lot of nice furniture. She decorated the apartment with picture and paintings on the walls. It looks very cozy. And I have my own room, with a big bed, and a large desk. I'm quite lucky, I think.

4. What do you like about the rooms in your house ?

I really like the way my house is furnished and decorated. We have a very comfy sofa in the living room, and a large flat-screen TV set hanging on the wall. Our apartment is well-equipped. In addition, I like the fact that we have two big balconies. It's really nice when the weather is warm. We can have dinner outside. Sometimes in the summer my parents and I play cards outside.

5. How long have you lived there ?

Watch out for the grammar ! Make a full sentence.
--

I have been living in the same house for the last 10 or 12 years, I think. When I was a child we used to live in another place, in a different neighborhood, but the house was quite small and old. My parents bought the apartment we now live in like 10 or so years ago.

6. What is the area like where you live?

(=Lively or peaceful, convenient or not, quiet or noisy?)

It's a pleasant neighborhood. There are plenty of shops and restaurants everywhere. From our house, it's like a five-minute walk to the supermarket. It's extremely convenient. In addition, there's a bus stop just down the street. We live in the suburbs of the city, but it only takes 20 to 25 minutes to get to the city center. It's not bad. The area is pretty quiet compared with other districts in my hometown. There are a lot of new residential areas everywhere around us, so they are building new schools and shopping centers. It's developing quite fast. Oh, I almost forgot! There's a nice park just a block away from our building. It's a great place to go for a walk or a jog in the summer.

7. Would you recommend this area as a place to live?

Yes, definitely! It's a very pleasant place to live, especially if you are raising a child. The area is more peaceful than the city center. The traffic is better; it's smoother. And on the weekend, you can relax in the park, or go to one of the many restaurants around the new shopping center. It's a lovely place to live.

No, definitely not! I live in the city center and it's absolutely too crowded and noisy. It's a very lively place. It's great if you like to go out at night to bars or to sing karaoke. But otherwise, if you are looking for a quiet neighborhood, with less traffic and noise, then I would highly recommend that you look for another area.

8. Do you think you will move anytime soon ?

Well, my family won't move, but I'm looking forward to getting my visa and going to Australia. I intend to continue my studies over there next semester. It's my ambition, and I hope it's going to work out.

9. What kind of house or apartment would you like to have in the future ?

Well, I would love to own a whole house, just like what I've seen on TV in Western countries. In China, we don't have enough space to build private individual houses, especially in the city. So pretty much everyone gets to live in apartment buildings. My dream would be to have a nice house in the suburbs of my hometown, with a backyard and a lawn (=grass area). My house would have to be modern and spacious, with a very large kitchen, because I love cooking, and a bright living room with a huge TV. My whole family could live there. In China, space is luxury. We'll see what happens. But I would need a lot of money to build this kind of house nowadays.

10. Do you prefer the appearance of old or modern buildings?

Well, in my country I love the design of old houses, you know, with the inclined roof, and the traditional architecture. I like the old-fashioned looking facades (=face of a building), with the Chinese windows. They are all carved and made of wood. They're beautiful. On the other hand, usually, modern houses are quite ugly. They are made of cement and tiles. They are generally all square. They look good from the inside though. You know, they are comfortable and well-equipped, but the outside is just too common, too boring.

11. What can you see from your bedroom window?

I can't see much except for other buildings. We live in a community, and there are like 10 or 12 high-rises next to each other. But just outside the living room, we have a balcony, and from that side of the building, we overlook the Min River and the mountains that surround Fuzhou. At night the banks of the river light up. Although there are still a lot of buildings in the way, the view is pretty nice.

5 Your Studies

TRY TO USE:

I have been studying there for 2 years.

I have been studying economics.

I've been living in a dorm with 5 other girls.

I've been learning a lot since I entered university.

1. Where do you study?

I am a college student and I have been studying at Fujian Normal University in Fuzhou City for the last 3 years. My major is computer engineering and I quite enjoy it. This is why I intend to continue my studies overseas next year.

2. Is it a good place to study?

Well, yes, it's not bad. The university has a pretty good reputation in Fujian Province. Obviously it's not one of the best colleges in the nation, but it has a good reputation in my field, and I have learned a lot already. In addition, the facilities there are very modern. The classrooms are spacious and clean. We even have air-conditioners in most classes. The library is brand new (=extremely new). It's a very comfortable and bright place to study. And on top of this, the dorms are not too bad. I mean they're not huge, but it's good enough to sleep and hang around with my classmates.

3. Why did you choose this university?

I had applied to other, better colleges, but my results on the College Entrance Examination were not as good as expected, so I had to lower my ambitions and go for Plan B. My university is actually not bad. It's just not as prestigious as what I wanted.

4. What subject are you studying?

My major is marketing, but I must admit to you that I really dislike it. This is partly

the reason why I want to study overseas, because in China it's really troublesome to change majors. But in Australia, I don't need to repeat the first two years, so I plan to go there and major in accounting.

I major in computer engineering and I quite like it. At first I wasn't too sure, but my parents encouraged me to choose this field, and I don't regret it. I have been learning a lot about software design and electronic engineering. I will finish my Bachelor's degree here, and then I intend to go to England to get a Master's.

5. What kind of job do you want to do in the future ?

I plan to=I intend to=I hope to=I might...
--

I intend to become a computer engineer because it interests me a lot, and I think I have the potential to do a good job in this field. In addition, the pay should be quite high, which is important to me.

I plan to set up my own company, although I don't know yet what kind of business I could open. It might be related to logistics, because I have been studying this subject at school. We shall see...

6. What is the most difficult part of your studies?

It is your turn to answer now!

Difficult= challenging= tough =complex= complicated

Your Studies — in High School

1. Where do you study?

I'm a high-school student. I have been studying at Number 1 Middle School in Fuzhou for 3 years. I'm a senior there, and I'll be graduating at the end of this school year. Number Middle School is supposed to be the best in my city. My classmates are all excellent students, and the teachers push us pretty hard.

2. Tell me about your school.

Okay, it's not a huge school. I think there are only 1500 students studying there, so the classrooms are not overcrowded (=jammed). It's a pretty old school and the facilities are not that great (=not so great). But the teachers are very professional and qualified.

It's a boarding school, so I get to stay there 5 days a week. It's quite nice to live with my classmates. We do homework together; we always eat with our friends. Because we spend each other very well, we get to know each other very well. You know, because it's a good school, the teachers make us work hard, and everyone expects a lot from us. I think we are all glad to be able to support each other in my class.

3. How long have you been studying there?

I have been studying at the same school for 3 years. I came there after I graduated from middle school. In China, Be careful with the tense! senior high school lasts 3 years.

4. Which part of your studies do you find most interesting?

I enjoy studying mathematics, probably because I get good results in this subject. I don't find it too hard. It seems to come to me pretty naturally. In addition, my teacher, , , very considerate man. He's excellent at his job and he definitely helps all of us a lot.

5. Do you often get together with your classmates after class ?

Yes, almost every day. We often go for a walk and buy some snacks after Occasionally we play basketball for a while before going home (or going back to the to study. I enjoy hanging out with my classmates, but we all think we never have enough time to have fun. You know, our workload is pretty heavy in high school.

6. Is there anyone who helps you with your studies at school?

Not really. Sometimes when I have a question I ask my friends. but usually I call them from home, while I am doing my homework. Sometimes my friends give me a ring to ask for advice. I guess we all help each other from time to tome, I could also ask my teachers questions, but I must admit I don't often do it. I'd rather my friends.

6 Your Work

Make sure you can explain very clearly what your job is.

USE PRECISE VOCABULARY; GIVE DETAILS!

This should be an easy topic if you prepare meticulously (=carefully).

1. What kind of work do you do?

I work as an accountant in a trade company. We export baby products all over the world. We produce baby bottles, baby chairs and baby clothes. I like working there but I feel I need to face new challenges and this is why I am taking this test. I might immigrate to Australia and settle down over there.

2. What work do you do in your job?

Well, I am an accountant, so my job consists of preparing profit statements at the end of each month. In order to do this, I must compile (=gather) and analyze a lot of information from different departments. Actually I get to work with the sales manager and the production manager quite a lot since they must let me know about their expenditures and budgets for the following months.

3. How long have you been doing this job?

I have been working for the same company for 4 years. I got the job right after graduating from university.

4. Why did you choose this kind of work?

Well, I have always been good at math, and one of my teachers advised me to become an accountant when I was in high school. I remember talking about it with my parents and they thought it could be a good idea because every company needs accountants. So it wouldn't be too hard to find a job. And they were right. I have heard that it was also possible for me to get a job in Australia. I guess this career is quite stable and the salary is also decent not bad).

5. Do you think...is a good place to work?

Yes, definitely. I got to learn a lot in my company. I met some interesting people and my colleagues and supervisors are all very nice and helpful. However, I think it's time for me to experience something new and exciting. In the last few months I realized I wasn't learning much anymore and my job was getting a bit repetitive. I think it's time for me to move on.

6. How do you feel about your job?

It's your turn to answer this question !

Your answer will be very similar to question 5.

7. What kind of training did you have to do for your job?

Well, I studied finance and accounting at university. I had to get familiar with the software applications we use on a daily basis at work, but I must admit it was pretty simple. The most difficult thing is to learn about the new governmental policies that keep on changing, especially in terms of taxes. I also need to plan a budget and estimate a lot of data for our department. It requires a lot of patience and I must be very careful and meticulous whenever I enter the figures into the computer.

8. Do you remember your first day of work?

Yes, four years ago. I was very nervous because I wanted to make a good impression on everyone. But actually everything went fine. My supervisor showed me my desk, and then she introduced me to my co-workers. Most of them were very friendly right away and told me not to hesitate if I had any questions about the job. As I told you, they are very helpful. I guess that's one of the advantages of working for a small company. The supervisor explained to me how to use the software applications, and then she gave me my first assignment. My first day was pretty easy, actually.

9. Was it difficult to get this job?

No, not really. I sent the company my resume and they replied very quickly because they really needed someone as soon as possible. The accounting manager called me and asked to meet me the following day. She interviewed me and gave me the job maybe 3 or 4 days after our meeting. It went very fast.

10. What is the most interesting thing about your job?

I enjoy attending meetings and training sessions organized by the H.R. (Human Resources) Department. It's a good opportunity to learn something new and usually I get to meet new people. It's a bit refreshing. A few months ago, we had a seminar in Xiamen for 3 days. It was nice to get away from the office. In addition, I have a lot of freedom every day, except on the last week of each month when it gets very busy. But I have gotten used to it, and I know how to manage my time. I like my job because I seldom need to work overtime. I know that it's quite common in a lot of other small businesses for employees to have to work very late, but I never have to.

11. Do you get on well with your colleagues?

Yes, because it's a small office we get to talk a lot and we regularly have lunch together. It's a good chance for us to socialize and get to know each other better. The atmosphere at work is quite relaxed and I enjoy talking to my colleagues. When I started the job, they helped me a lot. They are very kind and I will miss them when I quit.

12. Would you like to change your job?

Well, I want to keep on being an accountant but I would like to do it somewhere else. I intend to immigrate to Australia in order to change my lifestyle radically. I want to experience new challenges and see the world. I have been working in the same company for too long. I would like to learn something new and give my family a chance to have a better life abroad. I got married last year. Everyone tells me that Australia is a beautiful place to raise a child. We'll see.

7 Food

1. What is your favorite food?

Well, that's a tough question because I love so many different kinds of food, especially anything spicy. I love the specialties from Sichuan Province. I am sure you are familiar with Sichuan cuisine. They use red hot chilies with meat or vegetables. Everything is so tasty and colorful! A couple of days ago, I went out for dinner with some friends and we had spicy food: meat and tofu, as well as green beans and all kinds of vegetables in a spicy hot pot. It was unbelievable! It's going to make my mouth water just thinking about it!

2. What kinds of food are popular in your country?

It really depends on where you are. You know how huge our country is. So every area offers different types of cooking (=of cuisine), different specialties. The coastal regions are usually big on sea food: in Fujian we love to eat fish and shrimps, and crab, anything from the ocean. In the western regions of China, they tend to eat spicy food, with lots of peppers. In the north, they eat dumplings, and a lot of fried foods. In general, the Chinese eat a lot of rice and vegetables. And in the last 10 years, everyone has been eating more meat too, thanks to the economic development our country has experienced.

3. Is it usual for the whole family to eat together in your country?

Yes, definitely. Having dinner together is very common in China. Families usually pay a lot of attention to this. Dinner time is a great chance for everyone to sit together and enjoy a great meal. In addition, it's a good opportunity for relatives to catch up with one another, since everyone is so busy these days. You know, during the national holidays, families generally stay home and cook together. It's like a tradition. Food is a very important aspect of Chinese culture.

4. Who cooks the food in your home?

My grandmother cooks most of the time, and occasionally my mother does too. But I must admit that the best food we ever get is when my father is in charge! He's a real chef but he only cooks during the holidays, when he's not working.

5. What are some of the benefits of eating home-cooked food?

Well, obviously the food is cleaner; it's not as oily as in restaurants; and because it's prepared with love, home-cooked food always tastes better! At home, my mother always prepares the food very carefully. She buys the vegetables herself; she selects the best parts of the meat, and gets rid of the fatty bits too. And most important, she doesn't use too much MSG or oil.

6. What do you think about fast food?

There are different kinds of fast food. If we are talking about KFC and McDonald's, I would tell you that, although the burgers are tasty, people shouldn't eat there too much because the sauces there are too fattening and full of calories. This is why we call it junk food. On the other hand, there is also a lot of Chinese fast food, like noodles and fried rice. I think they are obviously not the best, but they can be convenient from time to time when you are in a rush.

9 the weather

1. What's your favorite type of weather?

Well, definitely warm sunny days. I like it when the sky is blue and the weather is warm enough that we don't need to wear sweaters, jackets or a scarf. In my hometown, I love the fall autumn). The temperatures are quite pleasant, and it doesn't rain much. It's the most beautiful season.

2. What is the weather like in your hometown in the winter?

My hometown is located in southern China, so the temperatures are quite mild in the winter. It gets cold, but it's definitely not as freezing as up north like in Beijing or Harbin. In January the temperatures vary around 15 degrees. It could be very nice on a sunny day, but it could be a bit gloomy when it rains. It never snows in my hometown, but it does a bit further away, in some of the mountains in Fujian Province.

3. Do you like the rain?

Not at all! I hate it when it rains. Especially in the winter, when it's cold and wet, I think it's the worst weather ever. In addition, in the city, when it rains, the streets get dirty from the dirt and the pollution. The bottom of my trousers always get dirty. I can't stand it. You know, in Fuzhou, usually, when it rains, it's not a little drizzle; it usually rains like cats and dogs (=very hard). Believe me, it's not that pleasant (=not so pleasant=no so nice).

Well, I don't mind it usually. I think that rainy days can be romantic and peaceful. I like it when it rains on the weekend, and I can stay in bed. I like the sound of the rain falling. It's very relaxing, especially when you are under a warm blanket on a cold winter day!

4. Have you ever seen snow before?

You bet! For sure I come from northern China, and, you know, we get lots of snow up there. Last winter for Spring Festival, we had like 40 or 50 centimeters just outside the door. Snow is fun at first: it's so clean, and it makes everything so peaceful. But after a few days, it gets dirty and quite annoying when we have to shovel the pathway every day and drive very slowly on the roads. It's inconvenient.

5. How does the weather influence your life ?

Well, the weather influences my habits. For example, I can only play basketball when the weather allows it. I don't especially like to go out when it's raining, or when it's very cold outside. In my hometown, it gets boiling hot in the summer, like around 40 degrees. When it's that hot (= so hot), you can't spend any time outside. In addition, the weather also influences my mood. When it's raining, I feel a bit lazy. But whenever the sky is very blue, it gives me energy.

6. Is the weather ever unusual where you live?

Now it is your turn to answer!

(Typhoons cause flooding. Schools close for a few days. Some people even die sometimes.)

(Snow storms took place in the last few years. They paralyzed traffic and cities. Some roofs collapsed.)

9 Your Hobbies

1. What do you do in your free time?

Well, it depends, but I enjoy reading and watching movies on my computer. These two activities are very entertaining and relaxing at the same time. Reading can open the doors to a fantastic world. I especially like fantasy novels like the Harry Potter series. When it comes to movies, I'm a big fan of action films. I like the shooting and the battle scenes. They're always thrilling. In addition, I try to go hiking as often as possible. I am lucky because my hometown is surrounded by mountains, and there are many paths to take up hill. The scenery is quite stunning, with forests, waterfalls and great views. On top of this, it's a good chance to work out (=exercise).

2. Did you have other hobbies when you were younger?

Yes, as a kid, I used to play basketball all the time. I used to be crazy about this sport. I remember when Yao Ming joined the NBA: it was such a big deal, and we would hear about it all the time on TV and on the radio. The national channel showed us a lot of games, and my friends and I would play and pretend we were NBA stars. I don't often play anymore, but I still enjoy watching games occasionally.

3. What does your father do in his free time?

My Dad likes to watch a lot of TV. He frequently buys DVDs and he watches them late at night when everyone is sleeping. He's extremely busy with his job and he doesn't get much time on his own. So he waits for everyone to go to bed, and then he turns on the DVD player. That's the only time when he doesn't need to talk to my mother and my grandmother. During the holidays, he often plays mahjong with friends. They hang out, catch up, and I think they drink quite a bit too.

4. Are these activities popular in your country?

You mean watching TV and playing mahjong? Yes, definitely! I think that middle-aged people all around my country love to watch TV, and many men in the south enjoy playing

cards or mahjong (= a kind of Chinese dominoes). It's fun, and at the same time, it's a good chance for people to socialize.

5. If you had more free time, what would you do ?

I would like to exercise more often. I wish I had more time to play basketball, and maybe join the gym to work out. In addition, I wish I could travel more as well. You know how big China is; there are so many stunning places I would like to visit. I'd love to go to Sichuan Province and Tibet. I wish I had more time and money!

6. What would you like to change about your daily routine?

I guess I should try to get to bed earlier, and get up earlier too. I play computer games late at night sometimes. I should focus on other things. And as I told you, I wish I had more time to exercise on a weekly basis. I would love to try new sports like rock climbing, for example.

As a high-school student, there isn't much I could do to change my daily routine. I just wish I didn't have so much homework all the time, so that I would have more time to enjoy myself.

10 Your Hobbies

1. Have you ever played any sports?

Yes, of course. I have tried to play a bunch of different sports. When I was a child, I used to play ping-pong all the time. I also enjoyed football. But nowadays, I frequently play basketball and I try to go jogging from time to time. In addition, I occasionally play badminton with my co-workers.

2. Are there any sports you would like to try?

A new sport? Let me think... I would love to learn how to ride a horse. Horse riding, I think the technical term is equestrianism, looks like a lot of fun. It must be a great feeling to be able to ride a galloping horse, and even jump over obstacles. In addition, karting, you know, kart racing (go-karts are tiny cars) also looks thrilling. I like sports that involve speed. I'd love to learn how to paraglide. I saw a show on TV the other day about this extreme sport. It looks like such an amazing activity! You get to fly on your own, with some kind of parachute. You've got to deal with the wind, but you can enjoy a stunning view from above at the same time. It looks thrilling!

3. Which is the most popular sport where you live?

Definitely badminton. You know, the Chinese are extremely skilled at both badminton and table tennis. I'm from Fujian Province, and we have quite a few badminton champions who were trained here. For example, the last Olympic gold medalist in badminton was Lin Dan, who's from Longyan, a small town in southern Fujian. Wherever you go in my city, if the weather is nice, you'll see people playing in the street. In my city, most young guys love basketball. If you go out on any campus or stadium, you'll notice that the basketball courts are always crowded. Since Yao Ming joined the NBA 8 years ago, basketball has become extremely popular. On the weekend, my father and I often watch NBA games on the sports channel, and I know that most of my friends do the same.

4. What sports are popular in your country?

Well, badminton and ping-pong are by far the most popular sports in China. Everyone learns how to play these sports from a very young age. And every 4 years at the Olympics, Chinese athletes excel in these competitions. However, in the last few years, teenagers started showing a growing interest for both basketball and football. But I am afraid that we'11 never be able to compete on the international stage in those two sports. We simply lack strategy, power and experience: it seems like a lot to overcome.

5. How important is it to play sports regularly?

It's extremely important for our health. Playing sports allows our muscles to exercise and grow. In addition, sports can be a great way for people to socialize and relax. Kids should be encouraged to play sports for these reasons.

6. Do you think that children should play sports in school?

Now it is your turn to answer!

Definitely! First... In addition...On top of this, it's a good chance for them to...

11 Music

1. What types of music do you like to listen to?

I usually listen to Chinese pop music. I'm very fond of two pop stars from Taiwan and Hong Kong, but I doubt I don't think you know their names. I also frequently listen to some American pop songs. I'm fond of two bands called West Life and the Backstreet Boys. I love the rhythm and the lyrics of some of the songs. Occasionally I listen to a bit of rap too. Although I don't understand the lyrics, the tune gives me energy. I have uploaded many songs onto my MP3 player, so I can listen to any kind of music I like, anytime, anywhere.

2. At what times of day do you like to listen to music ?

Usually I put my earphones in when I go to school in the morning. I take the bus every single day. I prefer listening to my own music rather than the bus radio. I often listen to music after school too, on my way back, and sometimes in my room at night after doing my homework. Music can help me relax.

3. Do you prefer to listen to recordings or live performances?

I guess I don't really have a preference. It depends on who is playing. Usually recordings are much clearer, the voices are better, and if the song is in English, it's much easier for me to understand the lyrics. However, live performances are very exciting, especially after the song, when the artist talks to the audience, and everyone cheers and claps. It can create some pretty cool feelings.

4. What types of music are popular in your country?

Well, Chinese pop music is huge here. this is the type of music you can hear if you go to karaoke, or if you turn on your TV around 7 pm at night. In addition, there are quite a few rock bands in my country, and they are very trendy (=fashionable). Nowadays many young people like foreign pop groups like Linkin Park and Daft Punk. Of course traditional instrumental music has always been well-appreciated, and some young singers, like Jay Chou, mix ancient instruments like the pipa, erhu or guzheng, with electric guitars and modern tunes. It's an interesting combination that many people like.

5. Do all children in your country study music at school?

Yes, definitely. Music is a compulsory subject at school in China. Usually teachers teach students how to sing, and how to recognize the musical notes: do, re, mi. You know, there are so many students per class, so teachers cannot teach everyone how to play an instrument. It's easier to make everyone sing.

6. Do you play a musical instrument?

No. When I was a child, I started learning the clarinet but it didn't last long. I didn't like it, and my mother kind of forced me to. We had a big fight one day, and that was it (= it was over). I would like to learn how to play the guitar in the future. Right now, I have no time because of my studies. Maybe during the next summer holidays...

7. Do you think children should learn to play a musical instrument?

I think it's great if parents can give their children an opportunity to learn how to play one instrument, but the problem is that, very often, kids don't enjoy it, but they keep on learning because their parents expect them to. Maybe it's better to wait until the children are old enough to actually make the decision on their own.

12 Shopping

1. Do you enjoy shopping?

Yes, definitely, a lot. You know how much most girls like shopping, and I am no exception. I frequently go shopping with my mother or some friends. There are many new shopping malls in my city, with a lot of new shops, more choices. It's always exciting to go there, and relaxing too.

No, I can't say I like it and I hardly ever go to the mall unless I know for sure what I want to buy. Some people, especially some girls, can go window shopping all afternoon, just trying on new clothes even if they don't need anything new because their closets are already full at home. They think it is fun and exciting, but I find it tiring and boring to walk around with no precise aim. My girlfriend frequently asks me to go shopping with her, and I must admit I am running out of excuses not to go!

2. Do you prefer shopping in modern stores or in traditional markets?

I definitely prefer to go to the modern department stores, because I know I can find whatever I want there. The shops offer a great variety of brand-name clothes. Usually the traditional markets in my hometown only sell cheap products or counterfeit items. In my neighborhood there are a few clothes shops as well as a bookstore I like to go to. But most of the shops sell furniture, because I live in a residential area with a lot of new buildings, and the owners of these new apartments need to purchase beds, tables, and sofas to furnish their new places. I guess the business is quite good for these stores. In addition, there is a pretty big supermarket like 5 minutes away from my place.

3. What sorts of things do you enjoy buying most?

I like to buy books. I read a lot, and I enjoy seeing all the books on the shelves in my house. Books are great; they allow me to relax, and they open the doors to an imaginary world. They make me dream. In addition, I love the smell of new books. I know it's a bit weird, isn't it?

4. Who does the daily or weekly shopping in your household?

It really depends. My mother often goes grocery shopping after work, but my father frequently goes to the market to buy fish, meat and vegetables on the weekend. Occasionally my grandma also buys groceries. It depends on who's got time to go.

5. How often do you go shopping for things apart from food?

Rarely. I am a university student, so I don't have that much money, and I don't want to spend my parents' cash on things I don't need. I enjoy shopping, but I don't think it's run if I know I can buy whatever I like. I guess I will go shopping more often as soon as I find a job and start earning my own money.

6. Do men and women have the same attitude to shopping?

No definitely not! Most women could spend whole afternoons shopping, wandering around the shops, whereas men usually know what they want. And men are not ready to waste time.

Now it's your turn to answer!

13 Reading

1. What kinds of things do you read?

Well, I read a lot of textbooks at school. I major in economics, so most books I read are related to this subject. However, in my spare time I enjoy losing myself in a good novel. As a child I really liked fantasy novels, but nowadays I'm keen on thrillers. In addition, I occasionally read the news on the Internet, and I buy magazines maybe once a month.

2. Why do you read?

At school I read in order to learn about my major. Whenever I read the news, it's because I am curious, and also it's a good chance to get some information about the world. And finally, when I read magazines or novels, it's because I want to relax. I like to read for pleasure. I think that most of the time reading is informative and entertaining.

3. How much time do you spend reading?

I don't really know, I don't really keep track, but I would say approximately 2 or 3 hours a day when I am at school, and maybe a little less when I go home. At university I don't have a TV, so whenever I go home during the holiday I soak up as much TV as I can!

Not much. I am very busy with my job, and I don't get many chances to sit down and read anything other than the newspaper. When I get home, I usually have dinner with my family; we talk, we relax a bit, and then I help my child with his homework. There's hardly any time for me to enjoy a good book.

4. At what time of day do you prefer to read?

Definitely at night, just before turning the lights off and sleeping. I usually read in bed. It could be a textbook if I have a test coming up or a novel if I have time. It's a habit I have gotten used to since I was a child.

5. Where do you like to read?

I enjoy reading on my bed or on the sofa at home. In the winter I get a blanket and roll myself in it. In the summer, I turn the AC (=air conditioner) on. My bed is the coziest (cozy =comfortable) place to read, and I like the sofa because our living room at home is very bright.

6. How important is reading for you ?

Reading is extremely important for me. I must read in order to study. You know, reading is the best source of knowledge for students. Reading can make me smarter. In addition, I find reading very relaxing, especially when I read comic books. It's a great way to entertain myself.

7. How often do you go to the library?

Now it is your turn to answer!

Frequently because...

Only occasionally because...

Hardly ever because...

14 Writing

1. What kinds of writing do you generally do?

I take notes on a daily basis at school, and I often need to write essays and papers as homework. I also need to write in order to answer questions for tests at the end of every term.

I am not a student anymore so I don't write as often as I used to. But I still take notes at work whenever we have a meeting or I think of something important to do. I frequently make lists of things I shouldn't forget. I often write emails to customers and colleagues, instead of handwriting letters.

2. How often do you write by hand and how often do you write using a keyboard?

I definitely write more on the computer. I am an accountant so I send and receive emails every single day. The other departments must provide me with the details on each transaction they make. I also need to write reports at the end of each month, and I always do this on a computer. In addition, in my spare time I often chat with my friends online, but I hardly ever handwrite anything.

As a student I'm constantly writing by hand. I take notes when the teacher tells me to, and I also need to write in order to take tests and do homework. I don't have a very nice handwriting, but I must do my best, because teachers pay a lot of attention to it. I only use a computer on the weekend to chat with friends or play computer games. From Monday to Friday, my parents don't allow me to turn it on.

3. How often do you write letters?

I hardly ever write letters to anyone. I use my mobile phone a lot, and I call my relatives or my family to keep in touch with them, or wish them a happy birthday. I used to write New Year cards every Spring Festival, but I don't anymore; I simply call or visit everyone. In addition, I frequently talk to my friends using Instant Messenger (=like QQ). There's no real need for me to write emails, but I might start next year if I get to go abroad to study.

4. What do you think is the most difficult letter to write?

(Difficult tough challenging)

Most difficult letter to write...That's a tough question...I suppose it must be hard to write a break-up letter to someone you care about. It must be very difficult too to pass on anykind of bad news, or to react to bad news. Writing a letter of condolences when someone has died) must be difficult. For young people, writing a resume and a cover letter can be challenging when you don't have any experience.

5. Which language do you prefer to write in?

Naturally my native language, Chinese! I already find it difficult to write smoothly in Mandarin, so in English you can guess how difficult it can be to write in an elegant manner and to be able to change from a casual style to a more formal one depending on who you are writing to. From my experience, it's extremely challenging to write in a second language.

6. What do you find difficult about writing in English?

Now it's your turn to answer !

I find it extremely hard to...In addition, the grammar is challenging, especially... On top of this...

15 Newspapers

1. How often do you read the newspaper?

Very frequently. I get the newspaper at work, so I read it on almost a daily basis. On the weekends however, I usually read the news online. I visit Yahoo China, which is very convenient.

Hardly ever. I never buy the newspaper because I can read about current events online every morning. I usually turn on my computer right after I get up, and my homepage is a website that gives me access to national and international news. It's much more convenient than going out to buy the newspaper.

2. Which newspapers do you read?

Most of the time, I read the local daily. It's called Fuzhou Straight. It's the most popular newspaper in my city. It offers interesting news about our city and Fujian Province, as well as explicit and informative articles on current events both in China and across the world. In addition, it's very cheap; it only costs 1.5 yuan. Occasionally I buy China Daily, It's the Chinese newspaper published in English. Since I have been studying to improve my English, I found it useful to read in English as much as possible.

3. Which kinds of articles or features interest you most?

I always start reading the newspaper from the back. I enjoy reading about entertainment, especially about celebrities and the reviews on new movie releases. In addition, I keep a close eye on sports. I am a big NBA fan, and I like to follow Yao Ming, although he's been injured for a few months now. Later on, I move on to the local news and the major headlines. I'm not big on reading about business. I find it a bit boring and hard to focus on articles related to economics.

4. Which are more popular-local or national newspapers where you live?

Definitely local! National newspapers focus too much on politics and conferences that take place in Beijing. Our country is so huge; people in my city like to read about actual

events they can relate to. A lot of people who read the newspapers are older, and they care a lot more about their local area than whatever is going on (=what is happening) in the capital. In addition, local newspapers also give info about the whole country and the world, so readers feel they get a good outlook on everything.

5. How important are newspapers in your country?

I think newspapers are extremely important in China. As China is so huge, it's essential for people to find out about what is going on all around the country. I think that newspapers somehow keep the country united. Journalists can make people think, and readers can become more aware of important issues taking place nationwide. They inform people about problems some provinces are facing, as well as happy events happening somewhere else. Newspapers definitely allow readers to learn about their country. This is why journalists should be honest.

6. Will newspapers be more or less important in the future?

Now it is your turn to answer!

(I think the sales of newspapers will definitely decrease because...Online articles +cell phones)

16 TV and Films

1. How often do you watch TV?

Rarely, because I stay on campus at university and we don't have a TV in the dorm, I only get to watch it when I go home. That is maybe every other month.

Pretty much every day. I turn the TV on in the morning when I get ready for work, and also at night after dinner, when I have time to relax. I like to watch the news, and sometimes I rent a DVD. On the weekend, I enjoy watching the NBA and some documentaries on the national channels.

2. What kind of programs do you watch?

I'm a big sports fan so I watch a lot of basketball and table tennis. This year has been good because the Winter Olympics were on in February and the soccer World Cup took place in June. I really enjoy watching sports events. It's exciting and very entertaining. I like to see how athletes can push their limits. I think there must be no better feeling than winning a big championship. I admire those champions.

I enjoy watching movies, especially historical films. But I must admit I often download them on the Internet and connect my computer to the TV screen. Watching a movie on a TV channel is annoying because they play commercials every 15 minutes or so. It's irritating. In addition, I occasionally watch the news and some talk shows in the evening. Lately, I have tried to watch CCTV 9, because it's all in English and I need to improve my listening before taking the IELTS test.

3. Is watching TV a popular thing to do in your country?

It is popular with a lot of middle-aged people like my parents, for example, who always turn on the TV as soon as they get home. They like to have some kind of noise in the house. I don't know why. I guess it's a habit, or it makes them feel like they're not alone maybe. I don't know. However, young people these days definitely spend more time on the Internet rather than watching TV programs. And online, they can also download films and foreign TV series like Prison Break, or Friends. They find it more fun than watching CCTV, the national channels.

4. Do you often talk about TV programs with your friends?

Occasionally, when we watch a TV series and we share our impressions on the main characters. For example, my best friends and I have been watching Desperate Housewives online in English, and we try to anticipate (= predict) what is going to happen in the next episode. I'm sure that boys often talk about the NBA games they watched on the weekend, and the moves that Kobe Bryant and the others pulled during the game (to pull a cool move to do something cool).

5. Do you think you watch too much TV?

No, I don't have a TV at school, but I definitely spend too much time in front of the computer chatting with friends, surfing the web, or watching movies.

6. How often do you watch films?

Frequently. I really enjoy watching films, especially fantasy movies like Harry Potter or The Lord of the Ring. I like it when there is a good plot, with stunning special effects. At home I have a wide screen TV, and it's a pleasure to buy DVDs and play them at home. Sometimes I invite some friends over, and we hang out watching historical or action movies. Every time is different.

7. What types of films do you like best?

action	martial arts	historical	romantic
comedies	thrillers	sci-fi...	

Well, it depends on my mood. Given a choice, I would go for a romantic comedy because they are sweet, and they don't require any thinking to watch, and therefore they are perfect after a long day of work. Occasionally I enjoy a good thriller, with a complicated plot. And usually there's always a cool protagonist (= character) in such movies. But you know, a few weeks ago I watched the last Disney movie, and I have to say it was pretty good for an animated film.

8. Do you prefer to watch films alone or with someone else?

I definitely prefer to catch a movie with friends. It's a lot more fun when you watch a movie with people. You can laugh together or be surprised at the same time. During the movie, you can see the other people's reactions too, and this adds to the atmosphere. Perhaps you're going to think I am a little odd (= strange), but I must confess I like watching horror movies by myself. Since they are always so nerve-wracking (= intense), I don't like to be distracted. Otherwise for any other movie, it's better with friends.

9. How often do you go to the cinema?

Not that often (=not so often). First of all, I don't have that much time (=so much time) because of my studies, and my college is far away from the city center. Going to the cinema is a bit troublesome because if I go at night, then there's no bus for me to get back to school. In addition, tickets are expensive. It costs at least 60 yuan, and I think it's a bit too much just for a movie. I can download online for free.

10. Do you prefer to watch films at the cinema or at home?

Of course I prefer watching films at the cinema. The screen is huge, the sound is better, and there's a special atmosphere at the theater. The only thing I dislike is when people talk during the movie, or when mobile phones go off. It's so irritating! People can't sit for 2 hours without answering the phone. It's too bad.

11. Do you think there is too much violence in today's films?

(violence=brutality=cruelty)

Yes and no. There is a lot of violence especially in action and martial arts movies, but I think that our government has managed to limit the amount of cruelty on TV. We see blood of course, but I think that it's not too problematic. It has become part of our society. Chinese movies are not so aggressive I think, although I have seen some crazy films from Hong Kong. Some young people are attracted to such movies because it's different, and not real. The fact that it is fictitious (=not real) is fascinating, because it is imaginative. I don't think that we should air too much brutality on TV, but I also disagree when some people say that the violence on TV is to be blamed for some people's violent actions.

17 Computers

1. How often do you use a computer?

Pretty much every day (=almost every day). I have a computer at home, and I use it to chat with my friends on Instant Messenger; I read the news, and occasionally watch online movies. In addition, my father bought me a laptop last year, and I take it with me to school. I go to college and I stay there from Monday to Friday. It's convenient to have a computer because I can look up whatever info I need for my classes, and it's also a good chance for me to keep in touch with my relatives and friends back home.

2. Which websites do you often visit on the Internet?

I use a Chinese search engine called Baidu on a daily basis, and I frequently read the news on Sina.com. These are two of the most popular websites in my country. I like Sina.com because I can get access to both national and international news. The website is well-designed and the articles are well-written. In addition, whenever I get online, I always connect to an Instant Messenger program called QQ. It's like a Chinese version of MSN, and on QQ.com I have my own blog and I can exchange letters, photos, and other comments with my online friends.

3. In what ways do young people use computers in your country?

Well, most students use the Internet in order to do a bit of research for their studies. They look for articles and info related to their homework. On the other hand, I think that most teenagers and young adults are addicted to Instant Messenger programs like QQ and MSN. They are constantly online, chatting with their friends or even strangers they meet on some group discussion forums. In addition, a lot of boys download online games, and play probably more than they should. I know that some of my friends, especially the girls, go shopping online, because they can find cheaper prices, more choices, and they say it's quite entertaining too.

4. How "computer literate" are you?

I don't know much about computers. I'm happy as long as it's working, but whenever something goes wrong, I am useless. I ask my good friend to come to my place to fix the problem. I know how to use basic programs like Word, and PowerPoint, but I can't say I'm skilled at it.

5. Have you ever bought anything online?

Yes, I have. I actually frequently buy books online, and a few months ago I purchased a mobile phone online. It took me a while to visit different websites in order to compare prices, and to make sure I wasn't making a mistake. but it worked out very well, I received the cell phone within 48 hours, and it works just fine. I saved a lot of money instead of buying it at the mall.

6. How much have computers changed your life? (if you didn't have one as a child)

Well, quite a lot actually. As a child I didn't have a computer, and I only learned how to use it in high school. But nowadays, I depend on computers a lot at work and also at home for entertainment. I read the news online on a daily basis. I socialize through the Internet, and I manage my pictures and my schedule on my computer too. I might actually depend on it too much.

18 Nature

1. What are the main agricultural products in your country?

Well, farmers grow all kinds of vegetables and cereals. In the south, they cultivate a lot of rice, and I think that in northern China, corn, wheat and barley are more commonly found. In Fujian, near my hometown, you can see a lot of tea fields. They look beautiful in the mountains, with different terraces that look like green stairs on the hills. And of course, farmers also raise all kinds of animals: chickens, ducks, pigs and rabbits.

2. Do you have a pet?

No, I don't. I live in an apartment in the city. It just doesn't make much sense to get a dog or a cat in a small apartment. I think that animals should have the option to spend time outside. Animals might be happier outside, don't you think? I used to have a gold fish, but it died a couple of years ago. And nowadays I think that fish look pretty sad inside their tank. They keep on going round. They're not the best companions anyway.

3. Do you like birds ?

Not really, although I have nothing against them. I think that parrots look cool, with their colorful feathers, and small parakeets also sound funny, especially when they can talk and imitate our voices. Otherwise, pigeons are pretty dirty; they defecate (=crap) everywhere, and I heard they can carry a lot of diseases. I really dislike birds in a cage. They're prisoners. Birds should have the freedom to fly wherever they want.

4. How many Chinese families have a garden?

Well, very few. Only people who live in the countryside might have a small yard. But in China, space is limited, and old houses might have a courtyard in the middle of the house, but you don't see any gardens with grass, or people planting vegetables like in ___America or Europe. It doesn't happen. Most houses are built next to others, so there isn't that much space for a peaceful and private garden.

5. Do any flowers in your country have a special meaning?

Yes, I think that every flower has a special meaning. Of course, everyone knows that roses represent love and that carnations stand for the love for a mother. But my grandfather also taught me that lilies are pure while violets symbolize loyalty or faithfulness. Peach flowers are associated with longevity and pretty girls. I personally like lotus flowers because they are compared to people who manage to achieve success in life though they come from a less privileged background.

6. Are wild animals protected in your country?

Yes, of course, a lot of endangered species like the tiger, the golden monkey, and the Tibetan antelope are all protected. Of course, the giant panda is the ultimate symbol of animal protection. Laws were also passed a few years ago to protect many other threatened wild species. There's still a long way to go, but it's better than before.

19 Pollution

1. Are traffic jams a problem where you live?

Yes, definitely! Every morning around 9 and every single evening after 5:30, it's rush hour and traffic gets congested (= heavy). It's a big waste of time for everybody to get stuck in traffic. The problem is that more and more people have a private vehicle now, but the roads are still too narrow in my hometown. I am sure it is the same in most cities around China.

2. Do you feel that transport systems are getting better where you live?

No, it is getting worse. Although there are definitely more buses than in the past, there are also many more people living in my city than 10 years ago. So buses are packed all the time. In addition, since the economy is developing, many people are making good money and they can afford to buy an automobile. As a result, many people drive their own car in the morning instead of using public transportation, so traffic gets even worse. Buses should have their own lanes in order to be able to drive faster. I think it would encourage people to use public transport. Actually, I really think the government should regulate traffic according to license plate numbers, or completely ban cars from the city.

3. Do you think daily life is becoming noisier?

Without a doubt! The number of cars is growing and drivers always honk their horns, especially at intersections. In addition, most people in my city own an electric bike, which is equipped with an alarm that goes off whenever someone barely touches them. The sound is unbearable. Downtown, many shops play loud music to attract clients. I don't know what they are thinking; I find it so annoying!

4. Are there any kinds of sound that you particularly dislike?

I hate it when a baby cries. It's usually such a high-pitched sound. It's so unpleasant, and the worse is that you have to pretend it is okay, because a baby is supposed to be cute...In addition, I find car horns extremely irritating. In my hometown, it is non-stop. It drives me crazy!

5. Do people in your country worry about the environment?

Unfortunately, I think that people only worry about the environment when they are really facing the problem. If the issue is happening in another province, people tend to ignore it. At the moment everyone complains about air and water pollution, and I know that the government is trying to implement a few laws and policies to improve the situation, but it doesn't seem to be enough. The number of cars is growing day after day; rivers are not getting any cleaner. I am sure we could all do more to preserve the environment.

6. What can we do to protect the environment?

Well, first we should recycle. We can recycle plastic, paper, and glass. We should learn how to live without consuming so much. In addition, no one should litter (=throw rubbish on the ground), and we should all try to save water. Naturally, we should walk and ride our bikes whenever possible. Finally, we ought to ask the government to take effective measures, even if they seem drastic extreme) at first.

20 Traveling

1. Do you enjoy traveling?

For sure! I love traveling but I don't get many chances to do so. As a student, I don't have much time during the school year, and I don't have much money to spend on holidays. However, last summer, I went to Beijing with my best friend, and I must say it was really a cool trip. I visited all the major tourist destinations, and got to see all the monuments that make Beijing so famous. It's a stunning city! This year, I would like to head to Yunnan Province. I hear it is a spectacular region.

2. Have you ever been abroad?

No, I haven't. I have never had the chance to go. My parents and I have only traveled in Fujian Province. My parents never went abroad either. You know, it costs a lot of money to go on holidays overseas. You've got to fly and you need to get a visa. And more importantly, if you really want to enjoy your trip, you need time, but my parents never get more than 5 or 6 days off in a row.

3. If you could go to any foreign country for a holiday, where would you go?

I would love to go to America! it's a huge country and there is so much to see. I would like to visit New York City, you know, to see the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Wall Street, and do some shopping on the 5th Avenue. Then I would like to fly west to Yellowstone National Park. I learned about Yellowstone in the movie called 2012 that came out a few months ago. There's a gigantic underground volcano, and you can see some small eruptions. There are hundreds of small lakes, with a stunning mix of colors: blue, green, red. It would be neat to see all this.

4. Which other cities have you visited in your country?

I have been to Hong Kong, and it was a fantastic trip. The city is so busy and crowded, but also so well-organized at the same time compared to my hometown. We call HK "shopping paradise" in the mainland, and I must admit that I wasn't disappointed with all

the massive modern malls everywhere. I also visited Shanghai. I found Shanghai very interesting, because it's such a mix of old and new. In some neighborhoods, people still live in old buildings, wash their clothes on the sidewalk, and hang everything on the street. People seem very relaxed. On the other hand, a few blocks away, you can see businessmen rushing to a meeting from one skyscraper to another. It's a fascinating place! I also went to Sanya, Hainan Province, in southern China. It was very relaxing, and the beach there is picturesque.

5. When did you last go on a trip?

On Labor Day in May this year, I went to Huang Shan, you know, the Yellow Mountain in Anhui Province. I spent 4 days there, and it was a memorable trip. First, the scenery was breathtaking all the way up. It takes a few hours to walk to the top, but it is really worth it. And you know, it's a famous place, many emperors have climbed the Yellow Mountain and I learned quite a bit about our culture and Chinese history. In addition, I visited some gorgeous little villages around the mountain. Each house is very old, and I got to see traditional architecture. I went with my parents. We were lucky with the weather. We got some great pictures of the whole trip.

6. Who do/would you prefer to travel with?

It would definitely be great to travel with friends. It would be a lot of fun. Traveling can bring people closer together, and I am sure that if I were traveling with my best friend we would learn a lot from each other. We are actually planning a trip together for the October holiday. We intend to go to Xi'an.

7. What do you like to do on holiday?

Well, I like to go back home and spend time with my relatives during the holidays. My university is located pretty far away from my hometown, so I don't get to see my parents at any other time. My mother usually cooks a lot of great food for me. I usually go for a walk with my Dad. The three of us sometimes go shopping. I generally take advantage of the vacation to take it easy and recharge my batteries.

8. Do you think it's good for young people to travel?

Yes, definitely! Traveling is a great opportunity for young people to see something new and learn about different cultures. In addition, they can meet new people, and open up their minds to the world. They need to realize the differences between their daily lives and other people's routines and customs. On top of this, if they get to travel by themselves, it's a good opportunity for them to make decisions on their own, and as a result become more independent and mature.

9. What do you think people can learn from traveling?

There's a lot to learn when traveling. First of all, if we go to some historical places like Beijing or Xi'an, we can obviously learn about the local history and culture. In addition, if we go to the countryside or visit some of the stunning mountains in my country, we can realize how beautiful China really is, and we can also find out about local legends and folklore. Finally, we can learn about ourselves too, because we can compare other people's ideas to ours, and plus we have to make decisions as well to plan the trip. We definitely get to think a lot, and learn how to appreciate things back home too when we get back.

10. Do you ever read books or magazines on traveling?

Occasional. I sometimes read articles in the newspaper about some tourist destinations. Before traveling, I usually buy a guide book too. I often go on a website called National Geographic, and I really enjoy looking at pictures of landscapes on the Internet. Most of their photos are spectacular.

11. Why were the Beijing Olympic Games important for China?

The Olympics were significant for many different reasons. First of all, this international event attracted thousands of tourists from all over the world. As a result, it really boosted the national economy. In addition, it was a great chance for China to spread its culture, since everyone throughout the world got to learn about China. What's more, the government invested a lot of money in new infrastructures and facilities. The country really modernized thanks to the Games. Finally, the Olympics brought our people closer together. They created a feeling of patriotism as China competed against other countries.

21 Languages

1. How many languages do you speak?

I speak 2 languages and a dialect. First of all, Mandarin Chinese is my mother tongue and I speak it every day at school, with my friends and my relatives. You know, it's the national language. But in Fuzhou, the natives speak the local dialect we call Fuzhouhua. I use this dialect with my grandparents mostly, although I can understand more than I can speak. In addition, I have been studying English for a long time, since primary school. However, my English is definitely not as good as it should be.

2. How long have you been studying English?

Well, I started studying English in primary school, when I was 6 years old I think. So it has been 14 years already. That's a long time, but it's still a work in progress...It takes a long time to master a foreign language, especially when students like me can't immerse ourselves completely in an English environment. But as you say in English, "Rome was not built in a day."

3. How important is English to you?

English is extremely important to me because next year I plan to continue my studies in Australia. So I need my English to be good enough to understand the teachers there, and to communicate with the local people. In addition, English is the international language, so it will probably come in handy when I travel and maybe for my future job.

4. Is there anything you find especially difficult about learning English?

Yes, I find it very hard to remember all the new words I come across when I read or watch movies in English. In English there are so many different ways to say one thing. You know, foreigners use so many synonyms (=2 words with the same meaning) to express themselves. It can be confusing. In addition, it's challenging for me to write elegant sentences or formal letters. It takes a lot of practice. On top of this, the grammar can be very tricky with the past tense and the many prepositions. It's tough not to make mistakes.

5. Which languages would you like to learn?

I would love to be able to speak French, because it sounds very cool and romantic. In addition, one of my dreams is to travel to Paris, and see the Eiffel Tower and Louvre. That would be awesome! If I could speak French, I would definitely enjoy the experience a lot more. However, I have heard people say that French is quite challenging to learn and that the grammar is even more complicated than in English. So, I don't know, it might be hard for me to pick it up.

6. Do many foreigners speak your native language?

No, definitely not! Some learn, but very few actually speak it fluently. I think learning Mandarin can be tough, especially the pronunciation and the writing. But more and more foreigners are learning, and I guess that's great for China and Chinese culture.

7. Do you think that your native language is easier than English?

You mean from a foreigner's point of view? I think it depends on where you come from. It must be easier for a European person to learn English because languages like German, French, and Spanish all share similarities with English. For example, in German, people say "Guten Morgen". It sounds very similar to the English "good morning". So it must be simpler for them to learn English. On the other hand, it might be easier for someone from Japan to learn Chinese, because the two languages have the same roots, especially when it comes to writing. We share a lot of characters when we write. I believe foreigners find it very difficult to write Chinese, because our characters look like little drawings to them. It's completely different from their language. In addition, in Chinese we have four tones, and foreigners often get them mixed up. It's usually funny..

22 Festivals

1. Do you often celebrate festivals in your country?

Yes, definitely! We celebrate a lot of national festivals in my country. I am sure you know about the Spring Festival. It's the most important one. We always celebrate the Chinese New Year with our relatives, and we have a lot of traditions for the beginning of each year. In addition, we also get together with our family for Labor Day, as well as Mid-Autumn Festival when we rejoice at the harvests in the countryside, and the Dragon Boat Festival is also very meaningful in our culture. We commemorate the death of a famous Chinese poet on that day. These are the most popular but there are many others all year round.

2. Do these festivals have special meanings?

(You should have answered this in question1!)

Yes, naturally. Each festival is meaningful. They are all based on Chinese history, and they remind us of the past which forms an important part of our identity. For example, we always get the first week of October off, because it's the anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China. We watch the military parade in Beijing, and we go home to spend time with our relatives. My favorite festival takes place on Dragon Boat Day, and my family and I go to the local river in my hometown to enjoy the boat races. Each boat is carved, and we cheer for the men who paddle hard. A long time ago, a famous poet threw himself in a river because he had an argument with the king. He drowned there, but the villagers got on dragon boats and threw food into the river because they didn't want the fish to eat the poet's corpse. That's the legend behind the Dragon Boat Festival.

3. What special things do people do during festivals?

Well, it really depends on which festival we are celebrating. But usually people go home, I mean to their hometown, since many people in China work in the city but were born in small towns. So everyone goes home for a big meal. Food is a significant aspect of Chinese culture and no festival is complete without culinary specialties made or bought by our relatives. For example, for Mid-Autumn Festival, we eat moon cakes. On Dragon Boat Day, we cook zongzi, which is a kind of sticky rice wrapped in a bamboo leaf. In addition, we always set off firecrackers to express our happiness and share our joy.

4. Which is your favorite festival?

I really enjoy Spring Festival because it brings my family closer together. We get to spend time with each other and catch up over some great food. We eat a lot of snacks, and set off fireworks...In addition, we exchange gifts and red envelopes filled with money to wish each other prosperity for the new year. On top of this, I love the red decorations, especially the paper-cuts we stick on the windows...

5. Do you celebrate any foreign festivals?

Yes, I celebrate Valentine's Day with my girlfriend although we already have a similar festival in Chinese culture. But I feel compelled to (=I have to) invite my girlfriend for a nice meal. Otherwise, she might complain, because all of her friends receive flowers or jewelry on this occasion. I don't do anything for Halloween or Easter. I barely know the meaning of those festivals, to tell you the truth.

6. What did you do last Christmas?

I didn't do much. I went shopping with some friends before Christmas to take advantage of the sales the shops were offering. Otherwise, I didn't celebrate, and it's not a Chinese tradition. So there's no need for us to do so.

23 Going Overseas

1. Why are you planning to spend a period of time abroad?

Well, I intend to continue my studies in Australia for a variety of reasons. First, I want to get a Master's in electrical engineering in order to learn more about my major and become a specialist in my field. In addition, if I do get a degree from an Australian university, I will have more options, more choices for my future. I might stay down there in Australia) if I find a good position after I complete my studies, or I could go and work in New Zealand or Singapore, but I could also come back to China to work here as an engineer. You know, Australian universities have a very good reputation in my country, and as a result, I don't think it would be too hard for me to find a job. On top of this, studying overseas will be an amazing experience from a cultural point of view. I will meet new people, learn about their daily lives, learn to speak a new language, and hopefully travel a lot. It's definitely going to benefit me a lot.

2. How long do you plan to be abroad?

I plan to live in Sydney for two years in order to complete my degree. I might stay longer if I find an internship (= practical training in a company) or a job afterwards.

3. How have your family and friends supported you in this?

Well, it was actually my father's idea to start with, and then my parents have really encouraged me a lot while I have been studying English. They also gave me advice when I was looking for some info on different Australian universities. Finally, they told me they will support me financially during my two years abroad, so I feel very lucky and thankful. My friends think it's a great chance for my future, and they encourage me to study harder.

4. How exactly will you benefit from this experience?

(If your answer to question 1 is good, the examiner will not ask you this!)

I should benefit a lot from this experience. First, I will acquire more knowledge in my field. I know that my university will provide me with two internships, so I'll definitely get

some practical skills on top of the theories we learn in class. In addition, this experience overseas will boost my resume if I want to apply for a job here in China. Finally, I will improve my English and meet a lot of new people. It should be a great chance to broaden my mind, and see something new. My parents think that I will also become more mature and responsible. We shall see...

5. What problems do you think you may have abroad?

Well, I expect to face some difficulties with the language at first, especially with reading. Teachers warned me that I will have to read a lot as a student, and I read very slowly in English. However, once I overcome this language barrier, everything should be easier. I should be able to communicate, and make friends there. Making friends will also be challenging because I don't know anybody there, and I am usually pretty shy. But I know how important it is to socialize in order to fully enjoy this experience.

6. How do you think Australia/America/Canada...will be different from China?

Well, first with regards to my studies, I expect the classes to be based on communication rather than just having the teacher giving us a lecture. In China, we never get to talk in class, and teachers don't ask for our point of view, but things should be different in Australia. In addition, I have heard people say that Australia is a very quiet place to live. One of my friends told me that even Sydney is not crowded at all. They said I will enjoy the peaceful life there. We'll see...And finally, I am a bit worried about the food I am going to find over there. I'm not a great cook, but I might have to cook for myself, if going out to restaurants is as expensive as I expect it to be. And I don't really know if I can get used to the local cuisine. My life there is going to be full of challenges !

24 Your Future

1. What job would you like to get in the future?

Now it's your turn to answer!

I plan to...

I wish I could...

I might...

I intend to...

I hope I can...

I may...

2. What qualities are necessary to do this job?

Well, being hard-working is essential to becoming a good manager. In addition, I should be specialized in my field, in order to make the right decisions and show my staff how things should be done. On top of this, a good manager should be decisive, ambitious and encouraging. As a manager you should take responsibility for the whole team's results and wrong-doings. A boss should manage to balance his passion for the job and his ability to remain cool at all times.

3. What do you see yourself doing in 10 years' time?

Well, that's hard to say because 10 years is a long time away, but I might be a manager in a company here in China. I'm ambitious and I hope I can achieve my goals. I really want to get promoted as high as possible, as quick as possible. I could see myself working in a computer company like Lenovo or LG, and working my way to the top. In addition, in 10 years I'll be over 30, so I should be married with a baby maybe. Wow! That's almost scary to think about! So many responsibilities!

4. What is your main ambition in life?

My short term ambition is to go to Australia and get a Bachelor's degree in computer engineering. And in the long run (=in the long term) I would like to set up my own company and be successful. You know, working for myself would offer me a lot of freedom, and hopefully a great income to lead a comfortable life.

5. Is it always good to be ambitious?

Yes, definitely! Ambition can motivate you, and keep you going. It's always positive as long as you remain down-to-earth. What I mean is that you shouldn't be overly-ambitious, otherwise you might get disappointed if things don't work out as expected.

6. What is the best age to get married?

Well, it depends on the individual, of course. But I don't think that people should get married too young anymore, because both men and women should focus on their studies and their careers, in order to find a good position, and a stable job in order to make enough money to actually enjoy life as a couple. I think that getting married around 30 seems like a wise choice.

7. How do you think your life will be different when you are retired

I hope I can save enough money in order to enjoy a peaceful life when I retire. If I am healthy, I would like to travel around my country, and maybe around the world with my family. And when I am home, I could spend time with my grandchildren, and teach them how to play sports, and maybe tell them some stories about the past.

Part 2 and Part 3 of the IELTS Speaking Test

1 People

2 Family

3 Personality

4 Places

5 Your Hometown

6 Traveling,

7 Celebrations

8 Childhood

9 Life Experience

10 Studies

11 Reading and Writing

12 Media

13 Technology

14 Money

15 The Future

16 Business

17 Transport

18 Pollution

19 The Weather

20 Clothes

21 Food

22 Sports

23 Art

24 Music

25 Animals

26 China

1 People

Proverb:

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

= A friend who helps when one is in trouble is a real friend.

Sample Answer:

Your Best Friend

A Classmate

A Happy Person

A Smart Person

A Famous Person

A Famous Foreigner

A Person in History

A Leader

A Person You Would Like to } interview

Practice:

A Neighbor

A Successful Person

A Leader You Admire (=A Person in History)

A Person You Would Like to Interview

Key Words

considerate = thoughtful

sweet = warmhearted

generous = kind-hearted

helpful = supportive

optimistic = enthusiastic = positive

determined = motivated = driven

cheerful = encouraging

to hang out = to get together

Your Best Friend

Tell me about one of your friends.

You should say: who the friend is and how you first met him/her
 what you enjoy doing together
 what her personality is like
and explain why your friendship is special.

- Name? When where did we meet?
- How often do we see each other? What do we have in common?
- His qualities
- A memory
- The future

Let me tell you about my best friend. His name is Jeff and we met in high-school where we **used to be** classmates. Jeff is my best friend because I can really **count on** him: he's the person I trust most. He's extremely **considerate**. He's very **thoughtful**. He always cares about other people.

We often get together to play basketball. We **hang out** on the weekend. We have a lot of things in common. We **both** like sports; we both love to watch the NBA and **especially** the Houston Rockets. We sometimes play online games too, or watch movies together.

Jeff is a very good listener. He's very **enthusiastic** and always **optimistic**. Whenever I have a problem at school, he's always there to **cheer me up**. **He's fun to be with!**

Last year, we had to study hard for the college entrance examination and he helped me with the science subjects. He's a hard-working student and he can be serious too because he wants to become a lawyer, and he knows what his **priorities** are.

Next year, I will go to America to get a Bachelor's degree and Jeff will stay in China, but I know that we will keep in touch **through** emails and messages. And even if we don't **get to** see each other often, we both know we can **rely on** each other and **THIS** is true friendship!

Vocabulary

- A versatile person is someone who has a variety of skills and abilities and who is able to change easily from one sort of activity to another.
- A convivial person is someone who is friendly and fond of eating, drinking and good company.
- A vivacious person is someone (usually a woman) who is full of life.
- A magnanimous person is someone who is very generous towards other people (=unselfish).
- An erudite person is someone who has studied a lot and is very knowledgeable.

(Source: Test Your Vocabulary by Peter Watcyn-Jones)

1. How do people meet new friends?

Well, I think that most young people make new friends at school or at university. It is **always easier to** become friends when you see each other every day, and when you have the same interests or goals. **On the other hand**, when we become older, it's common to become closer to our **co-workers**. It is also possible to **form a good relationship** with people when you **participate** in an activity together such as a basketball team, or a dance troop. A lot of old people get together for dancing every night where I live.

2. What can cause people to lose contact with friends?

I think that **time and distance** can make you **lose touch with** your friends. When we get older, **people follow different paths** and people move to other cities. As time goes by, we meet new friends; we get responsibilities in our work, in our families, and it's possible to forget about the past, and our old friends.

3. What are some of the responsibilities of being a good friend?

A good friend must **support** and **advise** you. A good friend should always be there to listen to you, especially when you're having some troubles. I believe that a good friend should be **thoughtful** and kind. A good friend is **someone you can trust and rely on at any time**.

4. Do friends or family have more influence on young people today?

That's a hard question, because in today's China, parents are still very **influential**. Children listen to their parents, even if they **might** disagree. There is always this notion of respect towards parents. **On the other hand**, young people spend more and more time with their friends: they chat online all the time, they are able to send text messages to each other anytime they want, and friendship is **an extremely important value** in our society. I would say that young people probably consider their friends' advice first, but **ultimately** (= eventually = at last) they follow their parents' decision.

5. How important is friendship in the workplace?

I think that friendship at work is **extremely important** (= essential) because **if you get along well with** your colleagues and your boss, you will enjoy work better, and **as a result**, the job will get done more **efficiently**. I believe that **team work** is now **fundamental** to any type of business. If you are good friends with your colleagues, you can help, advise and support each other.

6. Do you think that parents and children can be good friends?

I think it is possible, but difficult. **Friendship is based on communication and trust**. So if the parents talk a lot to their kids, and give them freedom, then I think it is possible for them to be friends. But you know in China, very often, parents want to control their children's lives. They don't give them enough space, and this creates **a gap** between the two **generations**. Many children believe that their parents represent **authority**, and that they always have to do what their parents ask them: this is not friendship.

A Classmate

Tell me about one of your classmates.

You should say: who the classmate is/was and how you met him/her
what the classmate is/was like
whether you have/had a good relationship
and say whether other people in your class have/had a similar opinion.

- Name? When? How long?
- Physical description
- Qualities
- Class memory
- Nowadays, future

Let me tell you about my high-school classmate, Xiaojiao. We met in grade 9, and we were in the same class for 3 years **in a row**. We had plenty of time **to get to know** each other better, and we often sat together in class.

To give you an idea of her physical appearance, I will describe her to you. She's quite tall with dark shiny hair. She has large bright eyes and **freckles** on her **cheeks**. Actually, talking about cheeks, I **used to tease** her about hers, because she has a baby face, and I love to **pinch** her just below the **cheek bone**. She hates it when I do this, but it makes me smile.

Xiaojiao is a great person to be with. First of all, she's very smart. She's interesting **to talk to**. Her point of view is often right and she's quite **mature** about things. She always acts as a big sister for everyone. **In addition**, she is **considerate**, and extremely **thoughtful**. She is a **reliable** friend, and at school, I knew I could **count on** her.

I remember once I was sick for a couple of days, and she came to my house to bring me all the lessons I had missed. She had personally copied everything for me, and she had written some comments about our teachers and our classmates in the **margin** to make me smile. In class, she was a great student. She always did well on the tests, and teachers **appreciated** her very much. I don't remember the number of times our math teacher told us he wished we could all be as **responsible** as Xiaojiao. We had a lot of fun too after class.

We would walk home together, and **occasionally** go shopping on the weekend with other friends. Nowadays, we go to different universities, but we still chat with each other online, and we try to meet during the holidays. Last Spring Festival, she came to my house and we looked at old pictures, and **reminisced** about high school. I think we have built a strong relationship over the years.

1. Why do people choose the friends they do?

People become good friends because **they get along well**. They must enjoy each other's **personality**. Two friends must definitely **have things in common**: it could be a hobby, or an ambition that makes them work together. I chose my friends because they are **considerate**, and also a lot of **fun to be with**.

2. Which is the most important relationship in a person's life?

I think that it really depends on your age, on **the life stage you are in**. I believe the parent-child relationship comes first. But there is another stage: when you get married, your husband or wife will **definitely** be the most important person in your life. Then you have a child, and the parent-child relationship goes back to being the most important.

3. How do friendships change as we get older?

I don't think that real friendship changes with time. It can only get stronger if it's a true friendship. **However**, when we get older, we have different **priorities** with our family or our job, so we **might** not see our friends as often as we **used to** at college. But it doesn't mean that the feelings change.

4. What kind of students can become popular in school?

The popular students are usually the good-looking ones and the funny ones. If you want to be appreciated among young people, it's important to look cool and **trendy**. Generally the girls like the tall guys who are **athletic**. And the boys pay attention to the cute girls who know how to **dress up**. **In addition**, if a kid is humorous and **quick-minded** he will also attract his classmates' attention.

5. How important is friendship to young people?

Friendship **is essential for** young people because they need friends to have fun and share good moments with. Most important they can **influence** each other, and learn from one another. A child who doesn't have friends is usually unhappy and lonely. With the "One-Child Policy", many kids are often at home **on their own**. **However**, it's very necessary for them to **socialize in order to** improve their **interpersonal skills** and, most importantly, for them to realize they can **rely on** their friends.

6. What are the possible factors that cause a friendship to break up?

Well, there could be different reasons, **I suppose**. The main cause could be that two people follow a different **path** (= road) in life, and **as** they grow older, they simply **lose contact**. For example, next year I am going to move to America and **I might** not be able to remain good friends with everyone I know here. **In addition**, friends **might** disappoint each other, or argue with each other about something. Sometimes you trust someone who later **betrays** your trust. It's never good when someone lies to you or says bad things **behind your back**.

7. Do you find it easy to make friends with others?

Not really; I'm rather shy, and it's never easy for me to open up to people. I know I should be more outgoing and confident, but it's hard to change your personality. I usually **get along well** with girls who are as **introverted** (= shy) as I.

A Happy Person

Tell me about a happy person you know.

You should say: who the person is
 how you came to know him/her
 whether you know him / her well
and say what makes this person such a happy person.

- My cousin Xiaofeng: university student, great personality
- Enthusiastic about everything: always eager to try new things (full of life)+ smiles a lot
- Good student, good university, good friends+ good life
- Optimistic: can cheer everyone up, considerate+reassuring
- Always shares great stories: future job = probably teacher or pediatrician: good with kids

Let me tell you about my cousin Xiaofeng. **She's going to turn 22** pretty soon I think, and she's still at university. She's the happiest person I know, and everyone agrees that she has a great personality.

First of all, she's **extremely enthusiastic about** everything. She's always **eager to** go out to meet new people. She's full of energy, and she's never tired. I have never heard her complain about anything. She always **looks at the bright side of things**. She smiles a lot, and sometimes we tease her because she can't stop smiling. She **constantly** has this big **grin** (= smile) on her face.

Xiaofeng studies in a **prestigious** university in Beijing, so I don't see her as often as I used to, but we often talk on the phone. She does very well in her studies: she does a lot of extra curriculum activities; she makes a lot of friends, and **last** I heard she was dating a very cool guy too. She's got every reason to be happy, but it's mostly because of her ability to remain **positive**.

She's always **optimistic**. She doesn't seem to be afraid of anything. I remember, when she was in high school, she always told everyone that she would be okay **in spite of** all the homework and tests she had to face. **On the other hand**, she can **cheer everyone up** just with her **spontaneity** (= she's so spontaneous). I sometimes call her to tell her about a problem I have, and she always gives me useful advice. She's **considerate** and **reassuring** too.

Right now, she's thinking about becoming a **pediatrician** (= doctor for children). I think she'll be a great doctor and teacher for kids, because **her cheerfulness can be contagious**. She always shares some funny stories with everyone. She makes us laugh, and **she's a pleasure to spend time with**.

1. What effects can a person's standard of living have on their happiness?

Well, I think that it is **definitely** easier to be happy when you have money. If you earn a high salary or come from a wealthy family, **I suppose that** you have more opportunities to make your life more **colorful**. Money can't buy everything, but it undeniably (=definitely)helps you enjoy yourself.

2. What changes in people's lives increase their happiness?

There are a great number of events that change our lives in a positive way. I think that students are always **thrilled** (=excited) to graduate and begin a new experience at university. **Later on**, people are **delighted** to find a job or **get a promotion in** their field. **In terms of** personal life, getting married or having a baby can definitely make people ecstatic (= extremely happy).

3. How do people try to achieve happiness?

Well, nowadays professional success is essential for many people; so many individuals are looking for a stable job, with a high income (=salary). If they succeed, they will be satisfied with themselves, and therefore happier. In addition, in order to be happy, people want to find love. I think that getting married and founding a family should be the main source of happiness in one's life. On top of this, it's always possible to enjoy yourself through traveling, or eating good food, or shopping. A lot of young people enjoy partying. Some even find comfort in drinking...

4. Do children and adults show their feelings in the same ways?

No, definitely not! I believe that adults are frequently careful with the way they show their feelings. You know, in my country we learn how to control our emotions. Adults smile and only talk a little about their feelings, but they usually internalize (=keep emotions in) a lot. On the other hand, kids don't think so much and they happily display their feelings: they laugh out loud, and they scream and jump around whenever they are thrilled about a gift or something else.

5. How can the effects of early family life influence a person's later development?

Well, what happens during childhood is extremely important for the development of one's personality. Parents will definitely influence a child's character a lot, and the early relationships will shape the kid's mind. For example, if a father mistreats his child at an early age, chances are the kid will grow up to become violent, and he won't trust anybody. On the other hand (=However), if the parents look after the child, and cover him with love, the child will learn how to be considerate. Whatever happens in our early childhood has psychological consequences on everyone.

6. How can governments help to make people happy?

Well, that's a great question. I think that the government must provide nice facilities and infrastructures, like parks, schools and stadiums. In addition, governments could organize free activities and events for the citizens to enjoy themselves, maybe a concert or a parade. And naturally, our leaders should fight against unemployment, try to keep the taxes low and offer occasional surprises to please the people. Like last year, the government lowered the price of public transport in my city, which everyone appreciated.

A Smart Person

Tell me about a smart person you know.

You should say: who the person is
 how you came to know him/her
 whether you know him/her well
and say what makes this person such a clever person.

- My Chinese teacher in high school: smartest person I have ever talked to
- Knowledgeable = loves reading + can cite many famous authors = lively fascinating class
- Studied at prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing: bright but modest
- Debate team member + organized debates at school = he's quick-minded
- Just wrote a book on education. Elegant writing style + independent thinking

Let me tell you about my Chinese teacher in high school. His name is Mister Li, and he is one of the smartest people I have ever talked to. He is now in his late fifties, and he has taught Chinese as well as History for many years. I graduated last year, but I still keep in touch with him.

First of all, Mister Li is extremely knowledgeable. He loves reading, and he has read every single classic from Chinese as well as foreign literature. When he taught us, he always made references to different authors. He was able to cite and use many famous philosophers and poets to illustrate his ideas. As a result, his class was always lively and fascinating.

Mister Li got a Master's degree from Tsinghua, a prestigious university in Beijing. This is a school for the Chinese elite. Only the top-notch students can get into this university. I know this because my classmates and I asked him about his educational background once after class. Otherwise, he would not brag about it. Although he is very bright, he's a very modest (= humble) person.

Mister Li also told us that he used to be a member of Tsinghua's debate team, and he competed against many other universities from all around the country. Apparently his team won many prizes and competitions. He can think and react very fast. He's so quick-minded.

In addition, he just finished writing a book on education. I haven't read it yet, but I think I will during the holiday. He's a very intelligent person, so his writing style must be very elegant. In class, Mister Li always asked us to think for ourselves. He always wanted to hear our opinion. He shared a lot of stories with us, but he always tried to make things as simple as possible for students to understand clearly. You know, in China, we recite a lot of things, but we don't always understand them, especially with old Chinese literature. But I remember he told us many times that it was meaningless to learn something by heart if we could not use it again.

1 . How would you define "being smart"?

What does it mean to be intelligent? That's a tough question to answer. Well, there are different kinds of intelligence, I suppose. First, there is the academic intelligence that is based on general knowledge, and how well you remember things. I think we can assess this intelligence through an

IQ test. In addition, some people are very independent and resourceful, and this is another kind of cleverness. This other kind of intelligence is what we call EQ. It's based on emotions, and how you resolve problems. Some people can have a very high IQ, but be very naive at the same time. As a result, they might not do as well in certain jobs and probably shouldn't become managers, doctors or teachers.

2. What is more important: IQ or EQ?

I would say that the Emotional Quotient is more important because without the ability to deal with problems, stress, and communication issues, it would be very hard to succeed in today's society. On the other hand, someone who has very little knowledge in terms of basic subjects such as verbal skills and mathematics, and just reasoning in general, would also have serious problems in daily life. So they are both fundamental, and IQ is not the opposite of EQ. They are complementary (=they work in pair).

3. How important is reading for someone's education?

It's fundamental to be able to read, and to read a lot. Reading allows us to learn information about everything: news around the world, articles on specific subjects, and also logical and pragmatic (= practical knowledge. People who are illiterate don't have access to all the resources available.

4. Do you think that intelligence can be inherited?

This is a question we should ask scientists. I believe that we all inherit certain abilities and characteristics through our genes, so I would say we can inherit the aptitude to learn from our parents. Some kids are more talented than others. However, I am sure that this predisposition (= gift of nature) is not enough: education is more important. People are not born smart; they can become intelligent through education.

5. How can parents help their children become smarter?

Well, I think that parents should help their children with their homework when they are young, or at least go over their assignments, in order to correct and explain whatever might be wrong. In addition, I strongly believe that parents should talk to their children a lot, and ask for their kids' opinion all the time. It's essential for children to be able to think independently. This will stimulate their creativity, and teach them how to deal with situations on their own. If possible, parents could also pay for extra lessons on the weekend for their children to learn more skills like English or music.

6. How do you think that artificial intelligence (AI) will influence our lives in the future ?

Well, we can imagine that robots will be able to help us with daily chores at home. I guess that our appliances at home or at work will also be equipped with AI devices. For example, computers will recognize our voice and greet us, our refrigerator will count how many calories we have been eating, and cars will sense when we are tired of driving. It will happen; it's only a matter of time.

A Famous Person

Tell me about a famous person you particularly admire.

You should say: who the person is
 why he/she is famous
 why you admire him / her
and say how he/she contributes to society.

- Yao Ming. Athlete + Chinese ambassador overseas
- Born in Shanghai, drafted in NBA = became an idol
- Extremely famous, in the news, on TV every day = successful + rich
- But also generous and thoughtful (charity)
- Businessman + No one will ever forget him.

Let me tell you about Yao Ming, one of the most famous celebrities in China. He is an incredible athlete who plays in the NBA. He is 2.29m, and is currently the tallest player in the league. He is obviously very skillful and talented, but he's also a great Chinese ambassador overseas.

He was born in Shanghai in 1980, and he played basketball there for quite a few years before entering the NBA. He was drafted by the Houston Rockets and has been playing for them since 2002. He's a hero in China because very few Chinese players get their chance in the NBA. Many young Chinese boys regard Yao Ming as their idol, and he has really made a name for himself.

Yao is everywhere in the national news, and journalists always report on his achievements or difficulties on a daily basis. Because of his size, Yao Ming often gets injured, but he also keeps busy with many advertising campaigns. I read somewhere that he was the richest celebrity in China.

People admire Yao Ming because of his hard-work and also because of his humanity: he always organizes charity events and he hosted a telethon to raise money against SARS a few years ago. After the devastating earthquake that hit Sichuan, he donated 2 million dollars. In addition, a few months ago, he bought his former club in Shanghai, as they were facing financial problems. He hopes to help the club regain its prominent place among China's other teams.

Yao Ming is respected by everyone and I believe he will be remembered long after he stops playing basketball. I think he's a well-rounded man, and that's what people appreciate about him.

1. How do people become famous nowadays?

Well, there are many ways to become famous nowadays, and I think it is easier than before

because of the Internet, and the quick access to information. But in general, you need to be talented if you want to become a celebrity: if you have a gift for sports, music or writing, you can make a name for yourself. I believe that people who are not truly talented cannot stay famous very long.

2. What are the possible problems of being famous?

Being a star also comes with disadvantages. Celebrities are recognized wherever they go, so they need to sign autographs, and talk to their fans everywhere. They don't have so much privacy because paparazzi follow them everywhere. We all know what happened to Princess Diana...

3. Why do some people want to be famous?

That's an obvious answer, isn't it? People who are famous are usually rich. They can use their image, their name, to make more money. In addition, I believe that when you are famous, you must have access to many privileges. For examples, you might not need to pay when you go to a restaurant, because the owner will feel honored by your visit. I am sure there are a lot of other advantages.

4. How can having a famous parent affect a child?

Well, it could influence the child in a positive or in a negative way. If your father is successful (and rich), you might get access to a better education or you might have more opportunities to meet important people who could help you for your personal career. On the other hand, it's possible that the child will lack confidence if he constantly compares himself to his father or mother. I think it must be tough when you introduce yourself, people always mention your famous Mom or Dad.

5. How do celebrities influence our lives?

I think that celebrities mostly influence the lives of young people who look up to them as role models. Teenagers might decide to copy the way their favorite stars speak, dress, or even eat. They might also be influenced in terms of ideas. For example, when Yao Ming gives an interview, he often repeats how important it is to work hard if you want to succeed. This could have a good impact on young people's attitudes.

6. How does the media in your country report on famous people?

In China, we get reports on the entertainment industry in the newspapers and on TV on a daily basis, but the news is usually very positive; I would say just informative. On the Internet, some articles are more scandalous (=shocking): they report more on sensational news in order to shock readers.

7. Why is the general public so interested in the lives of famous people?

I think everyone is curious about celebrities. They are supposed to have everything we ever dream of: fame, money, power, good looks...We all would like to know if they have any secrets, if they are very different from us. This is why there are so many TV programs about famous people's lives and careers. It makes us dream.

A Famous Foreigner

Tell me about a famous foreigner you particularly admire.

You should say: who the person is admire.
 why he/she is famous
 how why you admire him/her
and say how he/she contributes to society.

- David Beckham: football player = extremely famous
- Successful athlete: won the European Champions League
- Successful marriage = looks like a happy family
- Notorious for his good looks, and style = advertising

I will give you a short presentation on David Beckham, one of the most famous football players in the world. He's extremely well-known, and I believe that everyone around the world could recognize him if they saw him on TV or in a newspaper.

First of all, in the 1990s, Beckham used to be a very successful athlete. He used to play for Manchester United, and he won the Premier League 6 times with this club. They even won the European Champions League, which is the most prestigious club competition in the world. Everyone praised his ability to kick the ball, and deliver amazing passes. Goalkeepers always feared his free kicks, and a movie entitled Bend it like Beckham was even made. He was a role model for many young people.

Beckham got married to a former band member of the famous Spice Girls. His wife's name is Victoria and she is an attractive bimbo who somehow managed to bring Beckham to another level of fame. The two of them are the constant center of attention of the press. Paparazzi follow them on a daily basis, and I believe that there is not a day without an article published about Beck and his sweetheart. They seem happy. You know, so many celebrities divorce, but they've been together for a long time.

I think that his wife played a major role in his career. Actually, nowadays, although Beckham still plays for AC Milan, which is one of the strongest teams in Europe, I think that he has become more notorious for his life outside football rather than on the pitch (= the field). David is a good-looking man, and he learned how to make full use of his name and appearance. Beckham advertises for many famous brands. He models; he acts; he publishes books too. He's a real businessman.

When he played for Real Madrid, his name brought millions to the club because fans from all over the world bought jerseys with his name printed on the back. I think he still has a couple of years in him before he puts an end to his football career, but I am positive that he will keep busy in Hollywood and on TV sets for a long time after he retires.

1. What kinds of people become famous these days?

If you want to become famous, I guess you need to be on TV, you know, like in the news at least. So I would say that talented athletes as well as artists are the people who get the most attention

these days. Young people look up to some trendy role models like singers, actors and supermodels. In addition, because China has been developing so quickly, people enjoy hearing about the accomplishments of successful businessmen. They are also placed in the limelight (=on stage) quite often on national television.

2. Is this different from the kind of achievement that made people famous in the past?

Well, to some extent it has always been the same, but I guess that 40-50 years ago, people didn't have a TV so they didn't idolize (=worship) celebrities as much as nowadays. My parents used to have tapes with the pictures of the famous singers on them. My grandparents were not crazy about pop stars, but they admired opera singers. In addition, I think that twenty years ago famous people were mostly politicians in my country. People heard about them on the radio, and they were considered to be wise leaders everyone should look up to. My mother always told me about famous army soldiers and generals who did good deeds for our society. Their accomplishments won them a lot of recognition.

3. What are the advantages of being famous?

Well, I'm sure being famous must come with a lot of advantages. First of all, stars get paid incredible amounts of money to do their jobs. In addition, celebrities must get invited to a lot of parties and fancy dinners (=very nice meals) where they don't need to pay for anything. They get to travel a lot to promote their new movies or music albums. Famous people are recognized and admired. People show them gratitude (=nice feelings) and support all the time. It must be a pleasant feeling.

4. Do you think it's fair that superstars earn so much money?

Well, for the most part they are talented and I couldn't do their job, so they must deserve the money they make. If I had a wonderful voice, or if I had a talent for acting, then I would ask for a high salary too. I know their incomes are phenomenal, but that's the way society works: there is a lot of cash to be made for people who can stand out from the crowd.

5. What do people usually do to show their love to their idols in China?

Young people frequently buy posters of their idols to stick on their bedroom walls at home. They download pictures on the Internet and they upload them onto their mobiles so that they can see their favorite star every time they use their cell phone. What else? They create websites and blogs dedicated to their icon (=admired person), and they are ready to pay huge amounts of money to see them in person at a concert, or at an autograph signing appearance (=when they sign their names).

6. How can superstars give back to society?

I think that most celebrities participate in charity events in order to collect funds for victims of natural disasters, or terrible illnesses that could affect anyone. For example, Yao Ming organized a telethon a few years ago to raise money for SARS research. Superstars have the advantage of being listened to by the public. As a result, they can really make a difference.

A Person in History

Tell me about a person in history.

You should say: who the person is
 when you got to hear about the person
 what he/she achieved
and explain how he/she influenced society.

- Obama = U.S. President, extremely famous and appreciated
- 2008 election against Hillary Clinton: a woman or a black man?
- His background = cosmopolitan (Hawaii, Kenya, Indonesia, New York)
- Obama = hope for the future (war + global warming)
- Active + smart + promising (Nobel Peace Prize already)

I would like to tell you about Barack Obama, the current President of the United States. He's in his late 40's, but he has already achieved a lot, and obviously, it is only the beginning for him. I think it is no exaggeration to say that he became the most famous man across the world in 2009, and that his name could now be recognized by everyone on the planet. Actually, he has already received the Nobel Peace Prize for his many speeches and actions to strengthen world diplomacy (=cooperation).

In China, we really first heard of him when he decided to run for President. At the time, he had to win his own Democratic Party's primary election. He was opposed by Hillary Clinton: a woman against a black man. It was the first time in American history. Obama made history by defeating Republican nominee John McCain and becoming, I think, the 44th American President.

President Obama's upbringing (= background education) is fascinating, and it reflects a well-rounded man, very cosmopolitan. He comes from an atypical (=unusual) background. He was born in Hawaii to a white American woman and a father from Kenya, Africa. But when he was very young, his parents divorced. He then moved to Indonesia with his mother. As a young adult, he first went to college in Los Angeles, and then transferred to the prestigious university of Columbia, in New York City, before being accepted at Harvard Law School.

Obama represents hope for the younger generations. People expect a lot from him. First of all, he was elected when the financial crisis hit the world, so his main goal has been to put an end to this severe world recession. In addition, there's been so much political tension with wars in Afghanistan, followed by the war in Iraq. Nowadays, people worry about global warming. People are looking for a leader to make the appropriate decisions.

It seems like the world is turning to President Obama to show the way. He seems to be a reliable leader, with great integrity (=honesty). He's smart and very active. His future looks quite promising. We'll see if he can live up to our expectations (=meet our expectations).

1. How important is it to learn about history?

I think it's extremely important to learn about history because whatever happened in the past can

explain pretty much everything that is going on in our society nowadays. Learning about history is a great chance to find out about our national culture. Because of the current trend towards globalization, it's useful to learn about other countries' history and culture. It's beneficial to our understanding of the world we live in.

2. What can students learn from famous historical characters ?

Well, I guess that former emperors, generals and politicians, as well as national writers, can teach us some important values, such as loyalty, honesty, and hard work. They represent our culture and, most importantly, they helped shape our national identity. These people were extremely patriotic (=nationalistic), and this is another important value we can learn from them. We definitely learn a lot from their success. However, we can also learn from the mistakes they might have made, and make sure we don't commit the same errors in the future.

3. What should people do in order not to forget history?

Well, teachers must teach about the past, even if what happened was detrimental (= harmful) to the nation. I think it's important for students to talk about the national history in order to better understand what really happened. In addition, grandparents should also share stories and memories with their children and grandchildren. It is a great way for the younger generations to find out about the past. On top of this, cities should definitely build museums to display pieces of our national heritage. One more thing: in order to remember the past, we shouldn't destroy any ancient buildings, but renovate them instead. I think that architecture is a very important aspect of our history.

4. How interested are people in the history of where they live?

I believe that people are very interested and proud of their local history. People always feel attached to their hometown and their roots. People enjoy promoting their local area, and if the region played an important role in history, people will happily remind you of this. In my city, I think people are only recently beginning to feel more fascinated by the past. In the last 30 years, people were more concerned about the future, and the development of the urban area. This is why they kind of forgot to protect old buildings and old neighborhoods. But as you say in English: "Better late than never."

5. How important are historical monuments for attracting tourists to a country?

Extremely important! Thousands of people come to China to climb the Great Wall and visit the Forbidden City, or the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an. These monuments symbolize Chinese culture, and this is what tourists want to see when they come to my country. But it's the same everywhere. If anyone goes to Europe, they won't miss the Eiffel Tower, the Big Ben and the Coliseum in Rome. They are prestigious cultural legacies from the past. And they definitely attract visitors.

6. In what ways does oral history add to knowledge about the past?

Well, personal stories can illustrate facts and give information that is not available in history books. Oral history is lively and full of details. Learning history through a story can make it more memorable.

A Leader

Tell me about a leader you admire.

You should say: who the leader is
 what he/she do/did to become a leader
 what you would ask him/her if you met the person
and explain why you admire him/her.

- Wen Jiabao, his position, his previous experience
- His qualities: soft-spoken + considerate: people respect him
- After the earthquake in Sichuan: he was supportive + touching
- I would like to interview him: about what?
- He's extremely appreciated = he's a model

Let me tell you about Premier Wen Jiabao who is serving as the head of the Chinese government. Mr. Wen used to be a geologist and an engineer in Gansu Province, in western China, before he took more political responsibilities in Beijing.

Premier Wen is famous for being soft-spoken and hard-working. I believe he is a very considerate, very thoughtful leader, and this is why people admire him across the country. Our domestic media call him "the people's Premier" and he always appears very close to the population.

I will never forget the images of him in Sichuan right after the earthquake that devastated the region in 2008. He was the first politician to make the trip to the stricken area to support the population and organize the rescue plan. I remember him talking with a megaphone to 2 children who were stuck down in a well, and he introduced himself as "Grandpa Wen Jiabao". It was so moving.

I would really like to meet him to ask him many questions about China's development and future. He is known to have a very tight bond (=relationship) with President Hu Jintao, and I would love to speak with them about contemporary (=current) issues such as education and unemployment.

I think that everyone trusts Premier Wen Jiabao in China, and he is appreciated for all his qualities. I think that leaders should always reflect (=symbolize) important values. I look up to him, and I regard him as a role model. I wish I could become as wise and influential in the future.

1. How do people become leaders?

That's a good question, and I don't think there is one definite answer. It is common to debate the question of whether leaders are born or made. Can anyone become a leader? I don't think so. I believe people are born with some characteristics that could prompt (= cause) them to take responsibilities, to be brave and decisive. I would assume that many leaders worked hard to get to the top, but others found an easier way, using their connections to get to a high-ranking position.

2. How can parents encourage leadership qualities in their children?

Parents should act as role models for their kids. Children should learn how to take initiative (=decisions on their own), so parents should give them freedom and time to think by themselves. I believe that if a child learns how to manage different situations, he will become more mature, more independent, and also more flexible. These are essential qualities a leader should have. In addition, parents could try to ask their child to organize an activity or a schedule on his own. As a result, the child would learn how to make decisions and plans. Planning is the leader's task.

3. How might future leaders differ from the leaders of today?

That's a tough question. I think leaders in the future will be closer to their people and staff. In the past, we didn't know much about our political leaders. In business, there was always a huge gap between workers and their bosses. But I think that in the future, leaders will be more accessible. As a result, their job will also require them to have excellent communication and interpersonal skills and to be in touch with everyone regularly. Leaders will not only make decisions, but also train and advise more.

4. Are political leaders the most influential in today's society?

Yes, definitely, because they pass the laws and plan our society's future. They make major decisions in terms of the national and local economy. On the other hand, other leaders also influence our daily lives by their actions and accomplishments. Young people look up to famous athletes (= sportsmen), pop stars and actors. These celebrities play a very important role for teenagers, and they have an impact on their attitudes and way of thinking. Business leaders are also very powerful nowadays, because they can influence some of the government's decisions.

5. Do you think a leader should be perfect in all fields?

It would be nice, but no one's perfect. They are role models because of their achievements and as long as they do their job well, they are allowed to make occasional mistakes. I am a big sports fan, and a few months ago, I was a bit surprised to hear about golfer Tiger Woods apologizing to his fans because he cheated on his wife. I think that leaders should be responsible for their work and position, but they don't owe apologies to the public when they commit mistakes that are not relevant to their field of expertise. Tiger Woods should work it out with his wife, not the journalists.

6. Is it important for leaders to take others' advice?

Definitely! Leaders make the final decisions, but beforehand, they should be advised by different professionals and specialists, in order to have every single card in hand when it's time to be decisive.

A Person You Would Like to interview

Tell me about a person you would like to interview.

You should say: who the person is
 whether the person is famous or not
 what you would ask him/her if you met the person
and explain why you would choose to interview him/her.

- Kobe Bryant: best NBA player at the moment = MVP (Most Valuable Player)
- Questions on his performances in his childhood (high-school career)
- Questions on other players such as Shaquille O'Neal, LeBron James
- Questions on his dreams: he has won everything = any new challenges?
- Personal questions on his daily routine, or how he invests his money?
Or basketball moves !

I would love to interview Kobe Bryant, the famous NBA player from the Los Angeles Lakers. I am a big fan of his, and it would be an honor and a huge privilege to spend some time in private with him. Kobe Bryant won 4 national championships, and he was elected MVP (Most Valuable Player) last year. He's regarded as the best player since Michael Jordan retired.

I would start the interview with a few questions on his childhood. I would like to know about his basketball performances when he was a child, how much he practiced, how he practiced. I read that he refused to go to university, and directly enrolled in the NBA. I'm curious to know when he actually realized he had the potential to become a successful NBA player.

I would definitely ask him to tell me about other athletes he has played with or against. I would love to know what kind of relationship he has with Shaquille O'Neal. They used to play together. O'Neal is said to be quite a character: you know, he's a really funny guy. They won 3 titles with the Lakers when Kobe was much younger, and maybe he could tell me some anecdotes (= a short and fun story) about O'Neal. I would also like to ask him whether or not he ever talks to LeBron James, who is his big rival in terms of being the best in the league.

In addition, I would be very interested to know what his dreams are for the future. In terms of career, he has already won everything. I would ask him how he motivates himself, and whether or not he ever gets tired of playing.

Finally, I would inquire about his personal life and his daily routine when he's not playing. I wonder what kinds of movies he likes, who his favorite singers are, stuff like that. I would like to ask him about how he invests his money: in real estate, in the stock exchange, or something else? If it seems like these questions a

A Neighbor

Tell me about one of your neighbors.

You should say: who the person is
 how well you know this person
 what other people think of this person
and explain how you feel about this person.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. How important are neighbors in people's lives?*
- 2. How have relationships between neighbors changed in recent years?*
- 3. What kinds of local community events are held in your neighborhood?*
- 4. What are the benefits of community events?*
- 5. Are there any disadvantages of being part of a community?*
- 6. Why have virtual communities (like Internet chat rooms) increased in popularity?*

A Successful Person

Tell me about a successful person you know.

You should say: who the person is
 why he/she is successful
 whether you admire him/her
and explain whether you would like to be like this person.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. Why do many people want to be successful?*
- 2. Can a balance be achieved between success and a happy personal life?*
- 3. Do you think that being successful means more than becoming rich?*
- 4. What is your main ambition in life?*
- 5. Can money buy everything?*
- 6. How can people become workaholics?*

A Leader You Admire A Person in History)

Tell me about a leader you admire.

You should say: who the leader is
 what he/she do/did to become a leader
 whether you would like to be like him / her
and explain why you admire the person.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. Would you like to be a leader?*
- 2. Why don't some people want to be leaders?*
- 3. Why do societies need leaders?*
- 4. What are the qualities of a good leader?*
- 5. What are the responsibilities of a leader?*
- 6. What impact do leaders have on people?*

A Person You Would Like to Interview

Tell me about a person you would like to interview.

You should say: who the person is
 whether the person is famous or not
 what you would ask him/her if you met the person
and explain why you would choose to interview him/her.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2 Family

Proverb:

Blood is thicker than water.

= Family ties are stronger than any other.

Sample Answer:

- Your Father
- Your Grandfather (= An Old Person You know)
- A Person Who Has Greatly Influenced You
- A Person Who Has Helped You

Practice:

- Something Your Family Has Kept for a Long Time
- A Family Photo

Key Words

considerate = thoughtful

generous=kind-hearted

strong-minded = resolute

cheerful = encouraging

thankful = grateful

optimistic = enthusiastic = positive

cares about details = meticulous

Your Father

Tell me about a member of your family.

You should say: what the relationship is between you and him/her
 how much time you spend with the person
 whether you think you have similar personalities
and explain why you chose to talk about this person.

- Name + physical appearance
- Job + how often we meet + in common?
- His personality/qualities/shortcomings
- A memory, what he taught me (values)
- Future

Let me tell you about my father. His name is Tang Xingzhan, Tang being the family name he passed on to me. He's going to turn 50 this year, but he still looks good. He's quite tall and slim. He has broad shoulders, and very dark black hair. He's a very elegant man, and he really pays attention to his appearance. He shaves every single morning, and his skin is very smooth and soft, although I often tease him about the wrinkles he's getting around the eyes.

He is a businessman and he works a lot. Actually, he works too much, and his schedule is always hectic. He goes on business trips quite often to meet customers and supervise work in the factories. He set up his company many years ago, and he has done very well. He exports shoes all over the world, and he makes good money to support my family. Although he sometimes goes away on business for a few days, he takes good care of my grandparents, and me and my mother. He's very generous and caring.

My father is a great man, because he is extremely considerate and thoughtful. He cares about the people around him, and he always wants to make everyone happy. In addition, he always pays attention to details: he's quite meticulous, and I think this is why he has been successful. On top of this, he's smart. He knows a lot about everything. He reads the news every day, and he always makes comments about current events. He is very opinionated, and sometimes he and my mother will disagree, and even argue. But it never lasts too long, because he also knows how to make her laugh.

My father has always been my first teacher. I think he taught me how to be hard-working and patient. He always tells me that I shouldn't give up, even if things are more difficult than I thought they would be. He always says that "Rome was not built in a day". A couple of days ago, he also told me that I shouldn't be afraid to have my own point of view. I wish I could be as strong-minded as he is.

Next year, I plan to go to Australia to study business, and I will miss him a lot, but I am going to study hard, in order to learn as much as possible, and hopefully work for him in the future. I hope someday I can come up with ideas to make his company even more successful.

Vocabulary

- I come from a very close-knit family., have always spent. lot of. me with my family.
- My upbringing was a bit different from most other kids. because I was raised by my grandparents.
- Whenever I don't feel well, I know I can find support in my immediate family.
- My grandma celebrated her 70th birthday last May. I got to see my whole extended family at the party.

(Source: World Link series)

1. Compare the role of a father and that of a mother in making decisions for the family

in China.

Well, many people in China are very conservative (= traditional) and in most families the father makes the important decisions. However, it would be wrong to say that women don't influence their husbands a lot. I guess that the wives are simply more eager to make their husbands happy, especially if the men are bringing money to the family. On the other hand, when it comes to the new generation of couples, I think the responsibilities and the decision-making is pretty much equally shared, since the women are as educated as the men, and they work and earn as much as their partners.

2. Do you think that parents generally know what is best for their children?

Yes, most of the time, parents definitely have a good idea about what is beneficial to their children. A lot of teenagers might think that their parents are old-fashioned and too strict, but I would say that most parents actually know better than a 15-year-old child. According to my experience, parents know what is good for their children but they also expect too much from their kids. It's very common for parents to send their kids to different training centers on the weekend for them to study extra subjects on their days off. Many parents ask their children to come home right after school in order not to waste time hanging out with friends. This could be good in terms of academic success, but it could be detrimental (= harmful) to a child's social development.

3. What do you think that young children need most in life?

Kids definitely need to receive a lot of love and affection as well as a safe and peaceful environment, in order for them to grow up to be healthy, well-adjusted adults. In addition, children need to be given a good education, with discipline and useful fundamental knowledge. Children need guidance to distinguish (=tell apart) right from wrong. However, kids also need to be given the freedom to make mistakes. I believe that if they are given a chance to make mistakes, children will learn faster.

4. To what extent do you think children inherit characteristics from their parents ?

I don't know if we actually inherit characteristics from our genes or if we simply learn to imitate our parents' behavior. The fact is that very often children act like their folks. If a child sees his father read a lot, the child might be more prone to enjoy calm activities. If a child is always outside playing sports with his dad, chances are the kid will become active and energetic too. We always say that parents are a child's first teachers, and I think it's quite true. Take me for example. I am quite patient, just like my mother. I guess that as a child she taught me how to behave this way, or this characteristic may well run in the family. Who knows?

5. What types of activities do families often do together?

Well, it really varies from one family to another, but from my perspective, relatives in China really enjoy having dinner together. It's a great chance to get together and talk and catch up with each other. We always say that a good meal brings people closer together. In addition, family members frequently go shopping together and buy clothes or groceries for each other. Some people enjoy watching TV, playing cards or mahjong. Some others prefer going for a stroll (= a walk). Now that people have more money than before, it's quite common to see whole families traveling together.

6. Have there been any recent changes in the responsibilities of mothers and fathers ?

I guess so. In the past, mothers used to stay at home to look after the child and take care of the household chores. But these days, mothers also have a job, just like their husband, so couples usually divide the responsibilities. Fathers often cook and help with the housework, while women share the responsibility for making money for the family. I reckon it sounds fair for everyone. Why should women stay at home to cook and take care of the children all the time?

Your Grandfather (=An Old Person You Know)

Tell me about an old person you know.

You should say: what the relationship is between you and him/her
 how much time you spend with the person
 how the old person likes to occupy his/her time
and explain why you chose to talk about this person.

- My grandpa: How often do I see him?
- Physical appearance + how old? + health
- His qualities
- His daily routine
- What I learned from him

Let me tell you about my grandpa, who is someone who plays a very important part in my life. He has always been there for me. When I was a young child, he used to look after me, because my parents both had a job and couldn't stay at home to look after me. Since I went to university, I don't get to see him as often as I used to, but I give him a call on a regular basis to check how he is doing.

He's not that tall (not so tall) but because he always holds himself very straight, he doesn't look that short. He still has a lot of hair although it turned white on the back of his head. But he's never going to go bald, and that's a good thing. He has many wrinkles on his forehead and around his eyes, but he says it makes him look wiser. He's funny. Last year he turned 75, and we celebrated his birthday with the whole family. We had a banquet, and he was delighted to see the whole family and his old friends around for the whole day.

My grandpa is a very kind person. He smiles a lot, and he always wants to help everybody. Everyone knows he is extremely considerate and thoughtful. He used to be a teacher, so everyone in my hometown knows him. A lot of his former students visit him whenever they go back home. He's well-appreciated by everyone. In addition, my grandpa is very generous and helpful. He likes to cook for the family, and he always surprises us with small gifts or snacks. He's so kind-hearted.

I can't say that his schedule has been busy since he retired, but he seems to enjoy a peaceful and relaxing life. He cooks pretty much every day, and every morning, he gets up early to go grocery shopping and he buys the newspaper on a daily basis. He has a fixed routine and he sticks to it. After lunch, he takes a nap and then goes for a walk. He enjoys reading and a couple of years ago we got him a mobile phone: now he often sends messages to his friends or students.

My grandpa plays an influential role in my life. I definitely learned a lot from him. He showed me how to be a polite and respectful person. He cares about good manners. He also encouraged me when I was in middle school and I found school a bit boring. He doesn't need to talk much to me. When I complain, or say something he doesn't like, he simply gives me a look, and I can see through his eyes if I said something stupid or acted foolishly. He's a strong-minded person, and that is also why people respect him.

1. Is it the responsibility of families to support old people?

Yes, definitely! In China, we don't send elderly people to nursing homes. Their children ask their parents to come live with them when they get old. It's easier for the family to take care of the parents. In addition, it's part of our responsibility as children: it's like a social custom. We are expected to do this. In my country people who retire don't get a very high pension. Their income is limited so they can't really afford to pay for a nurse to come home every day, or have a maid help them with the housework. On top of this, senior citizens can also help take care of the grandchildren.

2. What part do older people play in family life in your country?

Grandparents are very influential in Chinese family life. First of all, they are well-respected by everyone, because of their age and experience. They are the heads of the family. In addition, they often help take care of their grandkids. These days, both mothers and father usually have a full-time job, so they frequently ask the grandparents to move in with them in order to look after the baby until the child is old enough to go to school. It's very common for grandparents to live with their children in China.

3. What part might older people play in families in the future?

I guess that if people in my country manage to make more money than in the past, they will be able to save more, and they won't need to live with their children when they get old. I hope that when I retire, I will have enough money to enjoy life, to go traveling, to go out and have fun. I think parents might place their children in day-care centers if they can afford it, in order to avoid bothering their elderly parents. So grandparents might have more independence, and less influence on their kids and grandchildren.

4. Compare the ways that young people and old people look at life.

Well, elderly people are usually wiser, and less worried about the future. I guess old people have accumulated (=gained) so much experience throughout their lives that they know what is really important, whereas young people sometimes might not have their priorities (=the most important things) straight. Young people might be a little careless and quick-minded. On the other hand, senior citizens are mature and calm. They never make decisions impulsively (= too quickly). I think it's easier for older people to sound optimistic, while it can be more difficult for the young generations to look at the bright side of things. Young people always want more these days, and this is why they might worry about tomorrow.

5. What activities do old people take part in where you live?

Most elderly people don't do much in my hometown. They have a fixed routine: they go to the supermarket to buy food, go back home and cook. In the afternoon, they take a nap (sleep) and go for a walk. They enjoy reading the newspaper and watching TV. However, some of them get together with their neighbors to play cards or mahjong. A lot of older women also exercise in the evening. They meet on the public square, and one teacher shows them how to dance. It's a great chance for them to socialize while keeping fit.

6. Do you think that the age of retirement should be flexible?

Yes, I definitely think so. Some jobs are more difficult than others. People who have a physically tiring job or a stressful position should be able to retire earlier than someone who works in an office. For example, in my opinion, farmers and truck drivers deserve to receive a pension earlier because they have endured (endure = undergo) years of hard work for a low salary. Right now, in China, men can retire at 60 and women when they are 55. Since we have so many people here in China, I strongly believe that everyone should be encouraged to retire around 55. It would give young people more chances to find a job. But of course it would also cost the government more money...

A Person Who Has Greatly Influenced You

Tell me about a person who has greatly influenced you.

You should say:

- who the person is/was
- how you came into contact with this person
- how he/she has influenced you and why

and explain what you generally think of this person.

- Who? My mother. How important is she in my life?
- In my childhood: provided help+encouragement; warm-hearted
- A role model: responsible, determined
- What did she teach me? Independence+hard-work
- Future. She supported me to go overseas=I am thankful.

Let me tell you about my mother. She plays a very important role in my life. She is a very considerate and thoughtful person who has always done her best to help me make decisions in the face of day-to-day difficulties.

First of all, when I was a child, she spent a lot of time going over my homework, helping me with my writing as well as showing me how things should be done. She always offered useful advice, and I think that I have managed to get through my education thanks to her help and encouragement.

In addition, I really consider my mother to be a role model. She has a strong personality and she never lets others tell her what to do. I learned how to be more responsible and also more determined in my daily life. She always reminds me that things are not as easy as they appear and that I should work hard in order to get results.

My mother has always encouraged me to be more independent, and she believes that children should be curious. She often used to complain that I did not ask enough questions. It took me a long time to realize what she meant, but I now understand how interesting life can be thanks to her recommendations.

Next year I am going to study overseas and once again my mother has influenced me a lot as she really supported me, and offered to pay for my studies. I will never be thankful enough. She is one of the reasons why I always want to do better in everything I attempt.

Vocabulary: Antonyms (= Opposites)

ambitious-unmotivated

generous-stingy

hard-working-lazy

honest-dishonest

outgoing-shy

punctual-late

reliable-unreliable

nervous-calm

kind-inconsiderate

optimistic-pessimistic

independent-dependent

unselfish-self-centered

talkative-quiet

extroverted-introverted (= shy)

(Source: Test Your Vocabulary by Peter Watcyn-Jones)

1. What kinds of advice do parents often give their children?

Well, parents usually give many different kinds of suggestions to their kids in relation to their studies, and to life in general. I think that first of all, parents always try to encourage their kids to work hard; they always tell them that it will be beneficial for their future. On top of this, parents give advice when the child runs into some troubles, or has some tough decisions to make. For example, they will give their opinion on where the child should go to university, and what major he or she should choose.

2. How often is the advice of parents accepted by children?

In China, most children always listen to their parents, and follow their parents' ideas. It's part of the traditional culture. It is impossible not to follow your parents' requests. This is why very frequently students pick a major that their parents actually chose. It is a bit sad, but it's common. And it is the same with a boyfriend or a girlfriend. If your parents don't like your partner, then you will probably break up. That's the truth, although I believe that things are changing (=the mentalities are changing).

3. What makes a good parent/teacher?

A good parent should be considerate and supportive. A parent needs to set an example for the child; he needs to teach the child right from wrong. A good parent will show the child how to behave, and how to be a good person. In addition, it is a parent's duty to protect and love the child throughout his life.

A good teacher should be smart and knowledgeable. If he doesn't know his subject very well, he won't be able to pass on his skills. In addition, everyone will agree that a teacher should be patient and considerate. Students learn at different paces (=rhythm), so the teacher will probably have to repeat himself many times. On top of this, a good teacher will be interesting, in order to get his students' attention, and he will be creative, to make his class as fascinating and effective as possible. From a personal point of view, I would like to add one more quality: I believe that a teacher should be practical or sensible. Students are always asked to learn a lot of things they will never use later on. I really think that teachers should teach useful knowledge: for example, at school, I learned a lot of English words, but after graduating, I couldn't speak English well.

4. Which factors influence the rate at which children grow up?

Well, there are several different factors (that come into consideration). From a physical point of view, I think children grow faster and bigger according to the food they eat. On the psychological side, children will become more mature and independent if they are well-taught and if they receive proper education. They should be guided, but not spoiled. Children should be encouraged but not forced. I think it's extremely challenging to raise a child.

5. How do children develop a sense of independence?

I think that parents should give children freedom and allow them to make mistakes. If children make mistakes, they will learn from them, and hopefully not repeat them again. Parents should encourage their kids to socialize, and to go out a lot. In addition, it could also be a good idea to give children pocket money, or to ask them to find a part-time job when they are teenagers, for them to understand how to deal with money.

6. Who makes the major decisions in a family in your culture?

I would say that nowadays it's common to have both parents share equal responsibilities and influence in the family. But if a family is more conservative (= traditional), then it is very likely that the father makes the major decisions, especially if his wife is a housewife. Most people think that the man must make money for the family in China. Frequently fathers are the breadwinners as well as the decision-makers.

A Person Who Has Helped You

Tell me about a person who has helped you.

You should say: who the person is/was
 what is/was your relationship with this person
 how he/she has helped you
and explain why you chose to talk about this person.

- My mother: influential + gives great advice. I owe her a lot.
- Only child in my family = lucky and received attention
- My mother helped me to get better grades: she helped me review + learn
- She corrected my assignments + gave me advice: parents are children's first teachers
- Values = she taught me how to be more independent, better-organized + critical

I think my mother is the person who has helped me the most in life so far. She has been extremely influential, and she still plays a very important role whenever I must make important decisions. During these 2 minutes, I'll try to focus on how my mother has helped me in my childhood.

When I was much younger, she spent a lot of time with me. She really helped me out with my studies. I believe this situation is very common in China. Because of the one-child policy, parents have more time to devote to their children. I was very lucky since my mother really paid close attention to my education. I guess it's a great chance to have someone to guide you when you are young, to give you a hand whenever it is necessary.

When I was in primary school, my mother used to sit down with me every day after school to review my lessons. She made me recite whatever the teacher asked us to learn, and she would very often explain things. She's a very patient woman, very considerate and thoughtful. She definitely helped me get better grades, all the way through middle school.

In addition, my Mom used to read my assignments and correct my writing. She would always give me new ideas and advice to improve. I guess she taught me how to be more meticulous. She always paid attention to details. In China, we always say that parents are the first teachers, and I strongly agree with this saying. I remember she used to check my homework on a daily basis, and sometimes for English class, she would even quiz me on a few words.

I really owe her a lot, because she has helped me become more independent. She emphasized on the fact that I should be well-organized and also more critical about my work. She has always expected a lot from me, which has been really beneficial to me. I learned how to set higher goals for myself, and work harder in order to achieve better results.

Vocabulary: Characteristics

Impolite = rude	intelligent = clever = smart = bright	obstinate = stubborn
severe = strict	eccentric = odd = unconventional	sympathetic = caring
immature = childish	moody = temperamental = grumpy	
big-headed = proud = conceited = arrogant		

1. What kinds of help do family members give each other?

Well, relatives help each other in many different ways. First of all, parents always give advice to their children, especially when it comes to important questions such as education, career choices, or issues with relationships. I think it is actually normal for parents to help their children. It is their responsibility, even their duty to assist the child, even when their child becomes a grown-up. In addition, family members also support each other. They usually encourage each other, and it's very common in my country to lend money to our relatives if they need it. I think most Chinese families provide each other with financial help. And you know, when our parents get older, we ask them to come and live with us. It's a cycle: they helped us when we were young, and we give them a hand when they get old.

2. How important is it to help visitors in your country?

It's extremely important to be welcoming and helpful to foreign tourists. Well, actually, we should be considerate with everyone, not only foreigners. I think that it's a national value to be nice and polite to everyone. The government emphasized this value in 2008, before the Beijing Olympics. They asked everyone in the capital to smile and help visitors. In my hometown, people are quite friendly and hospitable. People will always treat their guests to tea and some snacks. However, I guess that in the city, things are a little different. There are so many people; people don't care so much about others.

3. Why do some people enjoy helping others?

Well, it's always a good feeling to be helpful. I guess you could say it is rewarding to do a good deed. Whenever you do something good, people will smile at you or thank you. It definitely makes you look good, and feel good inside. Just like a doctor for example, when he cures a patient, he can feel proud of himself. It means his life is meaningful. I am sure that some teachers feel the same, when their students become successful. They know they played a role in their success. It's impossible to be completely selfless.

4. Which kinds of organizations do work to help people in your country?

There are many charity groups in my country that help the less fortunate. After natural disasters such as the earthquake that hit Sichuan in 2008, many charity organizations collected money from all over the world to give a hand to the victims there. Some aid organizations went to Sichuan to help them rebuild their houses and other social facilities. I am sure the government also has a special branch that assists people in need.

5. Which groups of people should be given most help from aid organizations?

I just mentioned the victims of natural disasters. A terrible typhoon devastated (=destroyed) parts of Taiwan last year. Aid organizations should definitely come to the rescue of those people who lost everything. There have been many similar cases all around the world these last few years, with earthquakes in China, Haiti, and Chile, and tsunamis in Indonesia, Thailand and Japan. I also remember that Hurricane Katrina hit the city of New Orleans really badly a few years ago. International help is greatly beneficial and appreciated in these stricken areas of the world. In addition, I think that charity groups should also assist people in poor areas of the country. For

example, many families in western China don't have enough money to buy school supplies for their children. I think we could all donate money to help these kids enjoy a better life.

6. How can governments help the poorer members of society?

That's a tough question to answer because it's a delicate situation. Governments should definitely provide job opportunities, or force national companies to hire more people. I think fighting unemployment is fundamental here. In addition, the government should also provide fair education to everyone around the country to limit inequality.

Something Your Family Has Kept for a Long Time

Tell me about something your family has kept for a long time.

You should say: what the object is
 when your family got it
 what you think about this possession
and explain why your family has kept it for so long.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Family Photo

Tell me about a family photograph you particularly like.

You should say: when the photograph was taken
 who took the picture
 who is in the photograph
and explain how you feel when you look at it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3 Personality

Proverb:

Great minds think alike.

= Great people usually think the same things.

(If you and your friend come up with the same idea, or agree on something, you would say, "Great minds think alike.")

Sample Answer:

- Something Good about Your Personality
- One or Two Bad Habits that You Have

Practice:

- Something Good about Your Personality

Key Words

considerate = thoughtful

hard-working = diligent

sweet = warm-hearted

generous = kind-hearted

meticulous = thorough = precise

efficient = productive = resourceful:

optimistic = enthusiastic = positive.

determined = motivated = driven

cheerful = encouraging

helpful = supportive

behavior = attitude

hard = challenging = tough

Something Good about Your Personality

Tell me about something good about your personality.
You should say: what your quality is
 whether it is a common personality
trait where you live how you developed this quality
 and explain how it influences your life.

- Hard-working: common in China
- Studies: students are required to study hard (homework, tests).
- My parents always taught me to work hard and to be persistent.
- IELTS: busy schedule + intensive course = challenging
- In the future: a boss will appreciate this quality: responsible

Well, it is always very difficult to talk about oneself, but if you press me if you ask me), I would say that my main quality is that I am hard-working. You know, in China, it is a very common personality trait, because of the education we receive here.

First of all, at school, our teachers and parents always push us to work harder. In high school, we have so much homework, so many tests, and the competition is so intense to get into the prestigious universities, that every student is determined to study hard. We are required to be diligent.

In addition, my parents have always taught me that my efforts will be rewarded someday. My father always encouraged me to focus on my studies, and to never give up. He often reminded me to persist, especially before the final exams. My father is a successful businessman, and he has always worked very hard to make money and provide a comfortable lifestyle for my mother and me. I can regard him as a model in terms of ambition and determination.

These last two months, I have been studying in a training center in order to improve my English. It has been very challenging, and I followed a tight schedule, with daily classes mornings and afternoons. It has been tiring, but I did improve quite a lot. I believe in the saying "No pain, no gain."

I think that in the future I will get a good job and that my boss will be pleased with my attitude. I think that hard work is always appreciated, and I truly hope to make a decent salary in order to lead a comfortable life. On top of this, I should be able to find a good wife too, because women like reliable and meticulous men, right?

Vocabulary

devoted = passionate = determined = motivated = driven = self-disciplined

= enthusiastic = focused

courageous = brave = audacious

sincere = frank = honest = truthful = reliable

polite = respectful = courteous

sensitive = empathetic = compassionate

modest = humble

independent = self-reliant

1. what are the qualities that a person needs to succeed in life?

Well, I think that being hard-working and creative is essential for someone who wants to be successful. If you want to do well in business, you need to come up with some great innovative ideas. In addition, lazy people cannot achieve anything. On top of this, successful people are always smart and ambitious. They always aim high in order to motivate themselves. Some people might also believe that honesty is a key characteristic to have in order to succeed, but I'm really wondering if honesty pays in today's world.

2. To what extent do you think successful people are happy people?

Well, it's certainly easier to be happy when you are successful. People with a good job and a great salary have more chances to enjoy life. They don't need to worry about money, and that's a great advantage. On the other hand, being successful comes at a price. I suppose that in order to be successful, these people need to focus on their work and probably spend a lot of time on their job. They might need to work overtime frequently, and they may always be thinking about their achievements. They might become workaholics and forget to spend time with their relatives and friends. As a result, it's possible that some successful people could be lonely.

3. Do people choose friends and partners with similar personalities to their own?

To some extent, a lot of people become friends because they share the same hobbies and interests. So it's possible they might have the same personality traits, but not always. Having the same hobby is different from having the same character. In addition, I think that a man and a woman don't necessarily need to share the same personality for them to fall in love with each other. We usually say that couples actually complete one another: if a man lacks patience, he will be attracted to tolerant ladies; if a woman lacks confidence, she will look for a reliable partner. We also say that opposites attract.

4. What personality traits are considered to be typical of your culture?

I think that Chinese people are famous for being hard-working and patient. It's due to the education we receive. In addition, I would say that Chinese people, especially the men, find it hard to express their feelings. They can hide their emotions pretty well, and they dislike talking about their problems. I think that many Chinese people are quite conservative, very traditional. Showing your anger or complaining too much is a sign of weakness. And when it comes to women, I believe that many Chinese ladies are shy and obedient. They always listen to their parents or their husband. But there are of course exceptions.

5. Which aspects of modern life have a bad effect on people's personalities?

Modern life has a negative influence on some aspects of people's personalities. Because the economy has been developing quite a lot, people seem to have become overambitious. They are not satisfied with what they have, and they always want more. You know, many people become greedy. In addition, some people envy others because of their success. Jealousy is a big problem in today's world too. Finally, I have met some very arrogant (=too proud) people who forgot about modesty. They want to act confident but overdo it.

One or Two Bad Habits that You Have

Tell me about one or two bad habits you have.

You should say: what the bad habits are
 why you developed these bad habits
 how they influence your daily life
and explain whether you will try to get rid of them.

- 2 bad habits are connected: computer games + going to bed late
- Internet + chat with friends + head to bed after midnight
- I should study more at night, read, and be efficient + bad for my eyes
- As a result, I get up late = not productive in the morning (or get up early = tired)
- New Year resolution but...it didn't last long! My mother also tells my father to go to bed early.

Well, actually I definitely have two bad habits, and they are interconnected. As a student, I live in a dorm at university, and I share a room with one of my classmates. We both have a laptop, and as you might guess, we play online games until very late at night. I know it's not an excuse, but every student does it at my school, even the girls. And because we play for hours at night, we never go to bed early.

Usually we get back to our rooms after dinner. We do our homework quickly. You know, I don't have too much work to do, and teachers give us a lot of time to finish our assignments at university. So I have quite a bit of time on my hands to spend online. I chat with some friends through IM (Instant Messenger) programs. And me and my roommate download games, and we play for hours. We frequently head to bed after midnight, and sometimes much later.

I know I should study more at night. It would be a good time for me to read and review my lessons. I guess I should be more efficient, but playing computer games is so tempting. In addition, everyone says it harms our eyesight. So I should try to limit the time I spend doing it.

As a result of my habit, I often get up late in the morning when I don't have class. And I suppose it is a waste of time too, because my teachers always told me that we could be very productive in the morning. And well, I don't do much usually before 11 am...And when I have class, and I must get up early, I feel a bit under the weather (=tired) generally.

Last year, I made a New Year's resolution to get up earlier in order to study and exercise more. But I must admit (= tell you the truth) that it didn't last very long. What is kind of funny is that, at home, my mother says the same thing to my father, because he's always out, having dinner with business clients, or sometimes just having fun with his friends. I guess the lesson to learn here is that we should always listen to our mother.

1. Do children know the difference between right and wrong ?

Well, it only depends on whether their parents taught them the difference or not. A child who receives no education won't be able to tell right from wrong, but if a father explains why it is improper to put your feet on the table, or why it is rude to interrupt others while they are talking, then the child will learn. You know, it's all these little things that must be taught. If the parents are fair to the children, then it's okay to be strict. Kids are not stupid: they know when they have made a mistake or said something bad. They might pretend to be sad after their father reprimands (=scolds) them, but they do get it.

2. Do you have any regrets about the past?

Yes, definitely. I think everybody does. In high school, I should have studied harder to get better results and get into a better university. I guess I was too childish, and I didn't care enough. Now I understand the mistakes I have made. My father always says, "Better late than never." I know I won't make the same mistake again. I think the future matters more than the past. It's fundamental to be optimistic, and it's not so important to think about the past. Being nostalgic (=regretful) is sweet but useless.

3. Do people in your country often complain about things?

Yes, of course. Everyone complains about small things. My parents complain about their schedule and their boss who is too stubborn or too stingy. My classmates and I complain about the amount of homework teachers give us. We also worry about the future, and how difficult it is to get a good job these days. I think that because our life is pretty comfortable we always want more and we are ready to whine (=complain) about small things my grandparents' generation wouldn't have complained about.

4. What can be the consequences of having an unhealthy lifestyle?

Well, it depends on what you do that is unhealthy. If you constantly eat junk food, you might become overweight, and you will have more chances to get some cardiovascular diseases. If you don't sleep enough, you'll get tired and easily irritated. If you drink too much alcohol, this will cause problems with your liver. People who don't lead a healthy lifestyle are also more likely to get cancer.

5. What is the attitude of young people in your country towards smoking?

A lot of young people really dislike the smell and the taste of tobacco. We have been taught that smoking is definitely dangerous for our health, and we are not used to the nasty smell. However, some young people take up (=start) smoking because they think it looks cool and mature to hold a cigarette.

6. How can alcohol affect a person?

Well, alcoholism can kill people. Someone who drinks too much wine or liquor will definitely experience some liver problems. It is said that the chances of getting cancer or a stroke are much higher when you are a regular drinker. I guess that alcoholism also triggers some social problems. A wife might want a divorce from a drunken husband, because being drunk all the time, he does stupid things. I reckon it could be compared to a drug, because if you have some personal issues, alcohol can make you feel better, but you can also get addicted to it.

Something Good about Your Personality

Tell me about something good about your personality.

You should say: what your quality is
 whether it is a common personality trait where you live
 how you developed this quality
and explain how it influences your life.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. Which personality traits might be most valuable to society in the future?*
- 2. Are some personality traits more typical of men than women?*
- 3. How can a person's upbringing (= childhood education) affect his/her personality?*
- 4. How much can events change the personality we are born with?*
- 5. What would you like to change about your personality?*
- 6. How will your experience overseas change you?*

4 Places

Proverb:

There is no place like home.

=Even a simple home is the best place in the world for the people who live in it.

Sample Answer:

- A Place Abroad Where You Would Like to Live
- A House You Have Visited
- A Quiet Place
- A Library

Practice:

- Your Ideal House

Key Words	
huge = massive = enormous	peaceful = calm = relaxing
amazing = stunning = striking	impressive = astonishing
spectacular = breathtaking	scenic = picturesque
nice = enjoyable = pleasant	a destination = where you are going

A Place Abroad Where You Would Like to Live

Tell me about a place abroad where you would like to live.

You should say: which country seems attractive to you
 whether it is a famous place
 why you would like to move there
and explain whether this dream can come true.

- Sydney: to further my studies. Australia=open landscape+stunning beaches
- Opera House=unique architecture, like a sea shell
- A quiet city compared to all the noise in China
- Beach=surfers+night life
- Great Barrier Reef up north...but need to study before I visit all these places!

Next year, I would love to go to Sydney to further my studies and enjoy a new life. Australia seems like an amazing place to visit, not so much because of the history like in China, but more because of the stunning beaches and impressive landscapes.

Sydney is of course famous for the Opera House. I think it's located at the heart of the city next to the Sydney Harbor Bridge. This monument is very famous for its surprising architecture, as it looks like a sea shell with different roof structures.

Sydney is the largest city in Australia, but I have heard people say that if you walk away from the city center for 10 minutes, you will realize that the city is not crowded at all. Coming from China, I am sure I would find Sydney very quiet compared to Fuzhou!

South of Sydney, I could go to the beach and admire cool surfers' skills, as well as enjoy the city's nightlife. I heard that Sydney was a good place to go out. I don't really like drinking, but I am curious to see what young Australian people like to do to have fun in the evening.

Hopefully I will be able to go to Sydney very soon, as well as travel up north to the Great Barrier Reef, with its crystal clear water and colorful underwater world. It sounds very appealing, but I will need to keep in mind that studies come first!

Vocabulary

- I prefer visiting places that are off the beaten track. Places that are relatively well-known are always crowded with tourists. For example, I hate to spend time in bustling urban centers (=busy cities).
- I went to the Yellow Mountains, and I felt that tourists were crawling around everywhere.
- The Great Wall has become a household name (=famous) in terms of tourism. But we decided to spend one night on the Wall. We woke up for the sunrise at 5 am. We had the whole place to ourselves.
- If you go to Tibet, you will be able to enjoy stunning mountain scenery.

(Sources: World Link series)

1. Why do many people want to go abroad for an extended period of time?

Well, people decide to immigrate for different reasons. In my country, many Chinese first decide to study overseas, and if they like it over there, they might try to find a job and settle down. Many Chinese who decide to stay overseas think that China is overpopulated, and that the competition back home is too fierce. They think it is easier to get a job in Australia or Canada, and if they do, they will enjoy a better salary, as well as a peaceful environment compared to that in China. My father also told me that the welfare system in some Western countries was also better for the citizens there. I guess governments can allocate (=give) a better pension since they don't have a billion people to look after. However, many Chinese only go overseas to study or gain some work experience before coming back here to China. Because China is developing, there are many good opportunities for qualified people.

2. What should these people do before going abroad?

They need to get some information about the country they want to go to, and they need to find out where they can study, where they can stay, and how much it is going to cost them. In addition, they need to learn the language, because it is essential to speak the local language if they really want to get used to their new environment. Once they speak the language, they can fill out all the paperwork there is before getting a visa or a green card. It takes time and lots of effort to immigrate.

3. What would you miss the most if you went abroad for an extended period of time?

I would definitely miss my family and my friends. I think it's very obvious. You know, the people around me play a fundamental role in my life and it would be hard to say goodbye. In addition, I'd miss the food, all the local specialties and snacks that I would probably not be able to get overseas. I might miss the atmosphere around the festivals too, but I could probably find some Chinese to celebrate with them too. Chinese people can be found all over the world!

4. Which country or part of the world wouldn't you like to live in?

It's hard to say because I would give anything to go traveling, and pretty much anywhere. But, I guess I am not so attracted by countries with wars that are going on over there at the moment, I wouldn't feel safe. There would be some better places to visit.

5. What problems do you think people who move to another country might face?

Well, there must be quite a few difficulties to face when you move to a foreign country. First of all, I guess the language barrier could be the main challenge. When many foreigners come to China, they struggle with Mandarin, and things become harder for them. In addition, if you don't know anyone at first, it's going to take time to meet people, and get a circle of friends. Once you speak the language and have some acquaintances you can rely on, everything should be easier.

6. Why do many foreigners stay in China for an extended period of time?

It's your turn to answer!

A House You Have Visited

Tell me about a house you have visited.

You should say: whose house it is/was
 where the house is/was located
 whether you liked it or not
and explain what is/was special about the place.

- Whose house? How often do you go there?
- Where is the place? Neighborhood + overall feeling
- Describe inside: modern + furniture what you see when you walk in
- Bedrooms: comfortable + spacious cozy
- Kitchen: well-equipped. Future: I'd like to buy a place like this.

Let me tell you about one of my good friends' apartment. She purchased a pretty nice flat in the outskirts of the city a few years ago, and since then, she likes to invite her friends over for dinner, or to hang out on the weekend.

Her apartment is located not far from a very pleasant park along the river. It's a quiet neighborhood compared with the noisy city center. It's a three-bedroom apartment. It's quite spacious. I think it covers about 130 square meters. She lives on the tenth floor and she has two balconies with a nice view over the river. On a clear day, you can see the mountains that surround Fuzhou.

As soon as you get inside, you are in the living room. There's a huge couch (=sofa) facing a wide-screen TV. My friend put a wooden coffee table in front of it. Because of the large screen doors, the place is very bright, and although the floor is covered with ceramic tiles, I would say it is a very modern home because of the furniture and the design. My friend likes to read a lot and she has set up many bookshelves to display her many novels and her DVD collection.

Two of the bedrooms have a private bathroom, which is very convenient when she has her parents over. There are nice curtains on the windows and fancy cushions on the beds. It looks very cozy.

Finally, the kitchen is quite small but well-equipped. She has an oven and hot plates, a microwave and a big fridge in spite of the limited space. It's a nice place and I really wish I could own a house like hers someday.

1. Do people in your country usually buy their homes or rent them?

Most people buy their own place. I think it is everyone's dream in China to own a nice house where your family can enjoy a comfortable life. Most people get a loan from a bank in order to pay for it. The problem is that the interest rate is very high.

2. How important is architecture in a country's culture?

I think that architecture is fundamental in terms of culture. Culture can be defined in many different ways and is related to a country's history, customs, festivals, food, and religion, but I think that architecture plays a very important role too because each country has its own architecture. In

my opinion, architecture is an art form and tourists always want to visit impressive monuments that represent a country's identity: for example, the United States is famous for its impressive skyscrapers; European nations like France and Italy are renowned for their ancient buildings (with Gothic or Renaissance architecture). In China, I think that people know about the inclined roofs of our old buildings and temples. They look like a bird's wings (use your hands). If you look at a picture of a house, you can probably guess which country the architectural style belongs to.

3. In the future, would you rather live in the city or in the countryside?

I would definitely prefer living in the countryside in the future because urban areas are too busy, too noisy, and traffic is usually impossible. Roads are always congested; buses are packed (= very crowded) every morning and night. I'd rather live in a peaceful place, especially if I had a car to get around. I think my life and my family's lifestyle would be much more pleasant. The only possible problem could be to find a good school for my children. Right now the education in rural areas is not as good as in the city. However, that might change in the future.

4. What kinds of people prefer living in the countryside?

I think people who were born there or people who enjoy peace and tranquility (quietness) never get tired of the countryside. Young people might be attracted to the fast-paced urban lifestyle found in cities, but couples with a child might prefer the quiet environment rural areas can offer.

5. What factors do people need to consider when finding a place to live?

Well, people who are looking for a place to stay need to take many things into consideration. First of all, they should worry about how much the rent is. In addition, they should consider the location: it shouldn't be too far from their work; it should be located next to a bus stop in order for them to get around the city conveniently. It's always better if there are some shops and restaurants in the neighborhood. It brings life to an area, and streets look safer when many people live there. On top of all this, the place should be spacious enough, and modern enough, unless you are looking for somewhere really cheap. It's always better if the apartment is bright and if it offers a nice view. But if it's located on a top floor of a high-rise, you should make sure there is an elevator, otherwise, it's going to be a pain (=annoying) to carry the groceries upstairs every day!

6. What kinds of facilities are available near your home ?

There are plenty of facilities near my house. First of all, there are many shops and restaurants which make my life more convenient, since I don't need to go too far to buy groceries. In addition, there is a middle school and a kindergarten too. There is a nice and peaceful park five minutes away. It's a great place to go for a stroll (=walk) or exercise. Actually, there is also a stadium where people go for a jog or play football. In terms of sports facilities, there is also a large swimming pool which is open all year round. It's really a nice neighborhood.

A Quiet Place

Tell me about a quiet place you know.

You should say: where the place is

how often you go there
 how you discovered this place
 and explain what you like about this place apart from the quiet.

- My bedroom: since I was a child; a lot of time spent there
- Describe bedroom + activities
- Homework
- Privacy
- One-child policy

The quiet place where I find refuge on a daily basis is my bedroom. I have been living in the same apartment for years. I live in the suburbs of Fuzhou City, in a pretty peaceful neighborhood. I live with my parents and my grandmother, but I have my own bedroom, which is convenient when I need to study, or when I need time on my own.

My bedroom is not that big: I think it's only 15 or 16 square meters. But it is well-furnished: first of all, I have a queen-size bed (=big bed), and I often lie there to read comics or novels. It is very cozy. The mattress is very hard; it's nice for my back, and I have like 5 pillows and cushions. Next to my bed is a bookshelf. I have hundreds of books. Most of them used to belong to my parents, and I still buy books on a regular basis. I read a lot. I think it's fun and informative at the same time. In addition, there's a large desk in front of the window. My room is quite bright. It's a nice place to relax.

When I do my homework, I need a quiet environment. If I do my homework in the living room, it's easy for me to get distracted by the computer or by the TV because my father often watches it. So I spend a lot of time in my bedroom. It's the only place where I can really focus on my studies. Usually I turn all the lights off except for my desk lamp. Then the room is all dark, and I can only concentrate on my books.

On top of this, my bedroom offers me some privacy. If I hang out in the sitting room, my grandmother will ask me questions about my studies, or try to give me some food. I watch TV, my father will ask me if I have finished my homework. He usually makes me feel bad about it when he says something like "Don't you have anything better to do than watching those stupid programs?" At least in my bedroom, people leave me alone. I can call my friends without having anyone listen to my conversations. You know, China is so populated, so crowded; it's just nice to have a place of your own.

I am the only child in my family, so I guess I am very lucky in many ways. I received a lot of attention as a child. I guess that if I had had a younger brother, we would have shared the same bedroom and it would have been a lot harder to find a place of my own. But on the other hand, with the one-child policy, a lot of children feel lonely. I do too sometimes. But you can't have everything, right? "You can't have your cake and eat it too."

1. How peaceful is your area?

My neighborhood is pretty calm and quiet. I am fairly lucky to live there actually, because in general

my hometown is quite loud with all the traffic and the people honking their horns. It's so annoying ! However, I live in a new residential area not far from a park. So although many people live there, the roads are wide and the traffic is smooth, but there are no night clubs or karaoke bars. It's a peaceful place and everyone appreciates it a lot.

2. What are some of the problems that urban noise may lead to?

I think the main concern here is that noise is simply really irritating ! When drivers honk their horns all the time as soon as the light turns green, or to signal their intention to overtake (=pass), it's so annoying ! In addition, the fact that electric bikes are equipped with loud alarms that go off every two minutes whenever someone walks by is so irritating ! If you live in a noisy neighborhood, where street vendors set up their stands to sell food or whatever, it could be more difficult to get some sleep at night or harder for students to concentrate on their studies.

3. How might the level of urban noise be reduced?

Well, first of all, drivers shouldn't be allowed to honk in the city, and policemen should enforce this law. In addition, traffic conditions should be improved, because noise frequently originates from traffic jams. If traffic is smooth, cars will just go by without stopping. So the engines won't roar. I guess that new houses should be built as far as possible from the roads. And planting trees in between streets and apartments could be a way to reduce noise levels significantly.

4. Why is it sometimes important for people to be alone ?

Well, it's essential to find time and a place to be by yourself from time to time in order to relax and recharge your batteries. If you are alone, you don't need to talk; you can just daydream and take it easy. I like to go for a walk on my own at night, when the streets are not so crowded. It's a good time for me to contemplate (=think deeply about) my daily life and my future.

5. How easy is it to find regular time to be alone nowadays?

It's not so hard to find time, but it's more difficult to find a place to be alone in my country. You know how populated China is. There are always people everywhere you go. Even in the countryside or in the mountains, you think you have found a quiet place, and suddenly two people pass by with their mobile phones playing loud music ! I guess it's China...it's a busy country. At university, students are everywhere. I share a room with 3 other girls, and our place is obviously never quiet. Some girls sing in the hallway; mobile phones are always ringing; some girls watch movies until very late at night. It's tough to find a time when everyone is out.

6. What kinds of places do people go to when they want to be alone?

When you are a student, the library is a good place to be because of the quiet atmosphere. You won't be alone, but at least no one will talk to you. Otherwise, parks are good getaways, especially in the early morning.

A Library

Tell me about a library you have been to before.

You should say: where the library is
 how often you go there
 what you think about the library
and explain whether you like it or not.

- My university library (Where? How often did you go there?)
- Always a popular place to hang around. Dorms are too crowded and noisy.
- Describe: the library was peaceful, modern, convenient, bright.
- A great variety of materials to read: textbooks, novels, newspapers, magazines
- I have always enjoyed reading = a good hobby

Let me tell you about my university's library in Chongqing University in western China. I attended college there for 4 years, and I spent an immense amount of time inside this massive (= huge) educational place.

The university library is always a popular place for students to hang around as it is quiet, modern and convenient to study or relax. You know, in China, students don't have much personal space. Dormitories are quite cramped; classes are always busy, sometimes packed. It is extremely hard to focus on your studies if you stay in the dorm.

On the other hand, I remember clearly that our school library was very spacious, comfortable and bright. I would spend whole afternoons there studying, sometimes by myself, sometimes with classmates. In the summer, we could enjoy the cool air from the air conditioner (AC). And the place offered a relaxed atmosphere as well as precious help from the librarians.

The library has everything students need. It offers priceless resources for every major. The library is divided into different sections, and we also have access to computers to do some research, or find the books we need. You can find a great variety of textbooks, novels or articles related to everyone's interests. We could also pick up a newspaper or a magazine to read for pleasure.

Reading has always been one of my hobbies, and I enjoyed losing myself inside the book aisles to pick one or 2 novels and enjoy them on location. I think it is a great pastime, and students should read more often rather than staying in their rooms playing computer games.

1. At what age do children start learning to read in your country?

Nowadays, most children start learning how to read in kindergarten. So kids must be around 4 years old. Sometimes parents teach their children how to recognize letters when they are a little bit younger too.

2. How could learning to read be made enjoyable for children?

First of all, children should often see their parents read, to realize that reading is interesting. Parents must set an example, and maybe read stories to their children, or read with their children. In addition, children should have access to colorful books with illustrations (=drawings or

pictures) to make the reading more fun. I believe that children love a good story, so parents and teachers should make sure that the books they give their young pupils are fascinating and trendy, not old-fashioned.

3. What is the role of public libraries for people of different ages in your country?

First of all, since nowadays everyone has access to the Internet, fewer people go to the library. In the past, students did some research there, and older people would come and read there because it was a quiet place. But these days, I think that only university students go to the school library to do some homework, and enjoy a quiet place to focus on their studies. Older people have comfortable houses and prefer to stay home to read. Primary school students don't often go to the library either, because their parents can buy the books directly. They don't need to borrow them anymore.

4. What are the differences between reading books and reading newspapers or magazines?

First of all, it takes more time to read a book than it takes to read the newspaper or a magazine. Books are much thicker. In addition, the contents are usually very different too. Newspapers report on current events, on what is going on around the world. A book could be about everything: it could be a novel, that is to say a story, a tale, or it could be a biography, a history book. In any case, these volumes tell a story. You also have textbooks, and usually textbooks are simply thicker and more precise than magazines. You could read a science magazine, but the textbook on the same subject will be more detailed because it will include more articles or chapters.

5. Compare reading and watching TV in terms of encouraging mental development.

In general, I think that reading will be more beneficial to your mind in terms of mental exercise and development. When you read, you need to focus in order to understand and imagine what you are reading about. But when you watch TV, you have images that make everything simpler, easier to understand, more straightforward. I think that, quite frequently, when I watch TV, I am pretty passive. I don't need to think so much; everything is obvious. Although there are some interesting shows on TV that can make us think and react, most people will tell you that watching TV is good for lazy people, and that smart people usually prefer reading because it is more rewarding.

6. How might attitudes to reading change in the future ?

It's hard to say, but I am afraid that people will read less in the future. Nowadays, people have access to audio books, where someone reads the story to you. I think that technology offers a lot of advantages, but it also makes people lazy. People read more on the Internet, especially the news, and few people still go to the library. I think it shows us that reading is becoming less popular. I have heard my grandparents say that they used to get together with their parents and read a story all together. This would never happen anymore.

Your Ideal House

Tell me about your dream house.

You should say: where the house would be located
 what the place would look like
 why you would like it
and explain if it is possible to get such a place.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1. Compare the kind of housing in cities and in the countryside in your country.

2. How does the climate in your country affect the design of homes?

3. Compare living in older housing with more modern accommodations.

4. Do young adults normally live in the family home in your culture?

Vocabulary

Your house can be...

Size: average, big, colossal, giant, gigantic, great, huge, immense, large, mammoth, massive

Style: modern, ancient, old, old-fashioned, abundant, empty, bright, dark, colorful, crowded, cute, drab (= boring), dull, distinct (= special), elegant, fancy (= highly decorated), gleaming (= flashy), grotesque (= looks ridiculous), homely (= lacks elegance), spotless (= clean), haunted

5 Your Hometown

Proverb:

Home is where the heart is.

=No matter where you are, "home" is where you feel
most comfortable and content.

Sample Answer:

Your Hometown

A Place of Interest in Your City

A Modern Building in Your Hometown

Practice:

The Best Parts of Your Hometown

A Place You Have Visited

Key Words

Nice = pleasant = enjoyable

impressive = spectacular

a huge city = a metropolis

architecture = construction design

amazing = stunning

quiet = calm = peaceful

famous = renowned

lively = dynamic = colorful

Your Hometown

Tell me about your hometown.

You should say: where you are from
 what is special about your hometown
 whether the city has changed in recent years
and explain whether you like staying in your hometown or not.

- Which city? Geographical situation - Fuzhou, Fujian, southern China
- Qualify the city - Pleasant and peaceful: mountains
- Tourist destinations +food specialties - Temples architecture colorful dishes
- Compare with other cities (modern and old) - a mix of ancient and modern (great changes)
- Changes in recent years - old areas were destroyed =modern residences

I was born and raised in Fuzhou. This is my hometown, and I have lived here most of my life. Fuzhou is the capital city of Fujian Province, and it is also one of the major harbors in southern China.

It is a pleasant and peaceful city in spite of its 7 million inhabitants. Fuzhou is surrounded by mountains and bamboo forests. As a result, it is easy to get away for the weekend, to enjoy impressive waterfalls or to go hiking up in the woods. When people come to Fuzhou, they usually visit a temple or two, take photos of the huge banyan trees, and take a dip in the natural hot springs. Fuzhou is famous for its colorful and sweet cuisine. The specialties here are sweet and sour pork and sea food, since we are not far at all from the coast. The locals will definitely try to make you taste the renowned fish balls and drink local green tea.

Although Fuzhou is the largest city in Fujian, it does not seem as developed as other metropolises in the country. Fuzhou is an ancient city that spread out around the Min River. The areas worth visiting are scattered (=spread) about the city. The best way to discover Fuzhou is by bike. You will discover several old neighborhoods with narrow alleyways and paved streets. There are some charming places.

Nevertheless, most of the old city has been torn apart, and skyscrapers and high-rises have now replaced the typical old wooden houses pretty much everywhere. In addition, wider streets were built to facilitate traffic. Fuzhou has undergone massive changes in the last ten years, and now the city is still expanding both north and south of the Min River. I like to think that the city is becoming cleaner and better organized although I know there is still work to do. I love my hometown because it's an incredible mix of old and new, and next year if I get to go abroad I will miss both my city and its people.

Vocabulary

- Engineers must make sure that the new bridge can withstand both high winds and earthquakes.
- This dam is an amazing engineering feat. The engineers changed the course of a huge river to build it.
- Some people were against the project, while others supported it. It was a big controversy. (Sources: World Link series).

1. What changes have taken place in cities over the last 20 years in your country?

Well, many changes have occurred (=happened) in Chinese cities over the last 20 years. First of all, high-rises and skyscrapers have replaced old accommodations. Actually, many old neighborhoods have been torn down (=destroyed), and it is a pity because we lost a lot of the traditional architecture, but on the other hand, people were given a more comfortable home in modern apartment buildings. In addition, since more people can afford to buy a car, the government has had to build larger roads. Nowadays in the city, most avenues count three or four lanes. The aim is to facilitate traffic flow (= make traffic smoother).

2. What are some of the major problems cities have to face nowadays?

The first problems that come to my mind are issues related to traffic and pollution. Nowadays it has become very common for people to own a private vehicle. You know, car prices went down, and people's salaries have definitely increased. As a result (= so), the number of automobiles on the roads grows day after day, and traffic gets terribly congested (= heavy) at rush hour, both mornings and evenings. In addition, cities have to face problems associated with population growth. More people from the countryside are moving to the cities in order to find a job. Many students from smaller towns decide to study in the larger cities, and later on, they try to find a job there. This creates fierce competition for jobs, and troubles with unemployment. On top of this, these people need to find a place to stay, and apartments have become very expensive to buy and the rent is usually very high. In Fuzhou, if you want to purchase a house in the suburbs, you need to pay at least 7000 yuan a square meter. Not everyone can afford that.

3. Compare job opportunities in cities and in the countryside.

Well, there are definitely more choices for people in the city. It is easier for you to find a job in a city, even if it is a small city, than in rural areas. In the countryside, people live off farming, and in some areas, people can also make money from tourism if they are lucky to live around a place worthy of interest (worth visiting). In the countryside, you could also find a job in a factory, but the salary will most likely be very low. Students who get a university degree usually stay in the city to work, because they are ambitious, and they hope they can quickly get promoted.

4. How could people be encouraged to stay in rural areas?

I guess the government should encourage more companies to set up factories and offices in the countryside by lowering taxes, and granting other financial advantages (\$\$\$). Most young people don't stay in their rural community because there is no university there, and later on, their chances to gain experience and to improve themselves are very limited. If people were given a good job in the countryside, I believe that people would move back there after university, because they could be with their family and friends. People actually know that rural areas are better places to raise a family. In addition, life there is much cheaper.

5. What are the attitudes of city people towards people from the countryside?

I think that most city residents respect the work of farmers and other hard-working people from the countryside. In China, everyone realizes that we need farmers and factory workers if we want to eat good food and enjoy the advantages of modern life. In addition, at university, many students from the city get to meet students from rural areas. They get to talk with them and realize that, although they come from different backgrounds, they can get along well, and they actually share a lot of similarities. I think that people recognize the fact that people who come from smaller towns are very often friendlier and more generous than many city inhabitants. And you know, a majority of the people in large cities have a grandfather or great-grandfather who actually used to be a farmer himself, so they don't look down upon rural people.

A Place of Interest in Your City

Tell me about a place of interest in your city.

You should say: where you are from
 what this place is
 whether it attracts a lot of people
and explain what is special about this place.

- Which? Where? Many places in Fuzhou but the most impressive must be this famous temple
- Describe: Huge pagoda with spectacular view. You can see it from far away.
- What is special? Peaceful inside: with a lake around a huge banyan tree (fish +turtles).
- Feelings: smell with the prayers and incense (especially during a festival= colorful)
- The architecture is breathtaking=roofs, high ceilings, statues, carvings, paintings

Fuzhou is a very old city, and the urban area spreads out far on each side of the Min River. There are many old streets and neighborhoods in Fuzhou. In addition, there are many nice parks, but I think the most remarkable place in the city is an impressive temple next to Fuzhou University.

It is called Xichan Temple. You can't miss it because there's a huge pagoda standing in the middle of the courtyard. I believe there are 12 or 14 different stories to the Buddhist tower and from the top you have a spectacular view of the whole city!

It costs 20 yuan to get in, which is quite expensive but the visit is definitely worth it! There's a huge, stunning banyan tree surrounded by a pond (=a lake) with thousands of turtles and big gold fish inside. The little park is decorated with Buddhist statues and ornaments. It's very peaceful and there's something special about the atmosphere.

People who go to the temple burn joss-paper as well as incense because they believe they will be prosperous in the afterlife if they do so. The smell is overwhelming but it's very enjoyable. This temple is quite large and many monks live there. It's a monastery and you will see them pray to the Buddha whenever you go there. If you get there during a festival, the place will be very crowded and lively. People don't hesitate to bring offerings to the Buddha such as fruit, oil and flowers. It's a colorful religion.

The temple is divided into many different buildings. The architecture is incredible. The roofs follow traditional Chinese style with multi-inclined carpentry (use your hands). The ceilings are very high and the decorations inside are breathtaking. You should really go there. It's one of the most impressive places in Fuzhou.

1. What kind of places of interest do people in your country often like to visit?

I think that there are usually 2 main kinds of places of interest. The first one is the historical site, with old buildings, such as a palace, a temple, or an old quarter with old streets and traditional architecture. The second type is the beautiful scenic places. Tourists go there to appreciate (=enjoy) the stunning landscapes, and also these destinations are supposed to be relaxing. It's very popular for people to visit national parks such as Jiuzhaigou in Sichuan Province, with its amazing lakes and waterfalls. In China, we like to climb mountains and enjoy a spectacular view from the top: everyone wants to go to Huang Shan, Tai Shan, Wutai Shan, Emei Shan... There are so many famous

mountains in my country.

2. Do you think that a person's age affects what they consider to be "a place of interest"?

Definitely! I guess I suppose) that some older people might not find it very interesting to visit a modern city, because they might think that every city looks the same. On the other hand, children might get excited at the idea of visiting a theme park such as Disneyland in Hong Kong, but their parents would probably not consider this park as "a place of interest" because it is not natural or historical. Elderly people would agree it could be interesting for young people but they would tell you they have no desire (whatsoever) to go there.

3. Do you think that places of interest often also have some educational value?

Yes, without a doubt. Many tourists decide to take a tour of visit) historical sites such as the old hutong streets in Beijing, you know, the very ancient and narrow alleys in the city, or they go to the Summer Palace or the Forbidden City. When they visit such places, travelers can find out about the past, and imagine what life used to be like during the Ming and Qing dynasties. When people visit some national parks, or some scenic destinations like Zhangjiajie in Hunan Province, they can realize how beautiful China really is. In addition, we always have different legends about these stunning places, like how they were created or which emperor or sage (a wise man) has visited it. I think there is always something to learn when you travel.

4. What more can we do to protect places of interest?

I think the most important thing is to educate people to realize that it is our duty to protect and respect historical or scenic places. Local governments have already hired a lot of people to clean up after tourists, and to guide travelers through the sites. In many national parks, they built wooden paths for people to follow a specific route, so that visitors don't go walking off and stepping on plants, or throwing stuff into beautiful lakes. I think that governments should also forbid the construction of any new hotel near tourist destinations, because I think that modern buildings, and the roads that were built to bring visitors ruin destroy) the beauty and the peacefulness of the place.

5. What modern-day places do you think that people in the future will consider interesting?

That's an interesting question because we never know for sure what will fascinate interest) the next generation. It depends on what innovations come out in the future. I think that in the future people will also be interested in ancient buildings, because old architecture and old lifestyle will seem even more surprising to the next generations. I think that what we are building nowadays will not interest people so much in the future, because by then they will have built bigger malls and higher towers. Did you hear they built a skyscraper of more than 800 meters in Dubai? It's only going to get higher and higher from now on. I really don't think contemporary (=present-day) architecture will stun daze=surprise anyone in the future.

A Modern Building in Your Hometown

Tell me about a modern building in your hometown.

You should say: what the building is
 how often you go there
 what most people think about it
and explain why you like it or dislike it.

- Fancy hotel: Where? Popular?
- View from the outside: the facade, the design
- When you walk in: space, decorations
- Technology: flat screen TVs, modern escalators and fast elevators
- In the future: I would like to have dinner there once again, but expensive

Let me tell you about a four-star hotel called the Shangri-La. It is conveniently located in the city center, and I believe that most entrepreneurs, state officers, and rich foreign tourists who come to my city stay there. It is a fancy hotel; actually it is definitely the best place to book a room in my hometown.

From the outside, the Shangri-La Hotel is a modern skyscraper. It counts at least 30 floors, and the building seems to be covered with glass, you know, huge windows. At night, they illuminate the edges of the building, and it looks quite neat. Actually, it was built next to a big square in my city, and you can see the hotel from very far away. It's a landmark easily recognizable building in my hometown.

When you walk in the hotel, you will be welcomed by a doorman, and at first you can enjoy the light fragrance of the air in the building. I don't know how they do it, but the place smells so nice: it is very relaxing. The ceiling is extremely high, and the lounge is very spacious and comfortable. It seems like every piece of furniture inside the hotel was carefully selected. The place is well-decorated, with paintings hanging on the walls, amazing chandeliers (=lights hanging down from the ceiling), and colorful decorations depending on the time of year. I had dinner there last year for Spring Festival, and the place was all red, with ornaments representing the Chinese festival: they had scrolls and calligraphy around the doors and lanterns hanging from the ceiling. It was stunning!

The hotel is also very well-equipped in terms of technology. There are flat-screen TVs everywhere, and there is a monitor in the elevators too. Actually, to get to the main restaurant, you can take the escalators inside to reach the first floor. On top of this, they have a swimming pool in the basement, a gym, their own cinema, and a tennis court on the roof. It's pretty cool.

I have had the chance to eat there once, but I hope that in the future I will be able to go back, to treat my parents to a nice dinner there. You know, my folks have done so much for me; they have been so supportive over the years, I would love to thank them by taking them out to the best place in town.

1.How important is the outward appearance of commercial and residential buildings ?

I think the appearance of modern buildings is extremely important, because nowadays people care more about their environment. Architecture is a form of art, and if a building looks good, people will enjoy hanging around it. A nice building can change a whole area. It can create a pleasant

feeling for people who live in it, or for the neighbors who live around it. If it is a shopping mall, it is almost the same: people will be attracted by the trendy design. But of course the quality of the shops inside probably matters more than the exterior appearance.

2. Should architects design buildings to be practical rather than beautiful?

I really don't see why architects should make a choice there. It should be their job, their responsibility to achieve both: new buildings should definitely be both, pleasing to the eye and practical for the people who will live or work inside.

3. Why are there so many tall buildings in so many places?

Well, high-rises and skyscrapers can be found in cities where space is limited and therefore expensive. Building high saves space, because many families can rent apartments on top of each other. And it is the same with companies. Chinese cities are too populated for everyone to have a private house with a garden. My foreign teacher told me that things were very different in Australia, because they actually have space in the suburbs to allocate private lots (=space) to families, so they hardly ever build skyscrapers.

4. Should historic buildings be preserved?

Yes, definitely! It's extremely important to maintain historical buildings because they symbolize our cultural heritage. They represent past dynasties and our historical identity. I think the government understood this a few years ago, but a little too late. In my city, many old neighborhoods were torn down in the 1990s and were replaced by modern high-rises. I suppose it was necessary to accommodate the millions of people who moved to the city, but I feel it's still a shame to have lost these monuments.

5. What are the advantages of living in a modern building?

Well, modern buildings are usually spacious and brighter than older accommodations. In addition, modern houses are well-equipped. It seems old-fashioned to say so, but in some very old houses, they don't have water or toilets, which is outrageous in the 21st century. Recent buildings are very comfortable and safe too. There is no problem with the plumbing or the electricity.

6. How are people affected by the buildings they work in?

Well, I guess that the environment we work in can definitely affect our behavior and feelings. If you work in a dark and cramped (= no space) room, you can't feel comfortable, and you might not work as efficiently as you could in another place. On the other hand, working in a pleasant office, with a nice view over the city, lots of space around your desk, and the air-conditioner when it gets hot in the summer can allow you to feel at ease, and to concentrate on your job rather than counting the minutes until work is over.

7. What requirements do companies have on the buildings they use?

Buildings should be safe, spacious enough, and bright enough for people to work in a pleasant environment. Different companies have different requirements according to what they specialize in: a food company will have very specific requirements in terms of safety and hygiene for example.

The Best Parts of Your Hometown

Tell me about the best parts of your hometown.

You should say: where you are from
 what the main attractions are
 how often you go to these a places
and explain what is special about these places.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. What are some of the problems that urban noise can create?*
- 2. What kinds of places do people go to when they want to be alone?*
- 3. How important is it to control the growth of cities?*
- 4. Compare the facilities and services in cities and in the countryside.*
- 5. Why are there tall buildings in so many places?*

A Place You Have Visited

Tell me about a place you have been before.

You should say: where the place is and what you did there
 if it is a popular place to visit
 what you can see and do there
and explain whether you liked the place.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6 Traveling

Proverb:

When in Rome do as the Romans.

When one is in a new place, country or situation, he must adapt himself to the new manners and customs.

Sample Answer:

A Holiday You Have Taken
A Trip You Would Like to Take
A Historic Site
An Educational Visit
A Walk You Particularly Enjoyed
A Place You Would Like to Visit

Practice:

A Place You Would Like to Visit
A Place Near Water You Have Visited
A Trip that Did Not Go as Well as Expected
A Three-Day Holiday You Would Like to Take

Key Words

a tourist destination = a scenic spot	impressive = spectacular = striking
amazing = stunning = astonishing	memorable = unforgettable
a monument = a landmark	nice = pleasant = peaceful = calm
it represents = it symbolizes = it reflects	
heritage legacy tradition (architecture, cooking...)	

A Holiday You Have Taken

Tell me about a holiday you have taken.

You should say: when and where you went on the holiday
 if it is a popular holiday destination
 what you did on the holiday
and explain what was special about it.

- I went to Huang Shan = famous tourist destination + impressive + nice to get away from city
- Very steep to get to the top tiring and challenging
- The view from the top was spectacular an ocean of clouds rocky peaks
- We got up for sunrise and it was magical (amazing colors) memorable
- We sometimes look at the pictures we took. Next trip= go overseas I hope !

Three years ago, I went on holiday with my family to the impressive Huang Shan, the Yellow Mountain. It is a famous tourist destination located in Anhui Province. I am a surgeon, and I am extremely busy at work. This holiday was a great chance to get away from the city, and spend time with my wife and my son for a few days.

Huang Shan is a stunning mountain range, but it is also famous for the very steep walk up to the top. At the time my child was only 7 years old, so I was a little worried whether or not he would make it by himself. Actually, he ran most of the way, and left me and my wife behind with the bags ! It took us three hours to reach the top.

It was a tiring climb, with thousands of steps, but the view from the summit was worth it. It was absolutely spectacular, with rocky peaks and a clear blue sky above. We saw a sea of clouds below us. We took many pictures (the place was truly picturesque).

In the morning of the second day, we got up at 5 am to see the sunrise, and we were very lucky once again because the clouds did not get in the way, although the weather was freezing up there. It was a memorable moment for me and my wife.

Nowadays, we sometimes look at the pictures and remember how much fun we had. I hope I can take my family somewhere else again very soon...Hopefully, our next trip will be to Australia.

Vocabulary

- I like quiet destinations. I can't stand it when a place is overrun by tourists. I prefer peaceful spots.
- In 2008, I spent some time in Gansu Province, in western China. I stayed in a village, very remote. It was pretty desolate (= isolated) but I loved how peaceful it was.
- Gansu's stunning because you never know what you might find. It's like no place else in the world.
- I really dislike following a guided tour. It's always so crowded. I love to wander off the beaten track.

Sources: World Link series)

1. Do you think the government should encourage people from other countries to travel to China?

Yes, definitely! I think the Chinese government should spend money on advertising on foreign TV channels for example. They could show some video-clips about some pristine sites in order to entice tourists to pick China as their next destination. It'd be great for our economy, and people could find out more about our culture. I think foreigners don't know much about China. Other than Beijing, Shanghai and the Great Wall, many Westerners have never heard of Hainan and its white sand beaches, or Hunan and its impressive mountains, as well as the lively ethnic minorities. The government should also develop tourist infrastructure, roads and airports to facilitate access to the sites. In 2008, the Beijing Olympics drew a great number of tourists to China. We should organize more international events of this kind, because they're great for the reputation of our country.

2. Do you prefer traveling by yourself or with others ?

I have never travelled by myself, and I think I would be a little scared to do so. I know my teacher told me that it is actually a great chance to meet people and open up my mind, but I don't know if it could be enjoyable to go alone. I like the idea of sharing my impressions with my family or my friends. If I see a beautiful landscape, but I have no one to enjoy it with, I don't see the fun out of it. I think traveling with others is always safer, and much nicer.

3. What is a good travel partner?

A good travel partner must be open-minded, energetic, and adventurous. It's essential to get along well with your partner, because you will need to agree on many decisions, such as where to eat, where to go, and how long to stay in one place. The person you travel with also has to be considerate and patient. You need to enjoy his or her personality and company; otherwise, your holiday will turn into a disaster.

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of air travel?

Well, flying is fast and saves time. From Fuzhou, you can fly to Shanghai in an hour, but it will take you at least 6 or 7 by train. In addition, taking a plane is quite comfortable, because the seat is large; you usually have more leg room than on a bus. On top of this, you can enjoy the food on board, and I am not even talking about the breathtaking view you have if you are sitting by a window. On the other hand, a plane ticket is usually expensive, although prices have gone down in the last few years. And it is also troublesome to get to the airport, because they are obviously always far away from the city center.

5. What different kinds of accommodation can people use when they are travelling?

Well, since China opened up to tourism, hotels have mushroomed everywhere. There is a great variety of accommodation choices for all budgets. Four-star hotels can be found in big cities and around famous tourist destinations. However, most travelers choose to stay in smaller hotels that offer more reasonable prices. In addition, there are quite a lot of home-stays. A family welcomes you for the night. You can have dinner with them, and it's a great chance to learn about the local customs and food. Backpackers with a limited budget can pick a youth hostel, and they can share a dorm with other travelers. I have also heard of couch-surfing, which is a great hospitality exchange network for travelers. It works in a very simple way: you can sign up on the website, and you agree to provide your couch, or a bed, to travelers who might come to your hometown. In exchange, you could stay on someone else's couch anywhere around the world. It's a network based on trust. But it is also a great opportunity to meet people and have a great time when you travel alone.

A Trip You Would Like to Take

Tell me about a trip you would like to take.

You should say: where the place is and what you would do there
 if it is a popular holiday destination
 what you know about the place
and explain why you would like to go there so much.

- France Paris = brilliant destination + romantic place
- I learned French at university: I would like to practice (catch up on my French).
- Architecture = impressive; ancient buildings, stunning castles + churches
- Many museums, Louvre: I could see the Mona Lisa + shopping.
- It would be an expensive but memorable trip.

I would love to go to France. You know, in China, we believe that France is the most romantic country ever. Paris sounds like a brilliant destination with many things to see and experience.

A few years ago, I learned French at university, but I have never had a chance to practice what I have learned. If I could go to Paris, it would be a great opportunity to catch up on my French. Paris must be a stunning city. First of all, it would be amazing to see the architecture. I know that in Paris, most buildings are very old, if not ancient. Walking in Paris would be like walking in an open-air museum, with many old streets and statues. I would go to Notre Dame, the prestigious cathedral. I love old churches and castles.

In addition, I could visit some art museums such as the Louvre, and get to see the Mona Lisa. I think it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And I'm not even talking about shopping on the Champs Elysees, the main avenue that leads to the Grand Arch that Napoleon ordered. The shops there must be so trendy and classy.

France is also very famous for the food. I could see myself sitting at a fancy restaurant, tasting French specialties and sipping some French wine. Life would be great! Although it would be expensive, I really think it would be worth it. If I ever surprised my wife and told her that we were going to Paris on holiday, I think she would be so thrilled that she would probably agree to cook for me every day for the rest of my life!

1. Why do some people enjoy traveling?

Well, people like to go on a trip for different reasons. First of all, it is always fun to go traveling. It's exciting to discover a new place. In addition, usually people choose to visit some beautiful scenic destinations. Everyone enjoys looking at gorgeous landscapes, or impressive views. On top of this, traveling is a great chance to relax and forget about your daily problems at work or in your studies. We also believe that traveling will open up our minds, and allow us to learn a lot (of new things) while having a great and memorable time.

2. What can make travelling difficult?

Well, the weather could make traveling difficult. If you are in Sichuan Province in the winter, you might get stuck in a small town if it starts snowing. Roads may be blocked by the snow. In addition, traveling could be made difficult and tiring if you decide to take the train or a bus during one of the popular festivals in China. At this time of the year, so many people want to go home for the holiday that trains are always packed, buses are always late, and it is extremely hard to find a seat. People get on the train but they have to stand for hours as every seat is occupied (= there is no seat). What's more, I am guessing that if you go abroad and you don't speak the language, it will be harder for you to get around.

3. Do you think that your hometown will attract more foreign tourists in the future?

I really think so. First of all, my hometown has a lot to offer a foreign tourist: there are many impressive temples; the old quarter in the city is a fantastic place to walk around — it's extremely traditional, with its architecture and museums. The food in Fuzhou is also stunning, with a mix of flavors, sweet and sour food. In addition, my hometown is going through some major changes at the moment, and I really believe that my city will become more attractive thanks to this modernization. The streets are already wider and cleaner than in the past. On top of this, there are many beautiful places of interest all around the city. Fuzhou is surrounded by mountains, and there are some spectacular spots to visit, with waterfalls and crystal clear streams (= rivers) going through the mountains. And you know, at the moment, there are absolutely no foreigners (=no laowai!) coming to my hometown to travel, so the situation can only improve from here!

No, I don't think so. I come from a very small place, and it is a little far away from any major city. It is a tiny place in the countryside. Although it could be a very nice and peaceful destination, with stunning rivers and impressive mountains, most local people are getting richer and building houses everywhere. They do not care about the environment and the houses they build do not follow traditional architecture. It is a lot of concrete and steel. It doesn't look attractive. Their life is more comfortable but it will not attract any tourist, especially foreigners. I believe that foreign tourists want to see traditional houses that represent culture and history. They want to go to some exciting places, not my hometown, where nothing ever happens.

4. How important is it to understand cultural differences when traveling overseas?

Well, it is essential. People travel overseas for 2 main reasons I think: first, they want to see the sites; and second, they want to learn about foreign cultures. Travelers should be open-minded and ready to ask questions in order to learn about people's way of thinking, as well as their habits. Tourists will enjoy their holiday even more if they appreciate these things. But I also believe that it takes time to really understand a culture.

A Historic Site

Tell me about a historic site you have visited.

You should say: where the place is and if it is famous
 what you learned from the place
 whether many people go there
and explain how you felt when you went there.

- The Great Wall = massive, gigantic monument, up north in many provinces + attracts tourists
- It took a long time to build = it was assembled over many years to protect the kingdom.
- It was made of stones found on location + bricks later on
- It represents Chinese heritage + hard work + determination
- view = breathtaking + picturesque = imagination = dragon above mountains + from the moon

Let me tell you about the Great Wall. It is a massive monument that has become the symbol of China. The Great Wall is extremely famous because of its impressive size. It is a gigantic construction located in northern China. The Great Wall has now become a popular tourist destination. Most people visit the site near Beijing, although you can get to the Wall in other provinces, such as Hebei or further down in Gansu and Shaanxi.

It was built more than 2000 years ago in order to protect the kingdom from northern invasion. The Wall was put together during the reign of various emperors, but the majority of the existing wall was built during the Ming Dynasty.

Building such a huge fortified wall required a lot of materials. At first, workers used the stones they could find in the mountains. But on the plains, the rocks had to be carried or rolled from far away. It was an incredible project. Later on, during the Ming Dynasty, they started using bricks, which made the Great Wall stronger and more elaborate.

In China, we say that boys can only become real men once they set foot on the Great Wall. I think that the Great Wall symbolizes strength and determination. It represents hard work, and above all, the greatness of Chinese heritage.

The Great Wall looks like a dragon unwinding above the mountains. It is a spectacular and picturesque construction that stands in remembrance of (represents) the past. There are watchtowers every 100 meters and the view from the top is absolutely breathtaking. It is so impressive. Some people even believe that it can be seen from the moon! How amazing is that?

1. How is history taught in school nowadays?

In my country, history is taught in the same way it was taught 50 years ago. Students follow the teacher in class, and take a lot of notes. And at home, they must read their textbook and learn a lot of dates and events by heart. Sometimes the teacher might try to share some stories or anecdotes, and use movies and pictures to illustrate facts. But overall, teachers need to stick to the program and their schedule because students will be tested at the end of the year. Teachers must make sure that they cover the entire curriculum on time before the national exam.

2. How is visiting a historical place different from reading about it?

Well, obviously when your teacher describes a place with words, or when you read about it, you

need to imagine what the place could look like. But when you get there, you can see it with your own eyes, and everything becomes clearer. In addition, I think it is easier to forget about something you read, but what you see and experience will usually remain memorable. On top of this, once you have seen the place for real, it is easier to picture what life in the past used to be like. For example, my teacher had told me about the Earth Castles in Fujian. You know, they are massive round earth houses built by the Hakka people. 200 people can live together inside one house. I used to try to imagine them, but as soon as I got there, everything became clearer. Actually it's a lot more impressive than I could ever describe to you.

3. Why is there often public interest in historical films and books?

I think that people really feel interested in the past and whatever happened a long time ago. Maybe because of globalization, people understand that it is extremely important to get back to our roots (=origins) because they define who we are. Historical books or movies could be a good chance to learn something while enjoying ourselves too.

4. How important are legends and heroes to a country?

Legends that relate the stories of past heroes are extremely important to a country, because these stories usually teach important values. For example, the legend of General Yue Fei is told to every child and student in China. It reminds children that they should be hard-working and loyal whatever happens in their lives. Heroes are regarded as role models for younger people, and they make everyone dream. It's always nice to look up to someone as a source of inspiration.

5. How could museums be made more attractive to young people?

I think that history should be told through stories. I think that a good story could definitely fascinate young people, and make it easier for them to remember and learn about history. It would be great to have a good guide take them through the museum while telling a captivating (=very interesting) story. Museums should also be more interactive, with computers asking the visitors questions, and maybe tour guides could even organize some games.

6. How interested are people in the history of where they live?

I think that people are getting more and more interested in their local history. Each place is unique (= one of a kind), and people are always proud of their local culture and heritage. This history can shape their identity. In China, we pay a lot of attention to our history, and old people always like to share stories about local legends or events that happened years ago. I think that young people should learn about local history in order to pass it on to the next generation.

7. Do you agree or disagree that you can't understand today's world without knowing about the past?

I definitely agree ! History can explain pretty much everything. First of all, history explains geography and the borders of our country. History can explain why some cities in China are more developed than others. History can explain people's mentalities (= frame of mind), for example why many Chinese do not trust Japanese people. I think that history can help us understand so many things about our culture and our customs. If you wonder why we make rice dumplings (= zongzi) or celebrate Dragon Boat Festival, the answer can be found in national history.

An Educational Visit

Tell me about an educational visit you have taken part in.

You should say: where you went and what you saw
 if it is a famous place
 what you learnt during the visit
and explain how you felt when you went there.

- Terra-Cotta Warriors in Xi'an = popular tourist destination I visited, and I learned a lot
- Farmers dug a well and found the Emperor's tomb = huge discovery
- He had thousands of statues built to protect him in the afterlife. Huge place = impressive
- Each statue is unique. There are still thousands of statues buried all around the place.
- This museum gives us an idea about amazing projects they undertook in the past (= heritage).

Let me tell you about what has now become a sensational tourist attraction in China. I'm sure you have heard of the Terra-Cotta Warriors outside Xi'an city. I visited the place 2 years ago with my parents, and I learned a lot about the Emperor Qin Shi Huang, and why he decided to duplicate (reproduce) his army.

The city of Xi'an has gained fame since the time 30 years ago when a farmer dug a hole and found tons of different statues buried under his field. It turned out to be the tomb of one of our famous Emperors. Emperor Qin Shi Huang was the first to unite the Chinese Kingdom, so he played a very important role in Chinese History.

Before he passed away, this emperor decided to be buried with a whole army of soldiers in order to be protected during the afterlife. He was afraid of what could happen to him after death. He called for thousands of peasants (farmers) to carve an impressive number of statues, representing soldiers and horses. They were all placed in lines all around his tomb. Many archeologists (historians) have done research there to explore the secrets of the Qin Dynasty.

What is remarkable is that each warrior has a different hairstyle or expression. Some of them are standing while others kneeling down. Anthropologists (researchers) have dug many statues out of the dirt, but not everything because they're worried pollution and high temperatures will destroy the sculptures.

This museum reveals the splendor (= beauty + grandeur) of past dynasties, as well as the beauty of our Chinese imperial heritage (= heritage from our emperors). It's really worth a visit!

1. What can people learn from visiting other places?

Well, it really depends on where you are going, but tourists can learn a lot from their visits. First of all, they can definitely improve their knowledge related to geography. Tourists will remember where cities are located, and which city is the capital of which country or province. In addition, in China, many people travel to historical destinations, such as Beijing or Xi'an up north. They get to learn about the country's historical and cultural heritage. In many places, tourists can learn about local culture. If you travel to Guizhou Province for example, and you stay in a small village

inhabited by the Miao ethnic minority, you will find out about their customs, the way they dress, the way they welcome their guests, and the way they cook. Finally, if you go to Sanya in Hainan Province, where the ocean is picturesque, with impressive crystal clear water, you will not learn about history or local culture so much, but you will realize how beautiful China really is.

2. Do you think a holiday is a good thing to spend money on?

Yes, definitely. I think that taking a holiday is a great chance to relax, to have fun while seeing some amazing landscapes. Traveling is really enjoyable, because you can visit amazing places you will remember forever. In addition, traveling is not as expensive as before. Even if you have a small budget, it is possible to stay in cheap hotels and to eat cheap food. Well, at least in China, it is possible. On the other hand, I understand that some people may not travel because they want to save money to buy a house or a car, something more practical.

3. What negative effects can tourism have on a place or on the people who live there?

Tourism comes at a cost and it sometimes has a negative impact on the environment or on the population. I think the main problem is that in order to make money from tourists, the local governments build roads and facilities that will change the place forever. Places of natural beauty or old towns will never be the same once thousands of tourists start visiting them day after day. I went to Jiuzhaigou, a famous national park in Sichuan Province, and outside the gate they have built hundreds of very ugly hotels. When you get there, you really don't want to stay. There are concrete buildings everywhere. It is noisy, and you don't feel in the heart of the mountains at all. It looks like a little city. It has completely modified local life too. People don't farm the land anymore; they try to make a living from sightseers (= tourists). Tourism always changes local people's lifestyle. In Zhouzhuang, near Shanghai, the streets are full of souvenir shops and restaurants to welcome tourists. You will not meet any local people, and I think that it is sad. The place loses its local culture and essence (=spirit).

4. What effects has tourism had on your country?

Tourism has both positive and negative effects on a country. First of all, tourism boosts the economy. It brings money to the country and the locals. It also creates jobs, which usually causes people's living standards to rise. Tourism also plays an important role in spreading local cultures overseas. For example, if many foreigners come to China, they will most probably talk about Chinese culture to their friends back home, and more people will become aware of Chinese traditions and customs. But on the other hand, tourism also brings problems. Sometimes hotels and roads are built with no respect for the environment. We should make sure that tourists do not litter or cause too much noise. There is a very old village near Shanghai called Zhouzhuang. It is a very popular tourist destination but most of the locals have moved out because they couldn't stand the noise due to the constant flow of tourists. As a result, businessmen opened souvenir shops or restaurants in place of the former craftsmen and local shopkeepers. I am pretty sure you could find many examples like this all around China since our country has opened up to tourism. This contributes to a loss of local cultures and traditions.

A Walk You Particularly Enjoyed

Tell me about a walk you particularly enjoyed taking.

You should say: where you walked
 if it is a popular walk to take
 what you saw
and explain how you felt while walking.

- Gu Shan: most famous mountain around my hometown = popular spot
- Steep steps: 2-hour walk amidst the trees = peaceful
- Rocks with engraved calligraphy and scrolls + impressive temple on top
- Scenic view over the whole city = spectacular landscape: mountains + city line
- Relaxing with friends + healthy

A few weeks ago, my friends and I decided to climb one of the most famous mountains that surround my hometown. The place is called Gu Shan, or Gu Mountain, and it is a very popular spot for people to go hiking. If you go on the weekend, the place will be extremely crowded, but if you go on a weekday, it is a very quiet getaway from the noise of the city center.

Gu Shan is located about 30 minutes outside my city. There is a small path that takes you all the way to the top of the mountain. There are thousands of steps, but I can't say that it is a steep climb, especially compared to the Great Wall or the famous Yellow Mountain. However, it took us about an hour and a half to reach the summit, and it was a very peaceful walk in the forest.

In addition, we saw many stunning rocks on the side of the path, with beautiful engravings on them. You know, in China, we really appreciate the art of calligraphy, and my friends and I took some pictures of each other next to those sculpted scrolls. At the top of the mountain, there is an impressive Buddhist temple, with traditional architecture and a gorgeous pond full of water lilies with turtles swimming inside. The place was so calm, so pleasant; we all enjoyed the tranquility of it.

Right outside the temple, there is a platform where we can admire the scenic view of my city. We were lucky with the weather: it was a clear day, and we could look out over the entire city. It offers a spectacular view. We realized how wide Fuzhou is growing. You can clearly see the skyscrapers rising through the city center, and the mountains that encircle surround the urban area.

I must admit that walking up the hill was a bit tiring, but it was also relaxing. We talked the whole way. My classmates shared some funny stories, and we all had a blast (= a great time). On top of this, hiking is very healthy, and I thought it was a great workout for both my heart and my legs. I intend to (=I plan to) go back to Gu Shan sometime soon..

1. What are the most popular ways of relaxing in your country?

Well, there are obviously many different ways to relax here in China. Nowadays, we often use technology as a way to entertain ourselves. Young people usually like to watch TV or surf the Internet. It has become very common for adolescents (=teenagers) to go online and chat with their friends. In China, we use a very convenient Instant Messenger program called QQ. Actually this software provides many online games which are very popular among teens and young adults. In

addition to these new forms of entertainment, many people practice sports as a way to unwind (= relax). People of all ages frequently go swimming or jogging. A lot of male students are big basketball fans, and they get together with their friends on a regular basis to have fun. Older people enjoy badminton and dancing in public squares. Finally, I should definitely mention shopping, which seems to be a trendy way for girls to relax. And in China, it is very common for people to hang out at a karaoke bar, and sing songs with friends.

2. What are the dangers of having no regular relaxation?

People should definitely relax after work or after studying hard in order to rest. If people don't take it easy, they will become burned out; they won't be as efficient as they should be; they might even lose interest in their job. These people will definitely get tired and stressed. I think that when you always think about your job or your studies, you will feel quite tense, and you might get easily frustrated (= irritated = annoyed). People who don't know how to take it easy will become workaholics, which means they don't know how to enjoy life. They might forget about their friends or their family.

3. What are the main causes of stress that people experience where you live?

I am a student, so obviously my classmates and I are always stressed before exams. We worry about getting bad grades. In addition, we sometimes talk about our future, and we don't really know what to expect. We have a lot of dreams and expectations, but we don't know if we will be able to realize them.

I believe that people mostly worry about their job, and making enough money to live a decent life. Life is getting more expensive, and when you get a family, a kid, you have expectations and obligations responsibilities). Men in China are required to make a living for the whole family. I believe that a lot of guys worry about being successful enough. Women might worry about their own or their husband's job, or their child's education, as well as their own age and appearance.

4. What types of jobs are available in the holiday industry?

There are many different jobs related to the tourist industry. First of all, I can think of tour guides and people who work in travel agencies. They plan your holiday; they book hotels and flights for customers. Tourism creates jobs in hotels and restaurants so many people can be hired as cooks, waiters, accountants, and managers. Many people also find a job in companies in charge of entertaining tourists: if you want to go scuba diving in Hainan, you need an instructor, and someone to rent the equipment from. If you go skiing around Harbin, it's the same.

5. What qualities and qualifications are needed to do them?

Well, it really depends on the job of course, but in general, if you want to work in the holiday industry, I think you should have good interpersonal skills. Communication is essential because you will meet many people from different backgrounds, and you should be able to adapt to their expectations and requests. In addition, tour guides, waiters, and anyone who serves tourists should be considerate and patient. You should be well-trained too, and it is possible to study tourism at university, in order to be fully qualified. Speaking English and other foreign languages would also definitely be useful.

A Place You Would Like to Visit

Tell me about a place you would like to visit.

You should say: where the place is and what you would do there
 if it is a popular destination
 if you know anyone who has already been there
and explain why you would like to go there so much.

- Brisbane, Queensland, Australia: northeast
- I did some research because I'd like to study there. National parks all around = outdoor activities
- The city is peaceful = Australians are said to be laid-back = barbecue + cricket
- Not far from the Great Barrier Reef = stunning, impressive underwater world
- two birds with one stone = study + visit a gorgeous region

I would love to go to Brisbane, Australia. It is the third largest Australian city. It is located in Queensland, in the northeast of the country.

I did a little bit of research on the city, because I would like to study in Australia in the future. Brisbane would be an amazing place because of the location. First of all, it is surrounded by many national parks. I love hiking and being outside; there are so many outdoor activities I could do there.

My foreign teacher told me that the city is very peaceful. It is said that Australian people, especially in Queensland, are extremely laid-back. I think the atmosphere must be very relaxing. I would like to make some Australian friends, and have a barbecue ("a Barbie, mate! ") with them on the beach or in a park. They might be able to teach me how to play cricket too, who knows?

On top of this, from Brisbane, it is easy to get to the Great Barrier Reef. It is supposed to be a stunning place with impressive underwater life. I have seen pictures, and the water looks absolutely crystal clear, with different shades of blue and green. It must be breathtaking! It is one of my dreams to spend time there and go scuba diving.

If I could go study over there, I would be able to kill two birds with one stone. I could learn about my major and get a degree, and also visit one of the most striking regions in the world.

Vocabulary: Country-People

France-French

Germany-German

Canada-Canadian

Switzerland-Swiss

Denmark-Danish

Czech Republic-Czech

Vietnam-Vietnamese

Holland-Deutsch

Turkey-Turkish

Japan-Japanese

Sweden-Swedish

Thailand-Thai

A Place You Would Like to Visit

Tell me about a city you would like to visit.

You should say: where the city is and what you would do there
 if it is a popular destination
 if you know anyone who has already been there
and explain why you would like to go there so much.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Place Near Water You Have Visited

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1. What kinds of leisure activities are based around water?

2. How valuable is water in your country?

3. Compare the importance of water and oil in your country.

4. Can you compare going on a short trip with going on a longer holiday?

S. How important is tourism to your country?

A Trip that Did Not Go as Well as Expected

Tell me about a trip that did not go as well as expected.

You should say: where you went
 what you expected to see and do
 why it was different from what you expected
and explain how you felt when you went there.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Three-Day Holiday You Would Like to Take

Tell me about a three-day holiday you would like to take.

You should say: what you would do
 where you would go
 if you have been there before
 and explain why you would take this holiday.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Vocabulary : What would you do if you had time off?

- I'd take my backpack and a map, and I'd bum around Yunnan for a few weeks until I ran out of cash.
- To be honest I wouldn't do much. I'd take some time off and take it easy at home, reading, and catching up on things I should have done earlier. I'd definitely hang out with friends too.
- I'd most definitely plan a trip to somewhere new. They say that "Traveling is a fool's paradise" but I am happy to be the fool if I can get to see some breathtaking places.

(Sources: World Link series)

7 Celebrations

Proverb:

The more the merrier.

The more people there are, the happier the situation will be.

Sample Answer:

- A Birthday
- A Wedding
- A Festival (Chinese New Year)
- A Festival (Dragon Boat Festival)
- A Foreign Festival
- A Gift You Received

Practice:

- A Party You Would Like to Organize
- A Gift You Gave to Someone

Key Words

memorable = unforgettable

excited = thrilled

well-decorated = well-planned

= well-organized

happy = delighted = pleased

interesting = lively = sensational

we had fun = we had a great time

= we had a blast

to light the candles

to blow the candles out

to light firecrackers fireworks

A Birthday

Tell me about a birthday (your own or someone else's) that you enjoyed.

You should say: what the occasion was
 how you celebrated the birthday
 whether you usually celebrate birthdays this way
and explain how you felt at this birthday celebration

- Whose? Where?
- Usually, birthdays are a bit boring: dinner with family = no big deal but...
- Got together with friends + surprise
- Cake: lit candles, blew them out, sang songs
- Gifts cards: meaningful + considerate
- Next year?

Let me tell you about my last birthday. In November, I turned 20 and I celebrated with my classmates at school. I have been studying at university for 2 years now. I live and spend most of my time with my roommates who are also my classmates.

On my birthday, we had class and actually, our schedule was pretty tight with a test and some important lessons. It did not feel like a special day at all until night time. After dinner, my roommates surprised me.

It was about 9 pm and my parents had just called me to wish me a happy birthday. Right after I hung up the phone, my friends turned the lights off and brought a birthday cake into the room. They had placed 20 candles in the chocolate frosting (= sugary cream on top of the cake). They also invited some other classmates of ours, and they all sang the birthday song for me, both in Chinese and in English. They asked me to make a wish and to blow out the candles. I cannot tell you what I wished for, otherwise it won't come true, but it had something to do with all the people in the room at the time.

I cut the cake into small pieces and shared with everyone. Naturally, one of my good friends spread some cake on my nose but I told them not to throw any cake around because I did not want to waste any of it.

In addition, I was given a very large card where everyone had written a message to wish me all the best. It was very considerate of all of my friends. My three roommates also bought me a gift. It was a small box, very well-wrapped with a red ribbon tied around. There was a gorgeous necklace inside, and I did not know what to say, or how to thank them: I was speechless. They promised me that we would be friends forever, and I felt that I could really rely on them.

It was my second birthday away from my parents. The first one had been a bit sad the previous year, but this one was absolutely wonderful and I plan to invite them all for dinner next year for my twenty-first birthday! I am sure that we will have a blast!

1. Which birthdays have a special significance in your culture?

Well, actually a lot of Chinese people don't pay so much attention to their birthdays, but in my hometown, people think that kids become adults at the age of 16. So this — 6th birthday is a big deal. In addition, this is when we receive an identity card in my country. It means we become grown-ups and we must face responsibilities, although according to the law, people become adults when they turn 18. When people get older, I think they pay more attention to round numbers like 30, 50 and 60. 60 is a significant birthday because it is when people usually retire. We usually hold a big dinner for this occasion and wish these people a long life.

2. Do children and adults celebrate birthdays in the same ways?

Definitely not. In my country, adults like to organize a big dinner, and very frequently everyone ends up singing at a karaoke bar, whereas children enjoy going to McDonald's and eating junk food while playing with their friends on the monkey bars and the slides. Teenagers often prefer going out shopping with friends, or playing basketball and going to the movies. And when they get home, parents cook and they get to eat a cake for dessert.

3. Do people's attitudes to birthdays change as they get older?

I think so. Children are usually excited about their birthdays, because they know they get to eat a cake, and they might receive cards or gifts from their relatives. However, as we get older, we tend not to pay so much importance to birthdays anymore, because it's just another year... Especially when people are in their 40s or 50s, they usually don't like to be reminded that they are getting older.

4. How important is it for families to celebrate special events together?

It's fundamental for families to celebrate birthdays and festivals together, because these occasions really bring a family closer together. Most traditional events in my country are family celebrations, so it is meaningful to get together with relatives. It's a good chance to talk and have a great time as a family.

5. Do you spend more time with your family or with your friends?

I definitely spend more time with my friends as I am still a student, and I have been living on campus at university. I only get to go home once a month, so I don't often see my parents. I made friends with a lot of my classmates, and we are constantly together. We study and eat our meals together, and we hang out after class. We're like family at school.

6. What presents do people usually give on birthdays?

Well, it depends on whose birthday it is, but people frequently give clothes to family members, especially children. I guess that in the last few years, electronic products have become very trendy. So things like mobile phones or MP3s or electronic dictionaries are often given as gifts. But you know, actually in China, we don't often offer gifts for birthdays. It's a lot more common to give a present for the Chinese New Year during the Spring Festival.

A Wedding

Tell me about a wedding you attended.

You should say: who was getting married
 who went to the wedding
 what was special about the wedding
and explain how you felt at this wedding.

- Whose marriage? Memorable celebration for many reasons
- Traditional: we went to get the bride: firecrackers, noodles, little games
- The decorations: the bed, red everywhere, pictures of the couple
- Restaurant: the ceremony + speech + food + wedding gown
- Performance at night: lively and colorful: unforgettable with fireworks

Last year, one of my good friends got married in his hometown of Longyan, a smaller city west of Xiamen. I joined the celebration and I must say that it was quite a memorable day.

First of all, they really tried hard to stick to the local traditions. In the morning, the groom and seven of his friends (8 people in total because in China 8 is a lucky number) drove to the bride's home. I was in one of the cars, with pink ribbons everywhere, and we honked the horn all the way to announce our arrival. The groom went up the stairs and knocked on his future wife's door for a long time. She kept on asking him questions about their relationship, and he had to make sure he was answering them right. She asked him to slide some money under the door for the bridesmaids too. It was quite amusing. At her home, we all ate noodles because this specialty represents longevity (=long life) and good luck.

Then, the husband-to-be took his fiancée home and showed her around his house. Their bedroom was well-decorated with little hearts and pictures of each other on the walls. Apparently the groom's parents had made the bed for the newly wedded couple, and they had placed a picture of a baby boy at the head of the bed in the hope that the new couple would give birth to a son soon.

The ceremony was very colorful and lively. The host invited the parents to give a speech, then the bride and groom bowed to the four parents many times as a sign of respect, and also because they knew they paid for most of the wedding. Later on, the host sang a couple of songs and people raised their glasses and cheered all together. The bride was wearing a beautiful red gown: she looked gorgeous. She had a flower in her hair and everyone kept on staring at her.

The food was stunning and we were served 16 dishes, I think. Everything was perfectly well-organized and people took many pictures of the decorations and dishes on the table. I snapped a great photograph of the 2 lovers with the Champagne fountain, as they were pouring the liquid down a pyramid of crystal glasses: it will be unforgettable for all of us, I think.

In the evening, we went back to the groom's place and they had arranged for some local artists to perform traditional dancing and singing outside their house. It attracted all the neighbors and there were at least 400 people watching and sharing the moment. The bride showed her wedding ring to her friends and she really looked delighted. I am sure that their wedding inspired many of the young women who had a chance to attend the wedding. Eventually, the family lit spectacular fireworks to mark the end of the festivities.

1. What kinds of wedding presents do people usually give in your country?

In my country, we don't give presents to the newly wedded couple. We always give them money.

You might have heard of the red envelopes we offer them. We place money inside, and it symbolizes our wishes for prosperity and luck for both of them.

2. Compare the advantages of having a big wedding and a small wedding?

Okay. Well, big weddings are more impressive, I suppose. When you get a few hundred people in the same room, it creates more noise, and the wedding will be livelier. And inviting a lot of people also means that the bride and groom will receive a lot of money, since everyone gives a red envelope full of cash. On the other hand, organizing a smaller wedding will cost less, and the atmosphere will be more personal. At big weddings, the couple doesn't actually know everyone in the room. In my country, the bride and groom's parents invite their friends. So these people barely know the young couple. I think it's a bit strange. If they only celebrate with their close relatives and their very close friends, people will bond and talk more. The bride and groom will also get a chance to spend more time with all of the guests. I think having a small wedding is definitely more meaningful.

3. Why do people enjoy celebrating events such as wedding?

Well, these events are definitely happy celebrations. Weddings celebrate family. When people get married, it means they create a new family, and it actually brings 2 families closer together. I think weddings are very significant, and they bring joy to all the people involved, not just the couple.

4. Do you think that men and women have different attitudes to getting married?

I'm not sure how to answer this question. I guess most women dream of getting married to Prince Charming, and having the happiest family ever. Women are usually anxious to get (= looking forward to getting) married. And some men are too. You know, in China many men are traditional and they want to get married early and lead a stable life. However, nowadays, many young men want more freedom, and they wish to enjoy life, and go out with friends, and maybe meet more than one girl before they take the plunge (= say "yes" forever). I think a lot of young people, both men and women, don't mind getting married at a later age these days.

5. How should family and work responsibilities be shared in a marriage ?

Well, in modern society, men and women are equal and they should be treated fairly. As a result, they should share every responsibility. Both of them are entitled and to work hard on their career. However, in my country, we always expect take some time off to raise her child, and it is okay for a woman to depend on her husband when she does. But if both men and women are working, then men should definitely lend a hand with the housework. Actually, it doesn't often work this way, but it really depends on what the man does for a living. If he's at home every evening around 6, he can help with the cooking, or with the child's homework. If he's a businessman who often works overtime or travels a lot, I guess his wife will have to deal with the family issues more than him. It's your turn to answer!

6. How important is marriage for a society?

(Marriage is fundamental...

7. Do you think that attitudes to marriage may change in the future ?

(People might get married even later...People might not feel it is necessary to get married...

A Festival (Chinese New Year)

Tell me about a festival in your culture.

You should say: what the festival is
 who you celebrate the festival with
 what is special about this festival
and explain how you feel at this festival.

- Spring Festival = most meaningful and important celebration
- Family holiday: get together + big meal
- New beginning: clean the house, put up scrolls around every door
- Visit relatives and friends: tea, snacks, red envelopes
- CCTV Gala + fireworks

Let me tell you about the Spring Festival in my family. It is by far the most important celebration of the year in China, and it is a very particular time for all of us for many reasons.

First of all, it is a family holiday. Because my parents are extremely busy with their jobs and I do not study in my hometown, we really cherish the New Year as a time to get together and relax. My mother cooks a lot of tasty specialties to spoil everyone, and she makes sure that my grandparents, my uncles and cousins can all come to share a great meal or two. We give presents and money (I am sure you have heard of the red envelopes we distribute to our relatives during the holiday). It's a time to be generous and considerate with those we really care about.

In addition, the Spring Festival represents a new beginning. It's the start of a new year, a new life for everyone. We must follow some traditions to make sure that this New Year will be a lucky (auspicious) one. First, every single family will stick red scrolls on each side of their doors and windows. When I was a child, my father used to make me paint those scrolls and he would teach me about Chinese calligraphy. Nowadays we mostly buy them in a shop but we still believe they will scare the evil spirits away. Red is a fundamental color for the festival because it symbolizes energy and hope. It is the official color of our country too. We also need to clean the house in order to get rid of all the negative dirt and dust we have accumulated in the last year. Each event has a special meaning. I almost forgot: it is a tradition to buy new clothes too to start the year looking smart and optimistic.

We usually get a week off for Spring Festival and we take advantage of the national holiday to visit our relatives. When we walk into their house, they always welcome us with tea and numerous snacks. Sometimes, we do not stay long but it is still important to wish them all the best for the New Year.

On New Year's Eve, everyone in China watches a TV program called the CCTV Gala. It is an institution in China. The show has been aired for so many years. Famous hosts, singers, actors, even athletes join in to perform in front of the whole country. At midnight, we light fireworks and the whole city suddenly comes to life. The dark sky becomes colorful and everyone has a blast. It's a very unique celebration and holds a special place in our hearts.

A Festival (Dragon Boat Festival)

Tell me about a festival in your culture.

You should say: what the festival is
 who you celebrate the festival with
 what is special about this festival
and explain how you feel at this festival.

- Dragon Boat Festival: when?
- Why? Qu Yuan (patriotic writer) drowned
- Boat races: drums, firecrackers, spirit + carved boats: stunning works of art
- Families get together to encourage the men
- Dinner: we eat rice dumplings and remember a Chinese hero.

Let me tell you about the Dragon Boat Festival we celebrate every year, on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar.

On Dragon Boat Day, we commemorate a patriotic poet called Qu Yuan who drowned in a river. The local people really admired him, and decided to get into some canoes (= boats) and throw rice dumplings to feed the fish in the river, so that they would not eat Qu Yuan's body.

Every year on Dragon Boat Day, in every city around China, men compete on rivers and lakes aboard dragon boats. It is a very lively and exciting festival for many reasons. First of all, the boats are well-decorated. Some artists carve and paint a dragon head as well as a dragon tail on each side of the boat. Each canoe is unique. The men usually cheer and scream while paddling hard. There is usually one man on each boat who beats the drums to encourage the paddlers and fix a rhythm.

It is a popular event and families go to the river together to cheer for the teams. Some people light firecrackers, and many crew members wear colorful clothes. Some even reveal their tattooed arms. When I was a child, my father used to take me to the Min River every year, and now it is my turn to take my child there.

It is a national holiday so families can get together and enjoy a good meal. You know how important food is in China, especially for festivals. Parents prepare a ton of food to celebrate. Naturally, everyone eats the rice dumplings we call "zongzi" in remembrance of Qu Yuan. It is a great opportunity to strengthen family values and to pass on our Chinese heritage to the younger generations.

A Foreign Festival

Tell me about a foreign festival you have experienced or heard of.

You should say: what the festival is
 how people usually celebrate on this occasion
 what is special about this festival
and explain what you think about this festival.

- Christmas: extremely popular in most Western countries
- Religious holiday: birth of Christ + tradition for everyone
- lunch or dinner (Xmas Eve or Xmas Day)
- Santa Claus + reindeer + presents + decorations
- In the future: I would like to experience a white Xmas.

I will tell you what I know about Christmas, which is a famous festival in most Western countries. I believe that it is the most popular celebration around the world, and even though it is not a traditional festival here in China, everyone has heard of it and the customs that are related to it.

First of all, I know that Christmas is a religious holiday. People who believe in God celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. And a lot of people in Europe, and North and South America go to church on Christmas Eve. The Bible tells us that Jesus was born on December the 25th in a stable. The priest gives a sermon (— speech) at the mass, and very often people sing religious songs together.

I think that some families actually get together on Christmas Eve to celebrate, while others wait for Christmas Day to organize a big lunch that might last for a long time. When I was in high school, I had a foreign teacher from America who told me that the traditions could be different from one country to another, and also from one family to another. He said that in America, it is common for people to eat a roast turkey or ham with gravy (=sauce) and Christmas pudding for dessert.

Of course when we talk about Christmas we can't avoid mentioning Santa Claus. He's a legendary imaginary figure that brings gifts to people on Christmas night. He's a plump fat, jolly, white-bearded man wearing a red coat with white collar and cuffs and white-cuffed red trousers. In Western culture, parents tell their children that if they behave well, Santa will bring them presents. There are many different Christmas songs about Santa and his reindeer. They are called Christmas carols. Santa comes from the North Pole, and he usually comes down people's chimneys to set gifts at the foot of the Christmas tree.

People always put a Christmas tree in their houses and decorate it with colored lights. They also hang Christmas balls and other ornaments on it. At the top of the tree there should be a star. I think Christmas is a joyful festival for families to gather and have a great time. The Christmas spirit is one of peace, love and goodwill to all, even for those who don't believe in Jesus. Next year, I intend to study in England and I truly hope I will get a chance to experience this festival with a British family.

1. Compare spending time with family and spending time with friends on special occasions.

It depends on what the occasion is. For example, it is traditional to be with family on national holidays like the Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival in my country. So my parents and my grandparents would find it hard to understand if I didn't go home to celebrate with them. However,

I must admit that these festivals are getting a little bit old. You know, other than eating, we don't do much, and what I sometimes dislike is that it's the same deal every year. On the other hand, spending time with friends could be a bit more exciting. We could go out to dinner or sing at a karaoke bar. We might play games, drink a little, or even travel. Usually it is okay to spend time with friends on birthdays, but family always comes first for traditional festivals.

2. Do you think that family celebrations will become less common in the future ?

Well, no, family celebrations will always take place in China, because they reflect our history and our culture. However, I think that the way we celebrate will change in the future, because young people like me will not want to celebrate in the same way every single year. I mean, last Spring Festival, I stayed home for a week, eating and watching TV every single night. I did it because my parents expect me to hang out with them, but in the future, when I get married, I will try to take advantage of the holiday to travel or at least go out and have some fun. I guess it also depends on if my parents live with me or not.

3. What kind of national events are celebrated in your country?

We have many different festivals in my country. The year starts with Spring Festival, and then two weeks later we hold the Lantern Festival which marks the end of the holiday season. In April there is Tomb Sweeping Festival when we commemorate our ancestors. In May everyone gets a few days off because of International Labor Day. And there is also Dragon Boat Festival in May or June according to the lunar calendar. In September there is Mid-Autumn Festival when we eat the famous moon cakes. Actually every festival requires people to eat different specialties. On Dragon Boat Day, everyone enjoys rice dumplings we call "zongzi." The first week of October, we all get one week off to celebrate National Day, the foundation of the People's Republic of China. We have festivals all year round.

4. Do you think that people's attitudes to national celebrations have changed in recent years?

Yes, definitely. The young generation is getting a little tired of the old traditions, and things are changing slowly. At the same time, people in my country have been making more money in the past few years, so their habits have also changed. For example, for Spring Festival many people now go out to eat, but in the past it was traditional to cook at home all together. Same with the ornaments we used to prepare when I was young. These days every family buys the decorations, like paper-cuts and scrolls we hang around each door, but we used to make them all by hand. In addition, many people have started traveling during the holiday instead of staying home all the time.

5. How significant are national holidays and celebrations?

They are extremely important because it is a great chance for our families to get together and remember why we celebrate such events. National holidays are meaningful. Parents should make sure to keep the traditions alive so that children can understand their cultural heritage and national identity.

6. Do you ever celebrate Western festivals?

It's now your turn to answer !

(If you do celebrate Western festivals like Christmas or Valentine's Day, explain why.)

A Gift You Received

Tell me about a gift you received.

You should say: what the gift was
 whether you think it was expensive
 who gave it to you
and explain what your reaction was when you got it.

- Spring Festival, my father bought me a cell phone
- Reaction: excited + thrilled + delighted
- Describe the phone
- Convenient + could instantly use it (SIM card)
- Need to be careful and responsible (money)

Last Spring Festival, my father bought me a mobile phone. It was a great gift, and I cherish it a lot. Before that I had a very old-fashioned looking phone, and I was not so pleased with it. But my father surprised me, and this is why he's such a cool dad: he's always considerate and thoughtful.

I knew I was going to get a gift or some money. It is traditional to receive something new for the Chinese New Year, especially new clothes. The Festival represents a new beginning; this is why we carefully clean the house before the celebration in order to get rid of all the bad things we gathered in a year. It symbolizes a new start. But I really didn't expect such a nice gift on top of the usual red envelope we give each other every year. I was thrilled when I opened the wrapping and saw a phone!

It was a Nokia phone, very trendy, you know, very well-designed, with a large color screen and many different functions. I can use my cell phone to listen to music, and also to get on the Internet. On top of this, I can take pictures and send the photos to other phones if I want to.

I switched my SIM card from my old phone to the new one, and in 2 minutes I was already sending messages to my friends to tell them about the gift I had received. I also took many pictures of our dinner, and later on the fireworks we set off at night.

At midnight I hugged my Dad to thank him again, and actually he told me that I should be very careful not to lose it, and he emphasized on the fact that I shouldn't play with it in class or while doing my homework. He was such a drag (=so boring)! He said he didn't want this new phone to be too much of a distraction for me. You know Chinese parents; they always ask their kids to study, and study even more. I got the message. I know I must be responsible.

1. On what occasions do people give gifts in your country?

We always give gifts to each other during Spring Festival. It is traditional to offer food, clothes, and sometimes money to children in the family. Whenever we go to visit our relatives we usually exchange red envelopes that contain money, and we bring tea or liquor (alcohol) to each other. In addition, nowadays it is pretty common to bring a gift to friends or relatives on their birthdays, although most people generally just buy a card and a cake, because birthdays are not such a big deal in my country.

2. Compare the kinds of presents that are given to children now with those given in the past.

Okay. Well, I guess that in the past, children frequently received clothes, books or candy on important occasions, like the traditional festivals. But nowadays electronic items might be more popular. Things like portable video games, MP3s, or mobile phones are great gifts for kids and teenagers. Of course they cost quite a lot of money, but people also earn more than in the past. The differences between the toys kids received 30 years ago and today's toys are huge. In the past they had card games, marbles, and usually toys their grandpas made of wood, but today's toys are sophisticated action figures, Game Boys and other technological items. It's on a whole different level.

3. How important is the cost of a present?

Well, we usually say that what really matters is the thought, not the cost, but I think it really depends on who is giving the present. For example, if it's a friend who doesn't have much money, of course the price of the gift doesn't matter at all. But I am sure that if a man only buys something cheap for his girlfriend, the girl will complain or think that her boyfriend is stingy! I guess that sometimes just remembering a birthday or Valentine's Day is not enough...Men also need to make an effort to make it special and memorable.

4. Compare the feelings of people when they give and receive presents.

Both are definitely great. It's nice to give, especially when you know the present is going to please the person a lot. A few months ago, I bought my nephew a portable video game I knew he wanted very badly, and you should have seen the smile on his face! He loved it, and I really made his day. It was a great feeling to actually witness his happiness. On the other hand, receiving a gift, especially when it's a surprise, is always very pleasant. It's a considerate gesture that everyone appreciates.

5. How much social pressure is there on people to give presents ?

Well, in my country, I think it is important to give gifts to important people whenever we go meet them. I know that businessmen feel it's an obligation to exchange gifts before they start working together. In addition, I think that nowadays because many festivals have become commercialized, young people might feel compelled to buy presents for their girlfriends on Valentine's Day or Christmas, because they think that everyone else does, even though it is not a Chinese tradition. Same with weddings, people very often give more money than they really want to give to the new couple, because they are afraid others will give more than they do. They might lose dignity, or "lose face" as we say in Chinese, if they give less than the other guests.

6. Tell me about some of the organizations in your country which help people in need.

It's your turn to answer!

(Talk about the Red Cross or other charity organizations in China)

A Party You Would Like to Organize

Tell me about a party you would like to organize.

You should say: what event you would celebrate
 who you would invite
 what would be special about this party
and explain whether you often go to parties of the kind.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Vocabulary: American Parties

- At a housewarming party, you usually receive gifts for your new home.
- A family reunion is a get-together with your family and relatives.
- When kids go to a slumber party, they stay overnight.
- A bachelor party is for the man before he gets married. (He's the groom. His fiancée is the bride.)
- You hold a shower baby after the baby is born.

(Source: World Link series)

A Gift You Gave to Someone

Tell me about a gift you gave to someone.

You should say: what the gift was
 whether it was expensive
 what the occasion was
and explain why you chose that particular gift for that person.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

8 Childhood

Proverb:

A man is as old as he feels.

A person's age is immaterial-it is only when he thinks and feels that he is ageing that he actually becomes old.

Sample Answer:

- A Child You Know
- A Toy You Enjoyed in Your Childhood
- A Group Activity You Enjoyed as a Child
- A Childhood Song You Remember
- A Happy Childhood Memory

Practice:

- A Toy You Had in Your Childhood
- A Game You Played in Your Childhood

Key Words

memorable = unforgettable

to meet people to = socialize

funny = amusing

when I turned 12 = on my 12th birthday

exciting = thrilling

interesting = fascinating

difficult = challenging = tough.

happy = delighted = over the moon

A Child You Know

Tell me about a child you know or knew.

You should say: who the child is/was
 whether you have a lot of contact with this child
 what the child's hobbies are
and explain what you think of children in general.

- Name + relationship to you + physical appearance
- How often do you meet? What do you do?
- Qualities + hobbies
- Studies + homework
- One-child policy + future

Let me tell you about my niece. Her name is Lynn and she is an adorable little girl. Lynn is going to turn 10 this year. She's really cute, and everyone thinks so. She has long dark hair, with big bright eyes. She likes to laugh and when she smiles, she illuminates the whole room. Her skin is very white, very smooth, and she has the sweetest voice. When she talks, she just calms me down; she almost mesmerizes me (=she's enchanting). She's really a little angel.

I usually see her on the weekend whenever I go visit my brother. Occasionally I take her to the cinema, or shopping. She's the only kid we have in the family so far, so of course she receives a lot of attention from everyone. But we make sure that she doesn't become too spoiled.

In terms of personality, Lynn is a very quiet and nice kid. She always listens to her parents, and that's a good thing. My brother is a considerate person, and I think Lynn can learn a lot from her father, my brother. Lynn is a smart girl too. She always asks questions about things. She's curious; she wants to know the reasons for everything. Sometimes I run out of explanations, so I ask her to ask her parents later on! She's full of energy, and she doesn't like to stay home too long. She enjoys riding her bike, and walking in the park with the dog. Actually she runs more than she walks.

She has been studying in primary school for 3 years, and I think she's one of the best students in her class. She has a great memory, and she can pick up things very easily. Actually, I think she's already very busy as a child. On the weekend, she takes piano lessons, and she also goes to an English training school to have classes with a foreign teacher. She's receiving great education.

We'll see how Lynn turns out in the future, but I have a feeling she's going to be a successful lady. She's very sweet and respectful. We all feel blessed to have her around. In China, because of the one-child policy, kids often feel lonely, but her parents know the risks, and they are doing a great job at keeping her busy, and giving her chances to hang out with other children as much as possible.

1. What do you think that children need most in life?

Well, children most definitely need love and affection. They need to feel safe, you know, protected and trusted, so that they can enjoy life and grow up in the best possible conditions. In addition, children need a good education, with discipline, and a bit of freedom too. If their parents are overprotective, the kids will become spoiled. Children must learn how to become independent gradually.

2. Compare the behavior of teenagers to that of young children.

Well, teenagers want more space and independence. They usually can't stand it when their parents try to control everything they are doing. Teenagers might be a little rebellious as well: they might not always listen to their parents or teachers' advice. Sometimes teenagers think they know better than all of them. Young children, on the other hand, are usually more obedient. They are often afraid of their parents anyway, so they listen to them. Obviously young children are more childish, that is to say more naive, more gullible (=believe everything people tell them), and they are very natural. They speak their mind easily, and they don't worry about everything teenagers already take into consideration: appearance, social status, being cool and responsible. These notions are foreign to young kids.

3. What are the most common interests of teenagers in your country?

A majority of teenagers spend a lot of time online. They play computer games for hours and hours, and they also chat with their friends online. They join in some Instant Messenger groups, and share their thoughts with classmates or strangers via the Internet. In addition, many teenage boys enjoy sports. In China, basketball is the most popular activity young people take part in. A lot of teenage girls listen to music and read. In high school, they start worrying about their appearance and spend more time shopping, and talking about guys, I suppose.

4. How important is school for teenagers?

School is a fundamental aspect of a teenager's life. Children spend the whole week at school, from Monday to Friday, and on the weekend, they still have to do homework. So school is extremely important for all of them. In addition, their parents keep on reminding them how essential it is for them to study hard if they want to get a good job in the future. On top of this, school is also significant for teenagers because it is the place they get to meet their friends and socialize. Usually on the weekend, they stay home, so school is actually a good chance for them to go out and interact with others.

5. Why is childhood such an important stage in people's lives ?

Childhood is fundamental in people's lives because it definitely shapes our personality. Whatever happens in our youth will have an impact on who we are today. In addition, there is so much to learn as a child. Childhood is a key stage in terms of intellectual and social development.

6. How does the one-child policy influence children's minds and behaviors?

A lot of children in China might feel lonely, although they definitely receive a lot of attention from the parents. They might also feel stressed and insecure because their parents might place too much pressure on their shoulders. In addition, children often become pampered and spoiled, and when they grow older, they are more likely to become proud and selfish.

A Toy You Enjoyed in Your Childhood

Tell me about a toy you enjoyed in your childhood.

You should say: what the toy was
 when you first got it
 whether it was a popular toy with children
and explain how much you played with it.

- . What type of toy? An action figure
- . How much did it cost? Was it a popular toy to have?
- . Describe the toy
- . How did you play with it?
- . Why are toys beneficial for children?

When I was a child, my favorite toy was an action figure called Ao Te Man. It was from a Japanese cartoon on TV that all of us used to watch. I remember begging my mother to buy me the little robot so that I could play with my friends during recess at school.

It was a 30-centimeter-tall plastic action figure and it cost my mother a lot of money at the time. I think it was something like 200 yuan which is ridiculous for a simple toy, but every one of my classmates had one, so I really insisted on having one too. That was a long time ago, but I still remember it had a blue armor and it held a sword and a shield. The robot had joints which allowed it to rotate and swing its arms.

I remember how we used to make the robots fight each other after school or on the weekend. We would imitate the cartoon we had watched and make them fly around our universe. We pretended to be the superheroes saving the world from destruction by alien robot monsters. It was a lot of fun and we spent untold hours imagining different plots for adventure stories in which our robots would attack each other.

I think these games are very good for children because they can socialize and create their own stories; it's beneficial for the kids to keep their imaginations active. One good way to do this is to imitate TV shows, even though nowadays cartoons are too often rather violent, which could have a negative effect on kids.

1. What kinds of toys are popular with young children in your country?

Well, in my neighborhood there are quite a lot of kids, and the boys seem to always be playing with action figures. They have transformer toys: they are very famous among kids. They look like little robots. and they can transform into cars or planes. They made a movie about these action figures too. Girls also play with dolls, and they are usually fond of Teddy Bears and other stuffed

animals. A lot of kids also play card games. They buy these colorful cards that represent some kinds of imaginary animals with power. There's a picture of the creature and a list of powers. So, two kids can actually engage in a battle via the cards. If one card is better than the other, the child gets to take the other card away. All the primary school students have them. I guess that toy guns and radio-controlled toy cars are also popular among the boys.

2. Would you say that parents spend too much money on toys nowadays?

I don't think so. Toys in China are usually quite cheap, except when it comes to video games and buying a computer for the child to play and occasionally study. We can't deny the fact that kids these days receive more toys than in the past, but it's definitely a good thing. My mother told me she never had a single toy when she was a kid. They didn't even have a ball to play with. So if parents buy toys, it's because they can afford it, and also because parents are giving a chance to their kids to have what they didn't at the same age.

3. What are the skills that children can develop through playing with toys?

Well, some games are good for the children's hand-eye coordination. The radio-controlled toy cars are a perfect example of this. The child must always keep an eye on the car while controlling the remote with his 2 thumbs. I guess that most toys and games available for children allow them to think by themselves, and also make them move around. So it can only be beneficial for the children's development of motor skills. When they play with marbles or with a ball, kids sit and stand up, jump around, catch and throw. They learn how to control their body. On top of this, some games allow children to cooperate and help each other, especially like board games.

4. How can toys help to develop a child's imagination?

Well, if we give a toy car to a child, he's not just seeing a tiny toy, he's most probably imagining a car race like he might have seen earlier on TV, and he has the ability to create this environment in his mind. Toys can definitely help children develop their imagination because kids always develop stories related to their toys. In addition, some games require children to build something, or to draw and design, so it means the child must imagine what the final result will look like. It could be good for kids' artistic skills.

5. Would you agree that the best toys are those that children make by themselves?

Not really, I mean, I am sure it's great if the child can create his own toy, but if the child makes his own toy gun out of wood, or if you buy one for him, he will most definitely take the plastic replica, because it looks more genuine. Of course it's great that some children create their own games, but I think that modern toys are just very cool too.

6. What kinds of things replace toys for adults?

Now it's your turn to answer! (Adults play cards, mahjong, sports; they watch TV; a man will compare his car to a toy too...)

A Group Activity You Enjoyed as a Child

Tell me about a group activity you enjoyed as a child.

You should say: what the activity was and what you needed to do

 whether it was a popular activity
 what you learned from this activity
and explain how you felt during the activity.

- A simple game we used to play in kindergarten
- Describe the environment, what you used to do in kindergarten
- Rules of the game (tap, chase, tag)
- How fun was it?
- How can children benefit from this game? Good way to learn how to react and socialize

Alright, I will tell you about a very simple but extremely famous game played in kindergartens all around the world. The game is called "Duck, duck, goose" and I remember playing in pre-school and possibly in primary school too.

As a child, my parents sent me to an English school where some Chinese teachers taught us in English. We would play games and join in a few activities while speaking English and learning new words. It was very easy but we learned the basics before going to primary school. Whenever the weather allowed it, we would go outside to play different games in English.

My favorite was called "Duck, duck, goose." A group of children sit in a circle facing inward. One child is "it" and walks around the circle. As the child walks around the circle, he taps every child's head and says whether they are a "duck" or a "goose." Once someone is called a "goose", he or she must get up and try to chase the child who tapped his head. The goal of the goose is to tag the child before he or she is able to sit down in the goose's spot. If the goose is not able to do this, he or she becomes "it" and starts tapping heads again. If the goose manages to tag the child who hit him on the head, then "it" has to sit in the middle of the circle and cannot leave until someone else is tagged.

These games were a lot of fun because children like to run and laugh. I remember that our teachers used to play with us and chase us like crazy around the circle.

Kindergarten is a time to learn how to coexist with others and this game definitely brings kids closer together because they have to touch and catch each other. In addition, it is essential to teach children to react fast. As soon as the child taps your head and calls you "goose", it is important to realize and get up as quickly as possible. I think it is a creative and fun game even if it seems a bit naive when I describe it.

1. What factors influence the rate at which children grow up?

Well, I really think that children should be raised in a peaceful environment, where parents have time to look after the child. I think that if parents are available to talk and guide the child a lot, it will be beneficial to the child's mental and social development. A child needs to be protected and

loved to feel confident I think. In addition, parents should make sure kids get a healthy diet, and exercise too. We always say that a healthy mind fits a healthy body.

2. Compare the importance of what children learn at home and at school.

Well, I think it's extremely difficult to compare the importance of what students learn at school with what they learn at home, because both are equally important, and most of the time, parents and teachers actually complete each other's work on children's education. At home, parents are a child's first teachers: they teach the kid right from wrong; they teach a child how to behave and also how to think. Parents act as models, and influence the child psychologically and socially. Teachers should do the same but they also need to teach more general skills and academic knowledge.

3. how important are outdoor activities for children?

Outdoor activities are fundamental for a child's social and physical development. First, it's healthy to spend time out. It's important to breathe some nice air, and to get some sun rays. It's a source of vitality (= energy). In addition, if children play outside, they will run and exercise. It's highly beneficial to their health. On top of this, hanging out outside is a great chance for kids to socialize and make new friends.

4. How can children learn to cooperate with each other?

I think that children can learn to collaborate through team sports and activities. Most kids in China enjoy playing basketball: they can realize that they need to help each other in order to win the game. In addition, teachers can also organize some activities where students share the amount of work to eventually put a presentation together for example. I think that it's important for parents and teachers to encourage their children to talk, to help and cooperate with their classmates. Adults should act as role models.

5. In which areas could businesses and schools cooperate for the benefits of students?

Well, it would be great if some companies could actually collaborate with some universities to come directly to the campus in order to introduce their business and present some job opportunities. I guess that they could directly interview the senior students and offer them a job after graduation. In addition, companies could cooperate with some college professors to offer different internships to students. It would be beneficial to everyone: students would get a first practical experience in the world of business, and companies could promote their enterprises.

6. Compare studying alone and studying in a group.

Studying in a group can be beneficial because students can help each other, and also encourage one another whenever one student might feel tired or bored. It's also more fun to study with others usually. However, studying in a group can also be a source of distraction: students might start talking about something else rather than their studies. On the other hand, when you study alone, it's easier to focus, and you can follow your own pace. In a group, your friends might go too quickly or too slowly for you.

A Childhood Song You Remember

Tell me about a childhood song you remember.

You should say: what the song was and where you first heard it
 whether it was a popular song
 who sang it to you
and explain your feelings when you heard this song.

- Kindergarten song: "I picked up one cent of a dollar in the street" = popular
- Extremely simple: lyrics are short: only 4 verses: meaning?
- Civic values: being honest + thoughtful + loyal will do you credit
- Catchy melody= easy to remember + naive but good for kids
- Eventually, what will the policeman do with the money? If I find a wallet in the street. ..

Let me tell you about a very famous song every kindergarten student in my country learns. It is a Chinese nursery rhyme so it is always challenging to translate the title but if I give it a shot, it would be something like "I picked up one cent of a dollar on the sidewalk". Or I guess I should say one fen of a Chinese yuan, but then it would be too long for my title.

The song sounds amusing, and the lyrics are very simple. There are only 4 verses to it, so it is easy for kids to remember. I'm obviously not going to sing it, but it goes pretty much like this: I found one cent in the street, and I picked it up. I gave it to the policeman standing at the crossroad. He saluted me, and I cheerfully said good bye to him. In Chinese, it rhymes. It's very straightforward (= simple), isn't it?

I think it's a great song for kids because it teaches everyone civic values. I think it's essential for people to be honest, and loyal in daily life. When you find a wallet, or a phone, or an ID card in the street, you should return it to the owner. I believe that being thoughtful and sincere will always do you credit.

This nursery rhyme is really catchy. The melody is very lively and enthusiastic, although it sounds a bit naive and simplistic. But for kids, it's alright. Actually, because the song is so famous, many older people sing it together during school reunions or other get-togethers at karaoke.

Now, on a side note, I wonder what the policeman is going to do with the money the child gave him. Is the policeman going to put up with all the paper work it must take to find the owner of the money? Probably not, the cop (= policeman) might just pocket the cash or throw it away again in order to avoid any hassle (= bother = problem). I am wondering: if I found 100 yuan in the street, would I bring it to the police? Or should I give it to a beggar in the street?

1. How important is music for young people?

Music is extremely important for young people for different reasons. First of all, music can be energetic and it can make young children smile. Many kindergarten teachers use music for kids to exercise and learn how to move: music is useful to help children develop their motor skills. In

addition, parents and teachers can use soft music to make children calm down, or even to put them to bed. Music can be soothing. On top of this, music plays a significant role with teenagers. They always love pop music and trendy singers. Celebrities can act as role models for some of them. Music is great for young people to express themselves, and let their feelings out. They can evacuate stress or anger thanks to music. I am sure that teens actually have songs that match every mood they might experience: some songs boost their energy; some others help them forget about their problems; some make them relax.

2. Should students study music at school?

Yes, definitely! Music is a form of art, and it should be studied as a school subject. Music can be used to express different emotions. Songs and sounds are always meaningful. Teachers should teach young people how to recognize all this. In addition, music symbolizes a culture and a national identity. Studying music can be seen as a social science. It can be interesting to study different kinds of music in order to compare the styles and become familiar with international trends.

3. What kinds of stories do older people tell younger people in your culture?

Well, in my country parents and grandparents frequently read fairy tales and legends to their kids. The stories could be Chinese, but now with globalization, it's very frequent for parents to read stories from Western culture like the Disney tales. When I was a child, I remember my mother told me the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf, and I am sure you are familiar with it. I think these stories are great because they can teach children a moral. In this story, I learned that I shouldn't lie, otherwise no one would ever believe me in the future.

4. What effects can reading and telling stories have on children?

I'm sure that children can enhance their imagination through reading stories. And when they are young, if the parents find time to read to their kids, they will create a very special bond (= relationship) between them and their child. I think that children can feel loved when their parents read stories to them. In addition, fairy tales and other legends can make the child think, and this will definitely make him or her smarter. Reading is undoubtedly very beneficial to kids.

5. How effectively do schools develop children's creativity in your culture?

I think that teachers do not emphasize enough on creativity in school in China. We often learn things by heart; we must recite a lot of articles, instead of actually thinking about the consequences or reasons for things. I guess students simply listen to their teachers too much in my country. Many people believe that kids are not creative enough here in China. It seems like everyone has always the same point of view. I think teachers should change their methods to allow children to think on their own more.

6. How could schools more effectively prepare students for their future?

It's your turn to answer! (Teachers could invite some professionals to come and talk about their jobs at school. Schools should organize internships + other practical trainings. Teachers should definitely teach young people how to think on their own + take initiatives!)

A Happy Childhood Memory

Tell me about a happy childhood memory.

You should say: what the memory is
 where and when the event took place
 whether you experienced it alone or with other people
and explain why it is such a good memory.

- Birthday at McDonald's
- Friends + parents
- Junk food, Coke and burgers
- Birthday song + gifts
- Simple things sometimes can be the best.

When I turned 6, my mother organized a little birthday party at McDonald's. At the time, McDonald's was quite new in China, and every kid was always thrilled to go there. Although I was very young, I seem to remember quite clearly that special day.

My mother had also invited my cousins and some other kids from school. Everyone's parents were chatting and having lunch while most of us children were jumping up and down in the play area. You know, at McDonald's, there is always an inside playground. Kids take off their shoes and can climb a ladder, and into some crawl-tubes. There is also a couple of slides and a ball pit (= ball pool). When you are in kindergarten, it's a lot of fun!

In addition, we enjoyed some cheeseburgers and French fries. I remember everyone was excited at the idea of opening the Happy Meal Box. This was the kids' menu, and inside the box, we could get a toy. At the time, we were all given a yoyo. The combination of junk food, Coke and toys simply made our day!

Later on, my mother told the restaurant's staff it was my birthday, and they brought us a cake. They lit 6 candles on it, and the waiters and managers all got together to sing "Happy Birthday" in English. I remember very well I was surprised at having strangers sing for me, and more especially in English! I blew the candles, and then my friends gave me some small gifts. I think I got an action figure and a couple of books. It was a memorable party.

My mother took pictures too, and actually this is probably why I remember that day so well. Although it was quite simple, I know that everyone had a blast (= had a great time) and that it doesn't take much to make a few kids happy. I know that eating junk food is not good for a kid's diet, but occasionally, it can't hurt.

1. What can adults learn by looking back at their childhood?

Well, I suppose when we look back at our childhood, we can really understand where we come from. We can understand what made us who we are today. I guess if we think about our parents, and the way they educated us as children, and if we consider our present personality, we should be able to see a corollary (= a natural cause-consequence relation).

2. How important is it to keep in touch with childhood friends?

I think it's extremely important because old friends are the people who know us best. They are people we can trust and rely on. Real friendship can only be judged upon time. If a friendship lasts for years, then it means it is a serious and deep bond.

3. What are some of the ways in which people remember their childhoods?

Well, I guess we have pictures to look back at the memories. In addition, some things are tattooed in our minds. Some memories will never disappear, and we can refer to them anytime we want or whenever something comes up that makes us think of the past. On top of this, when old friends get together, they often talk about what they experienced together. This is a great way to keep everything in mind.

4. What things do adults often keep from their childhoods?

I think everyone definitely keeps pictures of their childhoods. You know, photos are a great chance to reminisce of the past and keep life-long memories. In addition, some people manage to save toys and stuffed animals from their early days. I guess these things can be sentimental and unforgettable.

5. How can people improve their memories or learning ability?

Well, I guess our brain works just like a muscle, and we should exercise it as much as possible if we want to develop its strength. So we should simply exercise our memory on a daily basis in order to improve our learning ability. People should read, and try to analyze things. I think it's always easier to remember things when we understand them completely. Young students get to practice their memory every day, but people who don't go to school anymore can lose the habit of constantly being challenged. Nowadays, there are many online games for people to practice their memory. I think these games can be a good chance for people who don't study anymore to remain quick-minded.

6. What things do people try to memorize?

(Remembering is not the same as memorizing!) We all try to memorize dates and numbers. It could be our friends' birthdays or phone numbers; it could be a password at the bank or at the door of a building. At school, we are asked to memorize articles and quotes. Students must learn a lot of things by heart. In math we must remember some complex formulae, and in English we must memorize a lot of new words, as well as the irregular verbs in the past tense: go-went-gone, swim-swam-swum ... It's challenging to remember and use them correctly.

Toy You Had in Your Childhood

Tell me about a toy you enjoyed in your childhood.

You should say: what the toy was
 when you first got it
 whether it was a popular toy with children
and explain whether you would give this toy to your own child.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Game You Played in Your Childhood

Tell me about a game you played as a child.

You should say: what the game was and what you needed to do
 whether it was a popular game
 what you learned from this game
and explain how you felt during the activity.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

9 Life Experience

proverb:

Every flow must have its ebb.

= Life has its ups and downs; neither good fortune nor ill fortune lasts forever.

Sample Answer:

- An Important Stage of Your Life
- An Enjoyable Stage of Your Life
- A Habit that Influences Your Life
- An Important Conversation You Have Had
- Some Good News You Received by Phone

Practice:

- A Great Change that Occurred at Some Point in Your Life
- A Success You Have Had
- A Piece of Advice You Received
- A Piece of Good News You Received
- A Time When You Were Extremely Busy

Key Words

difficult = challenging = tough

good for my life = positive = beneficial

independent + mature = grown-up

motivated = resolute = determined

memorable = unforgettable

informative = enlightening = instructive

to learn = to find out = to discover

to understand = to become conscious = to realize

An Important Stage of Your Life

Tell me about an important stage of your life.

You should say:

how old you were at the time

why it was particular for you

what changes were involved

and explain whether it is an important stage of life for many people.

- My experience at university: my major = interested + met some great teachers

- Independence + maturity: I was on my own.
- Had to take decisions by myself + I became aware that I should study hard.
- Decided to further my studies abroad = beneficial for my future career
- I also understood that it was just the first step/stage = long way ahead of me

I am still very young, but I think that the most important stage in my life was my experience at university. I studied at Fujian Normal University for 4 years, and I majored in Computer Science.

First of all, I realized that I was very interested in software engineering, and I am going to do my best to find a good job in this field. I understood that I would like to find a job in a big company in order to lead some projects and have responsibilities. I met many excellent teachers who advised me. They encouraged and supported me a lot.

In addition, it was a brand new experience for me because it was the first time that I left my hometown and my parents. At first, I did not know anybody, and I had to deal with different situations on my own. I forced myself to become more out-going, and I made some new friends. I became very close to my classmates, and we established a strong bond (= relationship).

On top of this, I had to manage my time by myself, and make decisions without consulting my parents all the time. I became more responsible and mature. I became conscious that I had to study hard for myself, and not only to make my parents happy. I became more motivated and determined to succeed. I guess I could say I really grew up.

Finally, I made the decision to continue my studies in America. I could have looked for a job in China, but I thought it would be more beneficial to my career to get a Master's degree first, in order to find a better position in the near future. It took me a long time to make this decision because it involves a lot of money, and going overseas is a long process, as well as a huge challenge.

Going to university in Fuzhou was the first step towards my future. I learned a lot, but I found out there was still a long way to go.

1. What do you think are important turning points in people's lives?

Well, there are many different key stages in our lives. The first one is high school, because in my country, high schools are ranked, so if you go to a good high school, you will have more chance to get into a prestigious university. Going to college is a major change too, because it is a new experience, with new classmates, new teachers, and new teaching methods. In addition, many young people attend college far away from their homes. They learn a lot at university, not only about academics, but also about themselves and life in general. Later on, getting a first job is also a significant stepping-stone in one's career. On top of this, a turning point could also be when someone starts dating, and eventually gets married and has a kid. Having a child will definitely change your life!

2. What could you do when you were younger that you cannot do now?

I guess that when I was younger, I had a lot more time than I do now to play and hangout with friends. I remember when I was in primary school, I didn't have that much (= so much) homework. I did not need to worry about anything. In addition, when I was younger, I could avoid responsibilities. When something was difficult, I simply asked my mother for help. Nowadays, I am on my own, and I must face challenges independently. I should also tell you that when I was a child, I used to be very flexible. I could bend over and touch my feet. Nowadays, I am a bit stiff, and I don't exercise so much anymore.

3. What changes in people's lives increase their happiness?

Well, many changes in one's life can make a person truly happy. Getting accepted to a top-notch (= excellent) university is one, because it rewards students for their hard work. For me, if I do well in the IELTS test, and later on get my visa to study in America, I will be thrilled! In addition, finding a job and eventually getting promoted to a better position will definitely please people too. On top of this, I believe that finding love and getting married makes many people quite happy. I have heard many women say that the day when they gave birth to their child was also the happiest day of their lives.

4. What attitude should one have towards changes in life?

People should accept changes and be positive about the future. I think it's fundamental to be optimistic in order to succeed. Changes happen for a reason. There are positive changes as well as difficult ones. My father always told me that I should never give up. We should look at the bright side of things. Changes are challenges, and they need to be met with patience and determination.

5. Are there any negative effects of trying to keep the past alive?

Trying to keep the past alive could be dangerous if you don't manage to focus on the future. Remembering things is beneficial, but people need to understand the importance of letting go, and moving forward. The future is more important than the past. For example, when a couple breaks up and one of them tries very hard to keep all the memories alive, you know, to try to act as if nothing had changed, this is not healthy because they need to turn the page and move on. Otherwise, they will be miserable for the rest of their lives.

An Enjoyable Stage of Your Life

Tell me about an enjoyable stage of your life.

You should say: which period of your life was enjoyable
 why it was particular for you
 how you enjoyed this stage of your life
and explain whether it is an enjoyable stage of life for most people.

- Primary school was the best = it used to be fun to attend school.
- Compared with high school and university = no stress, little homework = entertaining
- I was also naive; I didn't need to worry + I was not aware of problems = life was all fun.

- Games we used to play = marbles, hide and seek, tag... great friends = memorable
- Even nowadays, I am sure teachers are even better at opening children's minds = useful

I regard my time in elementary school as possibly the best stage ever in my life. Although it was some 20 years ago, I still remember details on how much fun school used to be.

Compared to middle school and later on university, primary school was a piece of cake! Teachers were kind and helpful and we didn't have much homework. The atmosphere was not like in high school where students compete. Everything seemed easy and smooth. We would play games, chase each other, learn a little too, but from what I remember, it was entertaining.

When you're a child, you don't need to worry about anything. I was definitely very naive, and that is probably why everything seemed so simple. I'll never forget how we used to play marbles, hide and seek or tag. We used to buy colorful cards, and bet with each other in order to win our classmates' cards. If we could flip 2 cards over (use your hands, body language!), we would win. Simple but memorable times!

I felt thrilled and it was a pleasure to attend school. Nowadays, primary school teachers are even better trained than before. I am sure that students have access to a lot of new activities to help open up their minds. This is what children really need in order to grow up smart and quick-witted (= sharp = intelligent).

1. Tell me about a social change that is taking place in your country.

Okay, the first change that comes to my mind is that young people get married later than before; In the past, at 25 or 26, most men would be married or at least engaged, but nowadays people tie the knot (= get married) around the age of 30. A second major change in society is that young people worry a lot about their future. A lot of high-school and university students are a little pessimistic about their future. We often hear young people say that they are afraid of the fierce competition in the job market. They fear they might not make enough money, or get promoted as quickly as they would like. A lot of young people feel blue because they believe that they will have to work very hard their whole life, and will have to worry about saving money, rather than taking advantage of their income (=salary). I think this situation doesn't help young people to build up confidence.

2. What are the causes of this change?

Well, the fact that people get married later than before can be easily explained. It is because nowadays most young people continue their studies at university and focus on their careers rather than on their family life. Most students will get a Bachelor's or even a Master's. It means they will not finish their studies until the age of 23. After that, they look for a job, and they usually want to be successful and earn enough money before they get married and found a family. I don't think a man would propose to his girlfriend if he didn't earn enough money to offer her a comfortable life, and I don't think the woman would accept if she knew the man didn't make much money! In addition, in the past, girls didn't study or worry about finding a good job. But nowadays, women are ambitious. They refuse to get married and to become pregnant too young. Women are more independent than in the past. They think that their personal career is also a fundamental part of their lives.

A lot of young people are not so optimistic about their future because they hear people say that it is difficult to find a good job. I think that rumors about unemployment or low salaries discourage people. It is true that there are many people in the cities, and that you need to prove to your boss that you are qualified. But if you are smart and hard-working, I believe it is possible to find a good

position, and to be successful. Confidence is also an important quality to have nowadays.

3. Do you think that younger and older people react to rapid change in similar ways?

No, definitely not! Younger people can adapt to changes more quickly. Old people usually get used to a certain routine, and it is hard for them to change their habits. In addition, I think that young people can learn new things much faster. For example, I learned how to use a computer much faster than my father. I also think that I could learn a new foreign language faster than my parents would. In general, young people don't want to get bored; they want to experience new situations and face new challenges.

4. Do you think that the pace of change will continue to increase in the future?

Yes, definitely. Things are always changing. Technology is developing; architecture is getting more modern. They just built a tower in Dubai that is more than 800 meters tall! Like they say "You can't stop progress", I really think that we are entering a new era (=period) of development. In the future, students will all have a laptop to take notes; I don't think we will use gas, I mean petrol, anymore when driving. I am confident that we will change our lifestyles to be more eco-friendly. And science will help us lead healthier lifestyles. They will also find a cure for cancer very soon. There is no doubt about it. Everything will change.

5. To what extent are people of different ages better at learning different things?

Well, first I believe that younger people are almost always faster at learning new things. A child can learn English faster than a middle-aged person, for example. I think this is valid for most skills and knowledge. But maybe, because older people are more experienced, they can actually realize what is more important, so they can select what to learn. A young person might try to learn too many things, but in fact most of them might not be so useful or practical. A mature person will concentrate on what really matters, and be able to compare things in order to truly understand them.

6. Why is childhood such an important stage in people's lives?

Well, childhood shapes our personality and our life. We are who we are today because of what happened in our past. As a child, we learn so much. The people around us in our childhood influence our way of thinking. A good education as a child is fundamental to us if we want to become smart, polite and respectful people. Childhood is a key stage of our life because we simply absorb (=soak up = take in) everything we hear, see or experience at that age.

A Habit that Influences Your Life

Tell me about a habit that influences your life.

You should say: what the habit is and how long you have had it
 whether it influences your life in a good way or in
 a bad way
 whether other people have the same habit
and explain whether you think that habits can be changed.

- I get home and turn on my computer: it definitely has an impact on my life.
- I read the news (different sections) = fun and informative
- Then I chat with friends on QQ = probably a waste of time ...
- What else do I do on the computer? Emails, research, download, watch movies

- My mother used to complain but she now does the same!

The first thing I do once I get home from work is to turn on my desktop computer. It's been a habit for at least 7 years, and I'll try to describe why I do it, and what impact it has on my life.

By the time the computer is ready to run, I have washed my hands and gotten a snack. Once I sit down, I always go on the same websites. It's part of my daily routine. I first read the news on sina.com, especially entertainment news, and then, anything related to the economy because it is closely connected to my major. Then I move on to the national and international news. I can learn about what is going on around the world, and I believe it is useful in terms of general knowledge.

I spend up to 2 hours online every evening. After reading the news, I usually open an Instant Messaging program called QQ in order to chat with my friends. It has a bad influence on me because, I guess, I'm wasting time in front of the screen and many people criticize computer addicts.

But at the same time, I get to learn about the world around us, and it's a good hobby as it is fun and entertaining, educational and a good time-killer. I send emails, download movies or music, and do some research on Australia, because I really want to move there soon.

When I was much younger my mother used to complain about this, but nowadays the Internet has turned out to be useful for her too, and she sometimes joins me to read the news and play games.

1. What are the qualities a person needs in order to succeed in life?

Well, I think that the most important thing is to be smart and sensible. If you want to be successful, it is fundamental to know what you want, and to fix some goals for yourself. In addition, I have always been taught that hard work is necessary to realize your ambitions. I believe that lazy people cannot accomplish anything. On top of this, it is probably very useful to be creative: I can think of many jobs that require imagination. Teachers, businessmen, managers, writers and advertisers all need to be imaginative in order to succeed. I also think that people should be patient and persistent because success cannot be achieved overnight. As you say in English, Rome was not built in a day.

2. Which personality traits might be most valuable to society in the future?

I think that confidence as well as good communication skills will be required in the future. Our society needs leaders who can take responsibility, people to manage projects and tell others what to do. I believe that good interpersonal skills are very useful and appreciated by everyone. In addition, considerate and generous people will definitely make a difference in society.

3. What personality traits are considered to be typical of your culture?

Usually, everyone agrees that the Chinese are introverted (=shy) and quiet. We have a reputation of

being able to restrain our feelings. My foreign teacher told me he was trying to learn from his Chinese students how to control his emotions. In general, Chinese men don't talk about their problems much. In addition, I would say that we Chinese are hardworking, polite and respectful, a little conservative, and definitely nationalistic. I think a lot of foreigners believe that we are not very creative, but I think it's probably because of the education we receive. Things are changing though.

4. Do young people spend too much time playing computer games?

Yes, definitely! Students are quite busy with their studies, and their parents ask them to come home right after school is over. As a result, after they finish their homework, it is too late for them to hang out with their friends, so they turn on the computer and play online games. In addition, because of the one-child policy, I think that most children feel lonely at home. The computer is a good chance for them to have fun. And they can also socialize online. They can chat with their classmates or anyone who shares similar hobbies.

5. Which aspects of modern life have a bad effect on people's personalities?

I think that in the city, life is too fast-paced and people are always rushing from one place to another. This situation makes people frustrated, and they often get upset too easily. In addition, since people work too much, they tend to forget about their priorities such as family, friends and fun. They become a bit boring. On top of this, because of their new technology and especially computers, people stay at home a lot more, instead of going out to socialize or hang out with friends. As a result, I would say that modern life can have a negative influence on people's personalities. People always say they are busy. It has become an excuse for everything. I actually think that people don't take enough time to enjoy themselves. Or people have just become very lazy...

An Important Conversation You Have Had (= Someone Who Helped You in an Important Way)

Tell me about an important conversation you have had.

You should say: what the conversation was about
 when it happened and with whom
 what came out of this conversation
and explain whether you learned something from the conversation.

- I failed the College Entrance Examination = I was depressed but my father and I talked.
- He's the one who first told me it could be a good idea to go overseas to study.
- He called his friends and told me about IELTS + immigration agency.
- He cheered me up = he put me back on my feet. He is always consider optimistic.
- He taught me a lesson: I should work hard and be determined, I will never forget.

Last year, I didn't do very well at the College Entrance Examination. This is the every high-school student needs to take in order to attend university. I didn't qualify for any of the good universities in

China, which was hard to accept. I felt down and depressed, but my father sat down with me and we had an important conversation about my future

My father told me that if I did not want to repeat my final year of high school, I only had one choice to make, and that was to go abroad to get a degree. In one night, I decided to follow his advice and begin a new life.

I remember clearly that my father called a friend of his to get some information right away on what I should do to apply for higher education in Australia. And the following day, I was walking into an English training school where I hoped to improve my English and prepare to take the IELTS test.

Although I was at a loss after the final exams, my father put me back on my feet. He managed to find the words to motivate me. He really cheered me up and this is why he is such a great father. He is always optimistic and enthusiastic.

He told me that, from now on, I should be determined to study hard and that he would support me financially. He really emphasized the fact that I should be mature and independent. He said that these next few years would determine the rest of my life. -keep his words in mind whenever I find it difficult to focus on my studies.

1. What kinds of help do family members give each other today?

Well, relatives talk a lot and advise each other whenever they face difficulties. Parents always encourage their kids, and they also remind them of their priorities. Sometimes children forget how important some things are. In addition, relatives can also support each other financially. When children go to university, parents usually pay their tuition fees, but when the parents retire, their children will frequently give them money because, in China, the retirement plan, the pension people receive upon retirement, is usually quite low.

2. How often is the advice of parents accepted by children?

I really think that children listen to their parents a lot in China. You know, people are quite conservative, and children are educated to obey their parents and teachers. Children don't want to disappoint or upset their folks (= parents). Even if they might disagree, they will eventually follow their parents' advice. That's the way it works here. When I was at university, quite a few of my classmates told me they were studying computer engineering (or something else) because their parents had chosen this major for them.

3. Do you think that parents generally know what is best for their children?

Yes, I think so, because they mean well for their children. However, we know that parents can be stubborn and they might try to force their children to do things they don't like. Parents always expect a lot from their kids, especially in China. Because of the one-child policy, you know, parents pay a great deal of attention to their children's education. But generally speaking, I would trust a parent's judgment, because they have more life experience, and they have a good idea of what is good for a kid's development.

4. Why do some people enjoy helping each other?

Because helping someone can be rewarding. If you lend a hand to somebody, and the person manages to overcome his or her difficulty, it means that you did something good; you have accomplished a good deed. You will feel pleased with yourself, because you were considerate and thoughtful. We always say that "Giving is better than receiving", and I agree with this saying. I think a lot of teachers, doctors, nurses, and maybe lawyers feel good about themselves because they know they can make a difference in people's lives.

5. What are the main factors to consider when choosing a career?

First, we should make sure that we are interested in the job. If not, it will be very hard to stick to it for the rest of our lives. It's always better if the job corresponds to our field of study. In addition, I suppose that the salary is a fundamental factor to take into consideration when choosing a career. We work to make a living, so we should make sure that the pay will fulfill our expectations. We should also think about the chances of getting promoted; we should consider the training we can receive if we take the job, and of course the schedule we'll get. Some people might be ready to work very hard in order to be successful, but that's not the case for everyone.

6. How important is it to be able to make decisions alone?

It is extremely important to be able to think independently. We can't always rely on others. Of course receiving advice is always useful, but people should learn how to make their own decisions. It is a sign of maturity and mental strength. In today's world, you can't always be assisted. Someone who depends on others too much will be regarded as weak.

Some Good News You Received by Phone

Tell me about some good news you received by telephone.

You should say: what the news was about
 when you received it
 whether you expected to receive it
and explain how you felt when you received the good news.

- Phone call from my friend last week, let me tell you about her previous situation.
- She had moved to Xiamen to find a job instead of continuing her studies like me.
- She couldn't find a job: she was depressed + pessimistic.
- And last week, she called me to announce she had gotten a promising job.
- Finding a good position = challenging + phone allows us to communicate so fast = positive

Last week, I received great news from my best friend, but before I tell you about the phone call, I need to introduce the situation to you.

Two months ago, my best friend decided to move to Xiamen in order to find a job. We graduated from the same university but we followed different paths. I am planning to move to Australia to continue my studies in accounting, but she has decided to find a job and begin her career.

At first she struggled. She spent a month sending her resume to many different multinationals in order to find a job as an accountant. Unfortunately, she got almost no reply and felt quite depressed and pessimistic. A month ago, she was invited for an interview but she was only offered a very low-paying position, so she turned it down (=refused). Because she could not find anything else after a month, she finally accepted a job as a receptionist in a small company. She was not pleased and I tried hard to encourage her, but it was impossible to cheer her up.

However, last week, she called me out of the blue, to tell me that she had just been hired as the accounting manager's assistant in an American company. She was absolutely thrilled! She explained to me that she had been very lucky because one woman had taken a maternity leave and they needed someone to replace her right away. She said that the job was promising and absolutely related to her field. She sounded very enthusiastic. We talked on the phone for about 30 minutes and then, she told me she should probably hang up and share the news with her parents too. I could not believe that she had called me first, before her parents!

I think that it is very challenging to find a good job in today's modern world. The competition is tough and bosses always require experience. On the other hand, modern technology allows us to communicate with our friends and relatives so much faster than before; it is incredible! We even send text messages through the phone to wish each other a happy New Year, and my foreign English teacher told me that he learned that his friend was getting married on Facebook! Life is a bit crazy, but it is also innovative and exciting!

1. Describe any problems people face when using phones (both landlines and mobiles).

I can't think of any serious problem, but maybe a phone call could interrupt a conversation between two people, and if it is important the person who received the phone call might need to go out of the room in order to get some privacy. I think that most of the time, phone calls are very annoying, especially in meetings, or in class, or during a speech. Nowadays there are no more problems with the reception; you can even talk on your mobile phone in the subway in Shanghai.

2. Compare talking on the phone and talking face-to-face

It is very different. Face to face, you can see your interlocutor's (=conversational partner's) facial expressions and body language. I think that meeting your friends is always more fun than having the conversation over the phone, because our dialogue can always be more vivid, you know, livelier. But the advantage of having a phone is that we don't need to meet in person to share good news or important information. It is very practical (=convenient) and a big time-saver.

3. In what ways do you think people might use telephones in the future?

Well, they just came up with this new generation of mobile phones they call 3G. You can talk to your friend, and you can see each other at the same time. In the future, I believe that many people will use a very small blue tooth receiver stuck on top of their ear. I think in a few years, people might not carry a phone anymore; they might just have a special watch, which includes every function a phone offers now along with the tiny ear receiver. People will definitely have their hands free at all times. For example, when someone gives you a ring, you can see the name of the person who's calling you on your wrist watch, you press one button, or maybe you just say "accept call" (voice recognition would be cool too), and you can start your conversation. I think this is likely to

happen very soon.

4. What are the disadvantages of being able to be contacted at any time?

Well, it means your boss can call you even on your days off! I think that having a cell-phone is very convenient in general, but there are times when you don't feel like talking to anyone, or you are taking a nap because you are tired, or it is Sunday morning and you want to sleep in (= sleep late), or you are at a restaurant on a date, and people call you. But I guess it is okay, because you don't need to answer. Some people feel they have an obligation to pick up, but I don't. I very often set my phone on silent or on vibrate, so it doesn't bother me too much.

5. Do you think that modern communications technology has improved the quality of human relationships?

I think that computers and the communication software we use to chat online are very convenient and really save time, but I don't think that they have improved the quality of human relationships. I believe that many people in China are not good at communicating, especially face to face, because they are not used to this type of interaction. Sometimes, when they meet, people don't have much to say, and the conversation is boring. I think that we are not taught how to be curious enough in our culture. Young people spend too much time online, facing the computer screen, and lack conversational skills. According to me, a real relationship is when you meet people and talk eye to eye. These days, young people are too shy, or too dull to have a proper conversation. I think it is partly due to the fact that they use modern technology to chat too much, rather than going out and meeting people.

A Great Change that Occurred at Some Point in Your Life

Tell me about a great change that occurred at some point in your life.

You should say: what the change was and when it happened
 whether it is the same for other people
 how it has changed your life

and explain your feelings about it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Success You Have Had

Tell me about a success you have experienced.

You should say: what the success was
 whether it was difficult to succeed
 how you succeeded
and explain how you felt after the success.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. Why do many people want to be successful?*
- 2. Can a balance be achieved between success and a happy personal life?*
- 3. Do you think that being successful means more than becoming rich?*
- 4. What personal qualities or achievements are admired in your country?*
- 5. How important are role models for young people?*

A Piece of Advice You Received

Tell me about a piece of advice you received.

You should say: what the advice was
 why you needed the advice
 whether you followed the advice
and explain how the advice influenced you.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. What kinds of advice do parents often give their children?*
- 2. How often is parents' advice accepted by children?*
- 3. Are children influenced more by advice from family members or from friends?*
- 4. Which professions involve giving advice as the main part of their job?*

5. On what occasions have you been given advice about your studies?

A Piece of Good News You Received

Tell me about some good news you once received.

You should say: what the news was about
 when you received it
 whether you expected to receive it
and explain how you felt when you received the good news.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Time When You Were Extremely Busy

Tell me about a period of time when you were extremely busy.

You should say: when you were busy
 why you were so busy
 how you overcame this busy schedule
and explain how you felt.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1. What are the dangers of having no regular relaxation?

2. What are the main causes of stress that people experience where you live?

3. How important is it to treasure the time we have?

4. How much time do you generally spend with family and friends?

5. Do you think that high-school students are too busy in your country?

6. What are the benefits of having a daily routine?

7. How could you make better use of your time?

10 Studies

Proverb:

Rome was not built in a day.

= Any great plan or big dream cannot be achieved overnight or even easily.

Sample Answer:

A School You Attended at Some Point in Your Life

A Teacher You Have Had

A Subject You Enjoyed Studying at Secondary School

Something You Would Like to Learn

A Science Lesson or Experiment

A Skill You Recently Learned

A Group Activity You Successfully Took Part in

A Language You Would Like to Learn

Practice:

Someone Who Helped You Improve Your English

A Short Course You Have Taken or Would Like to Take

Something that Helped You Improve Your English

A Second Language You Would Like to Learn

Key Words

a prestigious university = a top-notch college

difficult = tough = challenging = complicated

essential = indispensable = fundamental

very interesting = fascinating

useful = practical = constructive

to motivate = to encourage

to concentrate = to focus

to concentrate = to focus

A good teacher should be smart, passionate, patient, well-organized, fair, responsible, professional, enthusiastic, energetic, punctual, interesting, meticulous, dedicated.

A School You Attended at Some Point in Your Life

Tell me about a school that you have attended at any time in your life.

You should say: what you learnt at the school and who taught you
 what the school campus was like
 whether the school and the teachers were as you
 expected
and explain how the school helped you improve your future prospects (or not).

- My middle school = I spent so much time there.
- Describe the classrooms
- Playground + surroundings
- Uniforms
- Teachers + classmates

Let me tell you about my middle school. I studied at Number 3 Junior High in Fuzhou and I think I can say I am very familiar with the place because, as a teenager, I spent so much time studying and hanging around at school. As you may know, Chinese students are required to study six days a week and our schedule is usually very tight. We almost considered our school as a second home since we spent more time there than anywhere else.

My school was a rather large school, with about 3000 students. You need to imagine large classrooms, packed with students. I think there were around 55 students on average in each class. The classrooms were not very modern but I can't say that it was totally old-fashioned as we had access to a computer in most rooms. There were electric fans on the ceiling and the desks were not made of wood like in schools in the countryside.

At Number 3 Middle School, there is a huge playground with about 8 basketball courts. Boys love to play basketball at recess or after school. Girls usually walk around and chitchat with one another on a bench. In Fuzhou we have big banyan trees and there is an impressive one at the entrance of the school. The buildings have 5 floors and from the top, you have a nice view of the surroundings.

At school, we used to wear traditional uniforms every day and, although many students complained about it, I think most students were pleased not to have to worry about what to wear every morning.

Teachers at school were quite professional. Number 3 Middle School has a good reputation and teachers are qualified and experienced. I learned a lot from them, especially from my Chinese teacher, Mr. Wu. He was a passionate and fascinating teacher who always had a nice word to say in order to encourage us all. He taught me how to remain positive and enthusiastic.

I also kept in touch with many of my classmates and we try to get together whenever we come back to Fuzhou. We always reminisce about high school.

1. Do you think that schools for younger kids and older children need different types of buildings? '

Well, I suppose that the facilities must be a little different. Usually kindergartens and primary schools are smaller than secondary schools, because the younger the students, the fewer there should be in each class. And in addition, younger children need less space to play. If the school is too big, the children might get lost easily. In kindergarten, desks and chairs are much smaller than in high schools, so the classrooms don't need to be as spacious as in high schools where 60 students attend the same lesson. But, now that I think about it, every kindergarten classroom needs to be placed next to the toilets for the babies to reach the bathroom as quickly as possible, because they can't really control themselves at that age.

2. How important are children's playing areas in schools?

I think that the playgrounds are essential facilities to have in schools, because we can't expect children to study non-stop all the time. Children need a break to relax and forget about the lessons and the teachers. In most middle schools, there are many basketball and badminton courts, as well as a few ping-pong tables. In a kindergarten, there might be a playing area with a merry-go-round, a seesaw, a slide and some monkey bars. A lot of kids like to play in the sandbox too.

3. Describe the benefits of single-sex schools and those of mixed ones.

That's a difficult question. When both girls and boys are studying together, I think they can realize that they are all equal, and that girls can do things as well as, if not better than, the boys most of the time. I think it is an important concept for children to understand because our society is sometimes still unfair to women. In addition, I think that co-ed (= mixed) schools offer a better representation of our society, as well as a chance for boys and girls to make friends and get to know the way the other sex thinks. Girls might learn from the boys how to be more out-going and adventurous, and boys might learn how to behave more carefully from the girls. We always say that girls become mature earlier.

On the other hand, unisex schools usually have a great reputation, and a lot of parents want to send their kids there. As a result, students are motivated, so good teachers want to work there. The academic level may be better. These schools might have the advantage to concentrate on the gender's needs and skills. For example, teachers might be more demanding in science classes with the boys, and they might expect more from the girls in the arts subjects. On top of this, girls won't be influenced by naughty boys, and the boys won't have to think too much about the girls when they get older. They can all focus on their studies rather than flirt and spend time observing each other.

4. What disadvantages do single-sex schools and mixed ones have?

In a single-sex school, I think that girls might get tired of each other. People always say that when you put too many girls together, they always bicker (= quarrel). In addition, when they get older, they might be very shy about talking with people of the opposite sex because of their lack of experience. Boys might think that girls are completely different from them, and they might even

look down upon women. Girls on the other hand might grow scared of boys, and find it a little difficult to socialize with them when they grow up.

In a co-ed school, students may tease each other, and talk about sex and grown-up stuff they will have plenty of time to find out about later in their lives. Girls might try to impress the boys, and the boys will definitely try to attract the girls' attention too. It's a very difficult question and I am not sure I can answer it fully.

5. How important is it for schools to offer accommodation to students?

It is not as important as before, because nowadays, there are plenty of schools everywhere, even in the countryside, and very few establishments are boarding schools. I suppose that in rural areas or in some private schools where students come from far away because the school is prestigious (= has good reputation), they need to offer accommodation in a dorm. I believe that boarding schools can encourage young people to make friends and help each other. I think that these types of school are great for helping children to develop a sense of independence and responsibility.

6. Do you think it is better to go to a secondary school in a city or in the countryside?

I would without a doubt tell you that, in China, it is much better to go to school in the city, because teachers are better trained, and the school environment is usually better. The classes are more competitive, so students learn more. Schools in the city have a better reputation, and they are always ranked by number depending on the students' results, which means that headmasters put pressure on teachers for students to succeed on the College Entrance Examination. Teachers also believe they will have more chances to improve themselves and to get promoted if they work in the city. The quality of education is definitely better in the city.

A Teacher You Have Had

Tell me about a teacher you have had.

You should say: who the teacher is/was and what subject he/she taught
 what the teacher is/was like
 how he/she taught
and say whether other people had a similar opinion of this teacher.

- My history teacher = very influential
- His teaching style
- His qualities as a teacher
- His personality after class
- The values he taught us

Let me tell you about my history teacher in middle school. His name was Mister Wu and he was by far the most influential teacher I have ever had. Mister Wu was a passionate and fascinating teacher. His classes were always lively and never boring. He knew how to get our attention and he had a talent for telling stories and anecdotes about historical events.

Mister Wu was a strict person and in his class no one would dare to interrupt him, but he often asked us for our point of view and he tried to make us think by ourselves. You know, in China, most of the time teachers ask us to listen and recite. His methods were a little different and his witty personality captivated every one of my classmates.

Mister Wu was always well-prepared for class. He was responsible and very knowledgeable. When you teach history, you must remember a lot of dates and explain to students the influence of important events on our history.

But after class, Mister Wu was also a very considerate and thoughtful person who cared about us. He often walked around the courtyard to talk with us and ask us how we were doing.

I remember one day he got a bit upset because one student was complaining that the College Entrance Examination was too difficult a test. Our teacher slammed a book on the table and told us that everything in life was difficult but that that was no reason to give up. He said that our efforts would be rewarded and that life was all about patience and enthusiasm. I try to remember his speech whenever I feel tired of my studies. He taught me how to remain positive and optimistic.

1. What is difficult about being a teacher?

Teachers need to be patient, and they must frequently repeat the same things, and always try to make their explanations as easy as possible for students to fully understand. Their job must be tiring. In high school, teachers have around 60 kids in a class, so it's hard for them to help every student improve. They have a lot of responsibilities, because students must pass the tests, otherwise parents might blame them. In addition, they need to worry about classroom discipline. When teachers work in primary schools, they must have a lot of energy and keep an eye on children at all times. It's a challenging job.

2. What do people generally think of teachers in your country?

People respect teachers in my country. We think it is a very important job in our society, because they train young people how to be smarter and quicker as well as teaching them how to become good citizens. Teachers are esteemed by both students and parents.

3. How could suitable people be attracted to the teaching professions?

Well, I think that people who want to become teachers feel like helping young people. They believe they can make a difference in their students' lives. In addition, they know they will be listened to and respected if they do a good job. It is a tough profession though; this is why teachers should get a decent salary, as well as some holidays, in order to recharge their batteries.

4. What are the aims of education in your country?

Well, the Chinese educational system is definitely test-oriented. So the aims are quite simple. First of all, teachers should make sure that every student acquires (= gain) some general knowledge. Students should become smarter. As a result, students should successfully pass the tests in order to get into university, and later on get a good job. On top of this, I think that teachers aim to make good citizens of their students. They must teach them how to behave. Students should learn what is acceptable from what's reprehensible (= wrong and punished) in society. I think that the Chinese educational system is very special, and different from many foreign countries. I know that in the U.S., teachers really focus on building up the child's individuality. They want students to be able to think independently. In China, teachers usually put more emphasis on knowledge from the books.

5. Should school be compulsory for all students up to the age of 18?

Yes, definitely. Life's already very challenging for college graduates, because it's hard for them to find a decent job. So if some teenagers don't even graduate from high school, what kind of future are they going to have? Studying is a privilege (= a great chance). Young people should stay at school as long as they can, and learn as much as they can. They have their entire lives to work and try to make money.

6. Which subjects should all students study at school?

I think that every student should study Chinese, math and history because these are the 3 fundamental subjects at school. In my opinion, these are the most useful, because everyone should be able to write Chinese well; everyone should be able to make references to Chinese literature and philosophy. History, especially our Chinese history, is also essential because students can learn about our cultural heritage. They can better understand their origins and their Chinese identity. In addition, math is also used in daily life, and it is indispensable (= crucial) for developing a logical way of thinking, especially when dealing with money. After these 3 subjects, I would select physical education, because I believe that a healthy body and a healthy mind are closely related; and biology and English for practical reasons. Biology explains how human bodies work and how other living things function. English become essential because today's young people will probably travel a lot when they get older, and everyone around the world now speaks this language.

A Subject You Enjoyed Studying at Secondary School

Tell me about a subject you enjoyed studying at secondary school.

You should say: what the subject was and why you liked it
 how the teachers taught this subject
 how important it has been, or will be, in your life
and say if you are good at this subject.

- History: why is it useful?
- Chinese history is rich and fascinating.
- My teacher
- The importance of understanding the past = our culture + identity
- Examples + learn from our past mistakes

When I was in high school I really enjoyed studying history. I think history is a very useful and fascinating subject. First of all, it's very important to understand what happened in the past in order to analyze today's geographical and political situation.

Chinese history is extremely long, especially if you compare it with American or Australian history, and there are also a lot of dates to remember and that is a problem for students. But it's because it is so rich that Chinese history is fascinating.

My history teacher was extremely good. He was very active and enthusiastic; he made the class very lively and managed to keep our attention throughout the class.

I think it's essential to learn about different dynasties in China in order to enjoy our national cultural heritage. I love to read about how the Great Wall was built or why Emperor Qin Shi Huang had the Terra-Cotta Warriors made in Xi'an. It's just incredible and captivating.

Boys usually like to learn about famous battles and wars. I remember my teacher telling us about the Second World War and the conflict with Japan. I think we can learn many things from the past, especially about past mistakes we shouldn't commit again.

1. Compare the subjects that younger students study with those studied by older students.

Well, in primary school teachers mostly emphasize reading and writing. These are fundamental skills. Students also get to learn a little about history and science. They learn simple, general concepts, I believe. When they reach middle school and high school, students learn more specific and detailed information on the same subjects. Science becomes biology, physics and chemistry. And actually, each of these fields is divided into even more precise sections: in biology, students will learn about anatomy (= related to the human body), molecular biology (= all the different molecules), genetics, as well as botany (= the study of plants), and maybe ecology (= how different organisms interact with each other). And this is the same for physics and chemistry, as well as history and geography. Students learn more knowledge about specific subjects. In addition, students are required to study more subjects that younger students don't have, such as philosophy, or politics.

2. What are the characteristics of a good learner?

A good learner should be motivated and open-minded. They should definitely persist until they succeed, which means they must be determined. A good learner shouldn't be afraid of asking questions. Curious students always learn more. On top of all this, good learners should understand what their priorities are (= what the most important things are), and how to manage their time.

3. Compare the benefits of studying alone and in a group.

Well, if they study in a group, students can help each other; they can ask each other questions. As a result, they can possibly gain time because they can explain the answers to each other. They can also encourage each other to study hard together. On the other hand, studying alone offers more privacy, as well as peace and quiet. A student who studies on his own can follow his own rhythm. In a group, the other students might go too fast or too slow. And I think the most important thing is that, when you study alone, you won't be distracted by your neighbors. When I study with my classmates, we always talk about other topics, we laugh, and it's hard to focus on our studies.

4. What has been the impact of modern technology on education?

In my country, modern technology has not changed the educational system so much. Teachers have access to computers in the classroom, so they can show a PowerPoint presentation to their students every so often. Other than that, students and teachers can communicate through emails, but to tell you the truth, students are still required to handwrite all of their assignments until they go to university. However, teachers can use computers, speakers and microphones in class. For example, an English teacher can work on his students' listening very conveniently using recordings on CD. I think that the most important thing is that modern technology has influenced the way students do personal research. They don't need to go to the library as much as the older generations because they have the Internet and they can find everything they need there. In the future students might have their own personal laptop at school. But I think it's still going to take a long time before that happens..

5. How might the range of subjects taught at schools change in the future?

That's a good question, because a lot of people would like to reform the educational system in China. I suppose that in the future students will have more choices. At the moment, every middle-school student in China follows the same curriculum. I think that there will be more flexibility in the next few years. People realize that not every student needs to have such a high knowledge of physics or chemistry. Some students might want to focus on literary subjects, while others might want to concentrate on economics. I think that school will become more practical, with internships and more interactions between teachers and students. But you know, people in China are conservative, and it always takes time to change an institution.

Something You Would Like to Learn

Tell me about something you can't do that you would like to learn.

You should say: what you would like to learn
 why you would like to learn it
 whether it is a common thing to learn
and say whether it would be difficult to learn it.

- French: romantic + melodious language
- Fascinated by French culture
- I would love to visit Paris.
- I will study in Canada: people speak French in Quebec.
- They say French is difficult but possible to learn if I study hard.

I would really like to learn French. In China, everyone is compelled to study English but as a student I wasn't given the opportunity to study a second foreign language. We believe that French is a melodious language that sounds really romantic.

A lot of Chinese are fascinated by French movies, culture and romance. In my mind, France is really a wonderful place, thanks to its fashion industry and amazing food.

And actually it is true that I'd love to travel to Paris someday. It would be so cool to get to see the Eiffel Tower and the other famous monuments in the French capital.

But I also believe that French could be a useful language for my future as I am eager to immigrate to Canada, and who knows where in Canada I will end up working. If I ever work in Quebec, English might not be sufficient. French is spoken in Quebec. I believe that sooner or later I will sit down and study it.

People tell me that French is quite complex to master. I've heard that the grammar is much more difficult than English and the pronunciation seems to come from the throat. It sounds very challenging. However, if I stick to it and practice as much as I did when I learned English, I don't see why I couldn't make it.

1. Do you think that children should learn practical and artistic skills at school?

Yes, definitely. I think it's important for students to learn about the arts, like music and drawing, because it can help them improve their imaginations. In addition, such skills could be useful for their future. They could learn how to appreciate beauty. It would give them ideas on how to decorate their house in the future, or how to select different kinds of music for different events or moods they experience. If they end up working in marketing, hotel management, or the entertainment industry, artistic skills would come in handy (= be useful). I know that in America, students are encouraged to choose a fun class from a variety , of choices like carpentry (= wood work), ceramics (= making pottery), or calligraphy (= art of writing). In this way, students can realize that not everything you learn at school comes from books. On top of this, I also think that learning how to write and speak

English is a very practical skill in today's world. Teachers should do their best to make students speak as much as possible. You know, in my country, we are often taught how to read and how to use English grammar, but we don't often get a chance to speak the language.

2. Can having practical or artistic skills help develop people's characters?

It certainly can. I think that learning about art and music can make people more patient and meticulous. They will be more likely to pay attention to details. Someone who writes songs will be able to express his mind, and maybe it will help him feel more relaxed. I think that learning a practical skill is also a good chance to socialize, because it's almost impossible to learn alone. Students will ask for help, and they will develop a special relationship with their teachers or their classmates who share the same interests. Students might open up to others and become more outgoing.

3. In the future, do you think some skills may be lost?

I don't think these skills will disappear, but they will definitely become rarer, unfortunately. The younger generations are not learning their grandparents' skills. Because of the development of modern technology, young people are now more excited about playing computer games than learning how to embroider. I think it's natural, but it is also too bad (= a pity), because some traditional abilities and skills are truly beautiful. Wood carving, stone carving, calligraphy, embroidery and paper-cutting are all stunning forms of art, but fewer people practice them compared with 50 years ago. I think schools should encourage young people to learn about these traditional skills, because they also represent a part of our culture and heritage.

4. What kinds of skills will be most useful for getting a job in the future?

I think that people will need good communication and interpersonal skills, because team-work is becoming more important. Job hunters will have more chances to be successful if they can take initiative, and if they can show a little creativity. I think it is essential to have ideas in order to constantly try to improve your company's situation.

5. Do you think we can learn practical or artistic skills from books or do we really need teachers?

Well, anything is possible, I guess, but it seems a lot easier, and probably faster, to learn with a teacher. I think books can be useful once you have already acquired the basic knowledge from your teacher. For example, if you learn English, a teacher should tell you how to pronounce letters. The teacher can correct you, and guide you, which is more simple than a tape-recorder can do. If you are learning how to play the piano, a teacher will give you tips (= advice) and show you a lot of examples for you to go home and try to copy. Some books are really well-done, and they definitely help students, but I think a teacher is always more effective.

A Science Lesson or Experiment

Tell me about a science experiment (biology, chemistry) you have done.

You should say: what the experiment was about
 when it took place
 whether it is a common experiment at school
and say what you thought of the experiment.

- First time using a microscope: biology. Caution and precision was required.
- Meaning of the word micro + microscope (microwave, microchip)
- How does it work? Light goes through refractive glass = magnifies the image
- Pulled one strand of hair, and placed it between 2 glass slides
- Zoom = I could see scales (like a fish). Good condition = closed scales

Alright, this is a difficult topic but I am going to try my best to tell you about the first time I used a microscope at school. I was in middle school, in biology class. The teacher told us that this apparatus (=piece of equipment) was very expensive, and that we should use it with caution.

First of all, the teacher explained to us the meaning of the word "microscope." He said that micro meant extremely small, like in microwave, where the (electromagnetic) waves are "impossible to see, or a microchip, which is a very tiny computer component. And the word "microscopic" meant invisible to the naked eye. I thought it was quite fascinating.

The teacher also explained to us how a microscope works. It has a refractive glass and a light shines through different layers of this special glass in order to magnify (= enlarge) the object we want to observe.

Our teacher asked us to pull one single strand of hair from our head, and to place it on the glass microscope slide. We then placed a drop of water on it, and placed another slide on top to fix the hair in place.

When I looked through the microscope, I clearly saw that the hair was not flat, not smooth, but it was covered with flat scales, just like a fish. The teacher said it was called a cuticle, and we could apparently see the same surface on our skin or nails. I think I remember him saying that if the cuticles are closed, then the hair is in good condition. It makes the hair smooth and shiny. But if the cuticles are shattered (= crushed), or raised, it means you need to take better care of your hair and you should buy some hair conditioner.

1. What kind of person makes a good scientist?

A good scientist should be meticulous and precise. In order to do research, he or she should definitely be patient and curious. Scientists should of course be passionate and very knowledgeable in their field.

2. What do you think about laboratory experiments on animals?

I think that these experiments are necessary because we don't have any other alternatives (= choices) at the moment. Scientists tests some medicine and chemicals on mice and monkeys. I think the death of such animals can be excused if it helps researchers J save human lives in the future. So I am definitely in favor of lab experiments on animals, as long as the animals don't suffer too much.

3. Medical science is constantly helping people to live longer. Do you think that is a good thing?

Yes, without a doubt! The fact that medicine extends people's life expectancy is a gift for all of us. If people live longer, it gives us a chance to spend more time with our grandparents, and this is priceless. Some people will tell you that it puts pressure on children because they have to support their parents and their grandparents financially for a long time, but what is money compared to the privilege (= chance) of spending time with family? People should keep this in mind and simply try to save a bit of money to pay for their retirement.

4. What do you think about human cloning?

Well, this has been quite a controversial issue in the last few years. First of all, I think that human cloning could be positive because it would offer the chance to have a baby to infertile parents (= who can't have children). In addition, if scientists can reproduce (stem) cells, they might be able to make tissues and organs to treat diseases. But I read that human cloning was not safe. Animal cloning has produced many dead, deformed and diseased animals. I am in favor of making human cells for research, but I oppose the whole baby cloning idea. If we produce identical people, it will lessen (= reduce) the diversity of the population and diversity is a great thing. If everyone looked the same, life would be boring. It also poses ethical problems (= on moral principles). People would be able to decide what their child should look like. If everyone looked perfect, or shared the same brain, life would become very bland and tasteless. I think that human cloning would undermine the value of human life.

5. What new scientific developments do you expect to see in the next ten or twenty years?

Well, I expect some progress in the medical field (= in terms of medicine). I hope that scientists will be able to find a cure for cancer and AIDS. I also think that researchers might come up with a new science to prolong our lives on earth. I think we will definitely be able to clone some hearts, and other essential organs, so that it will be possible to get a transplant and continue living. In addition, there will be some major developments in terms of technology and machinery. I am sure that we won't be using petrol as a source of energy for very long. It will soon be replaced by solar or electrical energy. They are also working on a hydrogen motor to make cars more environmentally-friendly (= eco-friendly). On top of this, there will be some major scientific changes in the home. Some people predict we will soon have robots at home to do all of the chores we dislike. Some say it might happen before 2030, but I am a little skeptical (= I have doubts).

6. Do you think that textbooks will be replaced by other media in the future?

I think that in the future everyone will have a personal laptop, so more students will read online textbooks. The sales of paper books will decline, but they won't totally be replaced. People realize it is more enjoyable to read on paper, and it is also much better for the eyes. I think that people will soon get tired of some of the technology we find so convenient and cool at the moment.

A Skill You Recently Learned

Tell me about a skill you recently learned.

You should say: what the skill is

whether it was hard to learn
whether it is a common skill to have where you live
and say why you decided to learn this skill.

- I bought a digital camera + my uncle taught me how to use it.
- He taught me about the different modes and settings (zoom + situations).
- Avoid red eyes
- Taking pictures of people in action
- Being aware of the luminosity (= light) overexposed/underexposed objects or faces

Last month, I really wanted to buy a new compact digital camera but I first needed advice on what to buy and how to use it properly. So I asked my uncle to tell me more about photography and to guide me on how to make good shots.

First of all, he recommended a camera to me and since it was pretty small and not too heavy, I followed his advice and purchased an expensive Japanese camera. I think that Japanese-brand cameras are quite reliable and durable. My uncle showed me the different options offered by the camera. He told me a lot about the different modes and settings and I realized I needed to adapt to the object I wanted to photograph, but I should also adjust to the time of the day and the light and brightness.

I remember he explained to me why many people often have red eyes in pictures. It's because when you take photos in a dim or dark setting, the light from your camera's flash reflects off the person's eyes. He advised me to avoid using the flash whenever possible, and if I really have to use it, I should ask the subject I photograph not to look directly into the camera lens.

We then went outside to see how my camera would perform if I took pictures of people moving or playing sports. We set the camera on Action mode and my uncle jumped around (use your hands). I tried to catch him on camera at the right time. It turned out to be much easier and more successful if when you take a picture, you first press the button halfway down and then wait for the right time to press the button all the way.

He also taught me about exposure because a picture can be overexposed when there is too much light or underexposed when there isn't enough. It's quite complicated and tricky and there are a lot of things to keep in mind if you want to take great pictures. I won't become a professional photographer but learning about all this was fun and useful.

1. How important is life-long learning?

It's extremely important to keep on learning. There is always something new to learn, and people shouldn't stop being curious. Even elderly people should keep on reading in order to exercise their brain and remain healthy. If someone stops learning, it means that he or she is doing the same things day after day, and this routine life must be somewhat boring.

American President Harry Truman said that "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." Learning should be a life-long process.

2. To what extent are people of different ages better at learning different things?

I think that in general, the younger we are, the faster we learn. This is true of languages, music and games. It seems like our memory and our ability to react quickly enables us to learn faster. However, when we get to a more mature age, we might be more capable of analyzing things and understanding the reason why certain things happen. We usually say that older people are wiser. They are definitely more experienced, and this means they can compare what they learn with different situations they have gone through before. In addition, grown-ups are also better at concentrating on things, while children have shorter attention spans. As a result, adults don't often make the same mistake twice,

because they are in general more careful. Plus, one thing older people can learn more easily is how to behave in society. When we get older, we are less naive, and we can learn about how to interact with people. Young people are often too shy to speak their mind, for example.

3. Is the ability to learn a gift of nature or the result of hard work?

The ability to learn is definitely a gift of nature, because everyone has this ability. Everyone has the potential to learn a second language, or to understand a book, but people also have different talents that come into consideration. Some students will understand math much faster than others, but it doesn't mean the slower students can't learn at all. They just need more time. A gifted but lazy student won't probably be as successful as the common hard-working kid.

4. What types of education are available to adult learners in your country?

If any adults want to study something new, or improve in a particular field, it is possible for them to go to a training center or to sign up for a university course. A lot of managers decide to get an MBA. They enroll in a course at one of the local universities, and they have classes on weekends. They also have a few projects to complete as homework. When I was studying English in a training school in order to get ready for the IELTS test, I met quite a lot of adults who wanted to improve their English before looking for a new job. In addition there are also a lot of online courses nowadays. These programs are usually affiliated (= associated) with universities, and you can get a degree once you finish the course.

5. What new skill would you like to learn?

Wow! There are so many skills I would like to learn! First, I would love to be able to speak a third language. I think that French sounds amazing, and I would love to have time to learn it. Last week, I saw a show on TV about Australian surfers, and these guys are so cool! It would be very neat (= cool) to be able to ride the waves like them. It must be an amazing feeling! In addition, I would love to learn a few magic tricks to amuse and surprise my friends. I think that could be a fun skill to learn.

6. Would you like to learn how to drive/cook?

Definitely! I will learn how to drive next month, when I turn 18. My father has a car, and it will be very convenient when I know how to drive it. It would be a great chance to get away from the noisy city, and hang out with my good pals (= friends). I know that in America, most students can drive at the age of 16. Having a car represents independence and freedom. I heard it was easier to drive an automatic car, compared to a stick shift, but I would like to learn how to handle the stick (= manual transmission) because it looks much cooler.

Yes, I would like to learn how to cook, because I believe that home-made cooking always tastes better! My mother is a great chef, and I should really spend time with her on weekends when she's preparing lunch or dinner. That would be the easiest way for me to learn. When I was in high school, I never had time to learn any culinary skills, and now I have a job, and I don't live with her anymore. But as you say in English, "better late than never," and I will definitely pick up a few recipes before I go to Australia. Otherwise, I am going to be stuck eating fish and chips (= the typical Australian fast food) every day!

A Group Activity You Successfully Took Part in

Tell me about a group activity you successfully took part in.

You should say: what the activity was and why you did it
 whether the activity was difficult or not
 why it was a success
and say how you felt during the activity.

- High-school group assignment in history: topic?
- How the tasks were divided?
- We shouldn't recite; we should explain.
- Results?
- What did you learn from it?

When I was in high school, our history teacher asked us to prepare a presentation about a historical event. We were assigned a topic and in groups of 4, and we were given 2 weeks to do a bit of research and prepare a PowerPoint presentation on Imperial Heritage (=heritage from past emperors).

Our subject was pretty simple as we had to introduce the famous Terra-Cotta Warriors to the rest of the class. First we divided the work into four different parts and each one of us went to the school library and then the public library to find out new information about the tomb.

Our teacher warned us that we should not use the Internet too much and that we should write with our own words. She did not want us to recite anything, but rather explain what we had learned with simple words.

My father had gone to Xi'an and he was able to provide some pictures he took when he went there 15 years ago. It was at the beginning of the excavation and these are very rare pictures. My classmates explained the Emperor's fear of death, and how large the site might really be, as most of the statues are still buried everywhere. I concentrated on the design and the way the soldiers are lined up like on a battle field.

We learned how to cooperate and communicate. We shared the work and the decision making. However, I think it's easier to work by yourself but it also takes more time if you have to do everything on your own. Although we got a good grade, I realized it is sometimes easier to follow your own ideas rather than always asking for everyone's point of view.

1. What are the benefits of working with other people?

Well, when you have colleagues, you can ask them questions if you encounter a problem. I think that co-workers can help and advise each other. If you get along well with your colleagues, the atmosphere at work is pleasant which makes your job more enjoyable.

2. Compare the benefits of working in a group with the advantages of working alone.

When you work alone, you can follow your own rhythm, and you make your own schedule or plan. When you work alone, I think you have more freedom, because no one can tell you what to do or how to do things. In addition, you might be more efficient because nobody will distract you. You

know, very often at work, people share stories with each other. They chat and socialize, which is nice, but it could also result in a waste of time for the company.

3. How can children learn to cooperate with each other?

I think that teachers and parents should encourage children to join in some group activities. For example, at school, teachers can give some group projects as homework, and students should do a bit of research and share their results together. I think it's quite easy for physics and chemistry teachers to organize some experiments where students must help each other. They will collaborate in order to get a good grade. Outside school, parents could sign their kids up for a sports team. Basketball and football are great team sports. Children will learn how to cooperate with each other, and they will realize that things are easier and more fun when they join forces.

4. How important is it to maintain individuality?

It's extremely important. Everyone should have their own ideas and perspectives on things. If everyone shared the same point of view, life would be boring. The fact that we all have our own ways of thinking makes us unique and special. We need strong individualistic figures in order to show an example to the rest and motivate everyone else. Individuality usually goes along with ambition, independence, liberal thinking, and these are great qualities to have in today's society.

5. What is the function of uniforms for members of a group?

Uniforms are supposed to bring people closer together. They create team spirit and remind people where they are, and why they are working hard. They represent the colors of the club, the school, or the company everyone is working for. Uniforms could be a symbol of pride in sports, and in America, students are proud of wearing their school colors. Uniforms unite people together, and minimize (= reduce) the differences between individuals.

6. Do you think people behave differently when in a group?

I think that children might act differently when they are in a group, but most adults would be the same. If you are shy in society, you are probably also quiet at home. A child might be outspoken at home, but extremely introverted in a group. For grown-ups, a leader in a group probably acts the same way in his or her family. Of course, people might be a little bit more careful with what they say and how they act when they are in a group. People might refrain from saying exactly what they think, in order not to shock or upset people, but I don't think that their personality will completely change just because they are in a different environment. Otherwise, it would mean that people lie and pretend to be someone different.

A Language You Would Like to Learn

Tell me about a second language you would like to learn.

You should say: what language you would like to learn
 why you would like to learn it
 whether many people study this language in your country
and say whether it would be difficult to learn it.

- Japanese as a second foreign language at university
- I would love to go to Japan = neighboring country
- I love Japanese comics = authentic language
- Chinese and Japanese share some similarities.
- We should learn 2 foreign languages from middle school.

Now that my English level is satisfactory, I think I will take up Japanese next year at university. I would like to learn this second foreign language for different reasons.

First of all, China and Japan are neighbors, and I believe I will probably fly to Japan someday, on holidays, in order to visit the country. It would be fascinating to discover

Tokyo which is the largest metropolitan area in the world. I have heard a lot about the famous tourist destination, Mount Fuji, which is an impressive volcano, and I would like to experience life in smaller fishermen's villages on one of the numerous islands.

To tell you the truth, I love Japanese cartoons and comic books. They are very popular among young people in China, and I have bought many DVDs and books written by Japanese authors. But they are of course translated into Chinese. I am sure it would be a lot better if I could read them in Japanese, because we always lose something when we translate: the meaning is different; the jokes are not as funny. Reading in the authentic language must be better.

I don't think it would be so hard to learn Japanese, but it would definitely require time. I know that Chinese and Japanese share some similarities, especially in terms of (= when it comes to) writing. Some characters are identical or very comparable.

In China, some university students get a chance to learn Japanese as a second foreign language, but most people want to focus on English only. They think that English is more important for the future, and that students will get confused if they learn another language.

But I disagree; I know that in Europe, many students learn English and French, or Spanish, or German. If we start at a young age, I don't see why we couldn't do it. I think it all depends on the time we have, and what chances we get to practice this language.

Vocabulary

- Four months ago I decided to study English again in a training center because I hadn't opened an English book in years. I felt really rusty at first. I spend the first weeks brushing-up on my English.
- Now I can carry on basic conversations. My mother tongue influences me a lot though, especially when it comes to pronunciation. I listen to audio-recordings and try to imitate the sounds I hear. I also find it hard to retain words.

1. What do you think is the best way to learn a foreign language?

I think the best way to learn a language is to practice as much as possible. First, it is essential to learn basic vocabulary in order to make simple sentences, and to recognize the words when you hear them. Then students should speak and write as much as possible. If they are able to do this, they will pick up the language quite fast. I think that in China, teachers focus too much on grammar and accuracy, instead of improving students' fluency. Of course the best way to learn a language is to travel to the country where it is spoken to completely immerse yourself in the language.

2. Do you think that the educational system in your country focuses enough on foreign languages?

Yes, I think so. In China, students study English every day for at least 45 minutes which I think is enough because there are a lot of other subjects students need to study as well. But teachers should probably use different methods. Right now, students are asked to recite a lot of words and to do a lot of written exercises on grammar. Teachers pay a lot of attention to tenses, prepositions, and other grammatical details. In class, students don't talk much. They might say one sentence or two in one hour. There is definitely not enough speaking practice. But of course, classes are crowded, with 50 or 60 students per class, so I guess it is difficult to make everyone talk.

3. How are language and culture connected?

Well, language is one aspect of culture, along with things like the arts, festivals, and local history. Language is used to describe culture, and it is very difficult to talk about a country's culture without using the local language. For example, in China, it is very complex to explain a legend in another language, because the names of the characters and the place have a special cultural meaning in Chinese. We always say that you can't fully understand Chinese culture if you don't speak the language. In my English class, my teacher used English to describe life in America. For example, he taught me the word "prom," the night when the senior-high-school students dress up and go dancing to celebrate the end of the school year. Here, we don't have a word to translate "prom" in Chinese. You can understand from examples like this that language and culture are very closely intertwined (= connected).

4. Would it be a good idea for people all over the world to learn a single artificial language, such as Esperanto?

No, it wouldn't make sense. Right now, everyone learns English, which is pretty convenient for all of us. It's not so difficult to learn English, and we all have access to so much material in English on the Internet, through textbooks, movies and different tape recordings. Everything is done for people to improve their English skills quickly and efficiently. If an artificial language was created, there wouldn't be so many books and articles for students to practice. In addition, if a language is alive, it carries a lot more meanings (=is more meaningful), and words are often related to one another. It is more interesting to learn a foreign language in order to understand the culture behind it. On top of this, it would take years before a majority of people learned enough of the language to communicate easily. I. it would be too much of a hassle (= too troublesome).

5. Do you think it is more difficult for adults to learn a foreign language than for children?

Yes, I think so. I believe that kids have the ability to remember new things faster. It doesn't mean

adults can't learn, but it gets more challenging the older you get. In addition, if you learn a language from a very young age, your pronunciation will be a lot better. When we get older, it is difficult to assimilate (= learn and understand) things quickly, because our minds think in a different way. I think that when we are older, we want to translate everything, every word. When we don't understand one little word in the sentence, we focus on it, and we stop thinking about the meaning of the whole sentence. Adults like to control every detail. Grown-ups are not as flexible and relaxed as children.

6. How do you communicate with people from other countries?

I must admit I haven't met so many foreigners in my life, but I used English to communicate with my foreign teacher at university. She was from Canada, and we always used English in and outside the classroom. Very few foreigners speak enough Chinese to handle a complete conversation in Mandarin. In addition, English is the international language, and if I met people from Japan or the Philippines, we would also most probably converse in English.

7. What do you find especially difficult when learning English?

I find it hard to write in an elegant way. When I write, it's challenging to organize my sentences together. In addition, the grammar is sometimes quite complex, especially with the tenses and prepositions. It's so hard to remember when I should use "of" or "by", "for" or "to". Like for example, you say "I want to go TO Beijing" but you can't say "I want to go TO there." These small things make English complicated.

8. What do you think about globalization?

Wow! That's a complex question. First, I think that globalization has had a relatively positive impact on our lives, especially for young people like me. Globalization brought so many new things to my country. Nowadays, we have access to foreign music, movies, and literature that my grandparents did not have. In addition, globalization has had an impact on the Chinese economy. A lot of foreign companies set up factories and offices in China. This creates a lot of jobs, which means a lot of opportunities for us all. Usually the salary in foreign companies is quite high too, and Chinese employees can learn from their way of doing business. Nowadays a lot of Chinese companies export all over the world, and exchange services and goods with so many different nations. It's a great chance to meet more people and open up our minds. However, globalization seems to create a homogenized(= common) world culture, so people all over the world seem to have similar tastes and ideas. It seems to eradicate (= eliminate) regional diversity. Chinese people wear Western clothes, eat hamburgers and drive German cars. We all watch American movies, drink coffee, and read Japanese comics. We should be careful not to forget our national traditions and regional specificities (= particularities).

Someone Who Helped You Improve Your English

Tell me about someone who helped you improve your English.

You should say: who the person is/was
 what the person is/was like
 how he/she helped you
and say whether this person has influenced other people too.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. What are the main differences between a good teacher and a bad teacher?*
- 2. Do you think that students learn better when their teachers are strict?*
- 3. What effects can a bad teacher have on his/her students?*
- 4. Do you think that being a teacher is a good job?*
- 5. Why might teaching sometimes be an unpopular job?*
- 6. How important a factor is age in learning?*

A Short Course You Have Taken or Would Like to Take

Tell me about a short course you have taken or would like to take.

You should say: what the course is/was about
 where you did/could take it
 what the exact content of the course was/will be
and say how it has benefited or will benefit you.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. Compare the effectiveness of textbooks and other media as teaching tools.*
- 2. Compare the usefulness of educational qualifications and practical experience for getting a job.*
- 3. What employment problems might there be in the future for university graduates?*
- 4. What are the social costs and benefits of a highly-educated population?*
- 5. Why do some working people continue to take courses?*

Something that Helped You Improve Your English

Tell me about something that helped you improve your English.

You should say: how you improved your English
 how often you studied
 whether it is a common method in your country
and say whether you would recommend it to anyone else.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. What do you think is the best way to learn a foreign language?*
- 2. Do you think that the educational system in your country focuses enough on foreign languages?*
- 3. If you had the opportunity to learn another foreign language, which would you choose?*
- 4. How are language and culture connected?*
- 5. Would it be a good idea for people all over the world to learn a single, artificial language, such as Esperanto?*

A Second Language You Would Like to Learn

Tell me about a second language you would like to learn.

You should say: what language you would like to learn
 why you would like to learn it
 whether many people study this language in your country
and say whether it would be difficult to learn it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Vocabulary

- I learned Japanese as a second foreign language at university. I can convey basic ideas but it would take me at least 2 more years of studying to become truly proficient (= competent = able to talk).
- In the U.S. I will be fully immersed in an English-speaking environment. There's no doubt I will learn fast.

11 Reading and Writing

Proverb:

A book is like a garden carried in a pocket.

(Chinese proverb: 书中自有黄金屋; 书中自有颜如玉)

= **Books hold houses of gold and ladies as fair as jade.**

Sample Answer:

An Important Letter You Received

A Postcard You Received

A Book You Have Read

A Story You Have Heard

A Book You Might Like to Write

Practice:

An Important Letter You Received

An Important Letter You Wrote

A Book You Read and Would Like to Read Again

Key Words

- A catalogue is a book or booklet which gives you a list of goods or books for sale, plus their prices.
- An atlas helps you to find the position of a place or a country anywhere in the world.
- An encyclopedia is a book (a set of books) dealing with every branch of knowledge in alphabetical order.
- You can keep a collection of stamps or photographs in an album.
- You look at the calendar to know the date and the month.
- If something goes wrong with your car, you can try to repair it yourself with the help of a car manual.
- if you don't know where to go on holiday, why don't you get a holiday brochure from a travel agency?

(Source: Test Your Vocabulary by Peter Watcyn-Jones)

An Important Letter You Received

Tell me about an important letter you received.

You should say: when you received the letter
 why the letter was important to you
 whether you expected this letter or not
and explain how this letter had an influence on you and your future.

- Admission letter from the University of Pennsylvania
- Reaction: thrilled + delighted + a bit worried too
- Describe the letter: style + info
- Requirements to get in: letters of motivation, good grades in high school + IELTS
- A great opportunity for my future + challenge

A few months ago, I received a very important letter from an American university. To tell you the truth, I applied to 3 colleges on the East Coast of the United States, but I was accepted to my first choice. I got into the prestigious university of Pennsylvania, and you can't imagine how happy I was!

I received the letter in April. My parents actually got it, but since they don't read much English, they waited for me to open it. I was a bit nervous, because I really wanted to go to U. Penn. It was my preference by far, but I was a bit worried of being rejected. I opened it slowly, and I screamed when I saw it was a letter of admission.

The letter was typed of course, and the style was very formal. The paper was thick, you know, good quality paper. On the top of the page, the emblem of the University was printed in color. And the person in charge of student recruitment had signed her name at the bottom.

You know, before receiving this letter of admission, I had spent hours on the Internet, looking at different universities and comparing their business programs, because that's what I really want to major in. At Penn, they have the Wharton Business School, which is really renowned, and that's why I really wanted to get in. I had to write so many letters of motivation, and fill out so many documents and registration forms. I thought it would never end. Finally, in that letter they sent me, they asked me to take the IELTS test. They said it was a requirement for international students. And that's why I am here today.

This letter really changed my life, because if everything goes as planned, I will be in America very soon, starting a new life. It should be a great opportunity for my future, but I must admit that it's a little bit scary too. Studying overseas, especially in a top-notch school, represents a big challenge. I hope to live up to it (= to reach the standards that are expected).

A Postcard You Received

Tell me about a postcard you received.

You should say: when you received the postcard
 who sent it to you and why
 whether you expected this card or not
and explain how you felt when you received it.

- When? From whom?
- Why?
- Pictures on the postcard
- The person who wrote it: her personality/qualities
- Feelings: where can I see the postcard now?

Last month I received a postcard from my friend in Sanming. Sanming is a small town in western Fujian. My best friend lives there. Her name is Xiaojiao. We used to be classmates in middle school and although we don't see each other as often as before, we have kept in touch and frequently send letters to each other.

She sent me a pretty postcard to encourage me with my studies. In the summer, she could relax and enjoy her holiday but I had to study English in order to get ready for the

IELTS test. She told me that she was thinking of me and that I should study hard for my future. She said my efforts would payoff someday. We'll see... But her words were very motivating and touching.

The postcard represented her hometown, Sanming. It is a beautiful place surrounded by mountains. There were four pictures of different landscapes around her town. You could see a stunning waterfall, an impressive view of the mountains and one old temple under a cliff.

When Xiaojiao sends me letters or cards, she always buys a pretty stamp because she knows I collect them. She's a very considerate and thoughtful friend. I kept the postcard on my desk and everyone who comes to my house can see it. I often think of her and I can't wait to see her again. I keep all of her letters and cards because they are all very meaningful and they represent our friendship.

1. Why do some people sometimes write letters rather than make phone calls?

Well, I believe that people write letters when they have something important to say, something that could not be said over the phone. I think that letters are more meaningful than phone calls. When you write a letter, you have more time to think about the words you are going to use, and most important, you don't need to talk face to face with the person, so you won't be afraid of telling the truth. People mostly write love letters, or letters announcing bad news, or important decisions in their life. Sometimes it is easier to write. In addition, people write cards to each other for the New Year because it is traditional, and a letter shows that you really care about people, because it takes time to handwrite it. Occasionally, I also write to my friends who are studying overseas. I write to

them because it's difficult for us to call each other, because of the time difference, and it's a good chance for me to tell them what I have been up to (= what I have been doing), and I let them know what important things have happened here. On the phone, I might forget a few things.

2. Compare the importance of writing letters for older and younger generations.

I think that the older generations are more likely to write letters, because they grew up without the Internet or a cell phone. They are used to handwriting, while the younger generation has the habit of typing on a keyboard. Young people don't write letters very often. They send text messages or chat online on a regular basis.

3. Why do many people feel differently about receiving a personal letter rather than an email?

Handwritten letters are definitely more personal. Letters are more meaningful, more significant than emails, because it takes a long time to write them. In addition, we rarely receive letters nowadays, so we usually appreciate them even more. On top of this, when someone writes in Chinese, we can see his or her handwriting, and through the handwriting, we can tell the person's mood. Chinese characters reflect a lot about one's personality: we can see if the person wrote fast, if he or she was careful, or excited; we can see which words the writer insists on. Someone's writing style can tell you a lot about the person.

4. How important is the sending of cards in maintaining a relationship?

I think it's not as important as in the past. Nowadays, people keep in touch through the Internet and emails. It is so convenient to talk to people online. There are many Instant Messenger programs such as MSN or Skype, or QQ in China. We can chat with each other immediately, and it is free. It's like a phone conversation that can last hours. Very few people now use mail, paper letters or cards. It's a little old-fashioned, although quite nice when you receive mail.

5. Compare the effect of receiving a card and receiving a present.

Well, I think that receiving a present is usually more exciting, because it's a surprise and you never know what you are going to get. Cards and letters are meaningful, yes, but birthday cards or New Year cards are pretty much all the same. But in any case, for both cards and gifts, it's the thought that counts.

6. Do cards and postcards have a future in the age of the Internet and text messaging?

Well, it's always hard to guess what the future holds for us (= what might happen in the future), but I guess that people will still send cards for big occasions such as the New Year, or weddings, or birth and birthdays. I honestly think that sales of cards and postcards already went down a lot in the last 10 years, but people still buy them every so often. Writing a card can be enjoyable, and whoever receives it will be pleased too. They are a lot better than those e-cards we find on the Internet. As I told you before, handwriting a letter or a card is meaningful, and I think that people will keep on doing so.

7. Why are writing skills so important in learning?

Well, writing skills are the foundations of education. The first thing we learn in primary school is how to read and write. These two skills are closely intertwined (= connected). Once you've mastered them, you can start learning anything, because you have access to all the information you want in books or on the Internet. We consider writing as an indispensable (=crucial) skill, because it is a daily necessity. We use writing to take notes and remember things; we use writing to share feelings and impressions, and to communicate. Well-educated people are those who write in a smart and sophisticated (= elegant) way, and many jobs require people to write reports or letters to customers or colleagues.

8. How important is literacy for the general population of a country?

Literacy is fundamental for a society, because if the population is not well-educated, it cannot develop and improve itself. Illiterate people can't make money in today's world. If people can't read, they won't have access to enough information, and will stay in the dark. In addition, this could have a serious impact on people in terms of health, as well as in terms of family planning. People who are not educated usually have many children and they struggle to offer a good life to the kids.

9. How could governments encourage the development of literacy for different age groups?

Well, first of all, the government should make sure that every child gets to go to school. School should be compulsory for every child from the age of 5. In order to do this, the government needs to train more teachers and to dispatch (= send) them to rural areas of the country. In China, there are still some places in the mountains where children don't have access to a school. It shouldn't be the case in 2011! In addition, for illiterate grown-ups, I think that some volunteer teaching organizations should be created, and maybe retired people could help by giving some of their time to these associations.

10. If you could write a book, what would you write about?

Well, I have never thought about this before, but I guess that I would write a book on travelling. I would love to backpack around my country, and describe my impressions on places and people. Actually, it could be even more exciting to travel overseas, and to write about a foreign culture. I could write about my perspective (= point of view) on American or European people. It would be easier to divide the book into chapters too: one chapter on food; one chapter on mountains; another one on marriages and on education... It would be a fascinating book to write.

A Book You Have Read

Tell me about a book you have read.

You should say: which book it was and when you read it
 what feelings you had whilst reading it
 if you have read other books by the same author
and explain how it influenced you, if at all.

- Title? When? Popular?
- Plot = story
- What is special? Stunning, fascinating tale
- Creative + good for kids to read
- In the future: I would like to read it in English.

Let me tell you about a book that has now become a classic. A few years ago, I read the first fantasy novel of the Harry Potter series and it was stunning! It is entitled Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. It was written by J. K. Rowling and it quickly became a bestseller. It was published in 1997 and six other books followed. They were all adapted to the cinema and everyone has now also seen the films.

The plot is original and extremely creative. It is the story of an ordinary boy called Harry Potter who finds out he has inherited magical powers from his parents. He enrolls at a school of magic and is taught how to master his powers in order to defeat the evil wizard who killed his relatives.

Rowling describes an amazing world where anything is possible. The story is fascinating and quite gripping. Once you start reading it, you can't stop! I love how the author gives so many details about the magic spells and curses. My favorite part is when they race their flying-broomsticks and use magic to have fun. They create potions; they have a magic wand; they talk to animals; they have invisibility cloaks and magic owls and toads. It is very well-written and I believe that young people should read this fiction in order to work on their imagination. It is a great chance for readers to daydream and enjoy themselves.

I tried to read it in English but it was a bit difficult. I hope someday I'll be able to understand all the terms Rowling uses.

1. How important are libraries in your country?

Libraries are extremely important for university students, but otherwise, I don't think that libraries play a major role in people's lives. Nowadays, most people like to buy books on the Internet at a very cheap price, or read directly online. It has also become common for people to purchase audio books to upload on their mobile. Most public libraries are empty, except for the huge and famous libraries in the big cities of Shanghai, Beijing or Nanjing. I think that university students spend a lot of time in their school libraries because it's a peaceful place to study. I could be wrong, but I believe that students mostly go there to do their homework, rather than borrow and read books.

2. How can libraries encourage people to read more?

First of all, libraries should provide a nice and cozy environment. In my hometown, most libraries

are very old and dark inside. In addition, they should offer a great variety of reading materials, especially books that might appeal to students. I think a library that does not supply Japanese comic books or contemporary (= present-day) best-sellers would be out of date. Offering books like the Harry Potter collection or the Dan Brown series (like *The Da Vinci Code*, and *Angels and Demons*) will definitely attract readers. On top of this, libraries could collaborate with primary-school teachers. A Chinese teacher could bring his class to the library, where the librarian would read the kids a story. Afterwards, young students could go around the library and read on their own for some time. If students get used to reading at a very young age, they will be more likely to read more when they get older.

3. Is it a waste of money for governments to pay for public libraries?

No, I don't think so. Actually the government should spend money on libraries in order to modernize these places, and attract more people. I think that it is important to have libraries in the city because people can read and learn about many things there. In addition, they are quiet places for people to relax and for students to study. They offer a good chance for people to socialize and to go out of the house, instead of staying home and watching TV. If libraries provide a nice environment, I think that more young people will go there, which will make the place more dynamic, you know, livelier. Right now, libraries are too often compared to dark, ancient places full of old people...

4. What kinds of reading materials are available on the Internet?

Well, you can find pretty much everything you like on the Internet. A lot of people read the news on a daily basis, but you can also do some research or read articles related to your studies or to your job. It is even possible to download whole books (= entire books). My mother likes to read about cooking, and she has found hundreds of new recipes online. My father reads about traveling, and he can find information about the places he goes to on business trips. One of my friends also has found a website where he can read Japanese comics. He spends whole afternoons on it.

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet as a source for reading materials?

People read on the Internet because they can have quick access to information. They don't need to go down the street to buy the newspaper, or to the library to get the book. It has now become possible to download whole books from the Internet. It is extremely convenient and very cheap at the same time. On the other hand, reading on a computer screen is not that comfortable (= not so pleasant) for our eyes, and it can definitely cause irreparable(=that can't be repaired = irreversible) harm to our eyesight.

6. Do you think that printed books will eventually be replaced by the Internet?

Definitely not! I think that, although people read a lot on the Internet, everyone agrees that it is more enjoyable to read on paper. Books have the advantage of being easier to carry than a computer, and it is much faster to open a book than to turn on a computer. In addition, books create a special feeling, they have a special smell, and they make you look smart! You can also make some notes on the book, and highlight what is important. Books are not ready to disappear anytime soon.

A Story You Have Heard

Tell me about a story you have heard.

You should say: what the story was about
 what happened in the end
 where you heard this story
and explain how you felt when you heard this

- Greek mythological story of Narcissus = a vain man
- Extremely good-looking = but he thought he was too good for any other women = narcissistic
- A nymph called Echo fell in love with him but he made her heartbroken + desperate
- Narcissus was punished to fall in love with himself = died
- Moral = boys should not be cruel to their lovers, not be superficial, but generous and Selfless

I want to tell you about a fascinating story I heard from my English teacher at school. It is the legend of a vain man called Narcissus. The tale originates in Greek mythology, and I believe that the story is well-known to every single educated foreigner, but completely foreign to a lot of Chinese people.

Narcissus was a very good-looking man but he thought too much of himself. Although every girl was in love with him, he was too arrogant to take any lady as his girlfriend. Narcissus was simply too self-absorbed to worry about anyone else's feelings.

A beautiful nymph (= young goddess) called Echo admired the young attractive man. She followed him and tried to kiss him, but he violently turned her down, and pushed her away. Echo was so heartbroken and desperate that she ended up alone in the mountains and got weaker and weaker until only her voice remained: the echo.

Because of his selfish behavior, Narcissus was punished by a god. He came across a pool and took a drink from it. As he saw his own reflection, he fell in love with his own image. This is where the term narcissistic comes from. He found himself so handsome that he couldn't get away from his own figure, and died there slowly. It is said that a flower grew in the place he died, and this flower bears his name: narcissus.

I think the moral is very neat: boys should not be cruel to their lovers, and they should be more considerate and thoughtful with girls. Being self-centered and cocky (= proud) is definitely looked down upon in our society, and apparently it can also be dangerous.

Nowadays a lot of young people are too superficial and materialistic: they care too much about appearance. A good boyfriend should be selfless and generous.

1. What kinds of stories do older people tell younger people in your culture?

Grandparents usually like to tell legends and fairy tales to their grandchildren. The story of the Monkey King is one of the most famous in China. The Monkey King goes on an epic journey with a monk, and they face a series of adventures. However, nowadays, many adults also know stories from Western culture, and they don't hesitate to share them with their children. When I was a child, my parents told me the story of Peter Pan who always fought against Captain Hook. These stories

are stunning; they can enhance a child's imagination.

2. How important are these stories as a way of keeping the culture alive?

These fairy tales are part of the culture so it is fundamental for parents to pass them on to their kids to keep this part of the oral tradition alive. The good thing is that nowadays we have access to all of these stories in books and even on tapes. So we don't need to worry about having them disappear. However, a child will be more likely to remember and understand the importance of the story if the father or the mother tells the story, rather than if the kid listens to it on a CD. These legends and tales represent a national cultural heritage, and they can also teach young people important values. For example, the story of the Monkey King, which is also recorded in the book entitled *Journey to the West*, can teach young people to be honest and have respect for teachers.

3. Do you think that this form of storytelling will continue in the future?

Yes, definitely. Everyone loves a great story, not only kids. I think that nowadays parents understand how important it is to communicate with their children, and that storytelling can be a great chance for them to create a special bond (=relationship) with their kid, and at the same time improve the child's intelligence and imagination. In the future, there is no doubt that kids will still learn the same stories, and new contemporary tales will also be added to the repertoire collection).

4. How important is it for parents to read stories to their children?

It's your turn to answer!

(Use Question 3 to answer: It's a great chance for kids to...In addition, children can enhance their imagination and learn...On top of this, these stories represent the national culture...and...)

5. What can people learn from old legends and national heroes?

We can learn a lot from legends. I think the most important thing is the values they teach us. Old stories always have a moral at the end, and the lesson they teach can be relevant to many situations. For example, in China we have the story of Yue Fei, who was an outstanding general in the army. His story tells us that hard work and loyalty are extremely noble and lead to success. We also learn that jealousy and fear can lead one to make wrong decisions. In addition, legends represent our culture. It's essential to know about them in order to understand our historical and literary heritage.

6. Why do children really like fairy tales?

Fairy tales are incredible. Fairy tales open the doors to an imaginary world. And this is fascinating for every person who likes dreaming. Folk stories always include magical characters in an enchanted background. Anything is possible in a fairy tale, and that's why children are so fond of them.

7. Do you have a favorite fairy tale?

Yes, I like the story of Aladdin from the book *The One Thousand and One nights*. Aladdin is an impoverished young man who manages to get hold of a magical lamp. And whenever he cleans it, a genie comes out to grant him some wishes. He goes through a series of stunning adventures and eventually understands that wealth is not the most important thing. At last, he frees the genie from his imprisonment in the lamp. I love the moral of the story: if you are witty and kind, you can succeed.

A Book You Might Like to Write

Tell me about a book you might like to write.

you should say: what you would write about
 how long it would take you to write it
 whether you think it would sell any copies
and explain how you feel about the topic you would write about.

- A guide book on traveling will get more popular in China
- A dream to travel and get paid at the same time !
- Stories, anecdotes during the trip = like a diary about the customs
- Practical information for travelers (hotels, prices, transport, food)
- Future = book about Australia or America in Chinese (more Chinese travel nowadays)

I have never thought about writing a book because I don't think I have the skills required to be a writer: I am not so patient, I don't write particularly well, and I don't consider myself that creative (=so creative). So it would be extremely hard. But if I had time, and since you ask me, I could try to write a book on traveling, like a tourist guide- book. I don't think there are so many famous books of the kind in China, so I could give it a shot give it a try .

In addition, it is my dream to travel around my country while paid by my editor at the same time. I would take a year, or maybe two, and send articles on a weekly basis. First, they could be published in a magazine, maybe, and later on, collected into a book.

I would write some anecdotes (=short stories) about my daily excursions, and some stories to describe the people I meet. It would be like a diary about my itinerary travel route . I think people would be interested in learning about local customs, especially in the countryside. I could add pictures to illustrate my stories as well.

On top of this, I guess it would be a good idea to include some practical information about each place. For example, I could recommend some hotels and restaurants. I could describe some famous dishes and the way the local chefs prepare them. I think it would be useful to readers if I could include some maps as well as some info about transports and guided tours.

China is a huge country, so I don't know where I would start, but I have always dreamt of going to Sichuan and Tibet. These places sound very attractive to me. Who knows, if the first book sold well, I could do the same thing in Australia or America. I could write in Chinese about the national wonders of the Australian outback, or life in the American Midwest. You know, more Chinese tourists can now afford to go overseas. They might enjoy reading about my discoveries and impressions before going themselves.

An Important Letter You Received

Tell me about an important letter you received.

You should say: when you received that letter
 why the letter was important to you
 whether you expected this letter or not
and explain how this letter had an influence on you and your future.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

An Important Letter You Wrote

Tell me about an important letter you wrote.

You should say: when you wrote that letter
 why the letter was important
 whether it was difficult to write it or not
and explain how this letter had an influence on you or someone else.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Book You Read and Would Like to Read Again

Tell me about a book you have read.

You should say: which book it was and when you read it
 What feelings you had whilst reading it
 How long it took you to read the book
and explain what you learned from it

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

1.What are the main qualities someone needs to be a successful writer?

2.Why do some people choose to write for a living ?

3.Do you think that printed books will eventually be replaced by the Internet?

4.What are some of the difficulties faced by people who write for a living?

5.If you became a writer, what kind of book would you like to write?

12 Media

Proverb:

No news is good news.

=When there is no news, it is likely that everything is all right.

Sample Answer:

A Website You Often Visit
A Newspaper You Often Read
An interesting Piece of News You Recently Heard about
A TV Program You Like
An Advertisement that Influenced You to Buy Something
A Speech You Have Heard

Practice:

A Website You Often Visit
A Newspaper You Often Read
A TV Program You Dislike
An Advertisement that Influenced You to Buy Something

Key Words

convenient=practical
well-made=well designed=ingenious
to broadcast=to air
to get access= to obtain=to get hold of

sections=categories
an ad=a TV commercial
to describe=to portray
to learn=to find out,

A Website You Often Visit

Tell me about a website you often visit.

You should say: what the website is about

whether it is a popular website

why you often visit the website

and explain what is special about it.

- . Which website? How often? On a daily basis
- . News articles, different sections, different categories: clear headlines
- . Cool design: colorful, well-organized, trendy, easy to use
- . I personalized it: weather + horoscope + instant access to my emails
- . Search engine (like Google) to search for info

I get on the Internet pretty much every day, and the website I visit most is Yahoo China. Actually I chose cn.yahoo.com. as my homepage so that I can get access to the web page directly every time I go online.

I usually surf this webpage in order to read the news. I usually click on the sports link to obtain articles related to the NBA or soccer. The articles are arranged in different categories. I can quickly find out about the national or international news, business issues or entertainment headlines.

I like Yahoo because the website is very clear and colorful. The design of the page is well-organized. It is easy to grasp the information at once. You don't need to skim or scroll down the page to find what you are looking for. I would describe this website as efficient, precise and trendy. It is divided into different sections like the news, the most popular searches, job offers, and online shopping or traveling tips: very convenient!

I have personalized my webpage so that it can inform me about the weather, my horoscope and whether or not I have received new emails. I created a Yahoo email account three years ago, and I use it very often to communicate with friends and relatives.

Finally, Yahoo can be used exactly like Google as a search engine. It is very practical when I need to do some research for my studies. There is an empty bar they call a search bar at the top of the page, and you can type in whatever you want to know and as soon as you press "Enter", you will get your results instantly. In this way you can get access to millions of pictures, articles or reports.

1. How has the Internet influenced communication in daily life?

Well, nowadays a lot of people use the Internet to communicate with their friends or colleagues on a daily basis. We all use an Instant Messenger program called QQ in China. It's the equivalent of (=it's similar to) a Chinese version of MSN. You can chat online with any of your contacts as long as they are signed on. It's very convenient because it's free, unlike talking on the phone, and you can talk to many different people at once. In addition, many people use email to keep in touch with friends who live far away or to communicate with colleagues or customers. On top of this, it's also a great way to send documents to one another. The only problem is that all these communication tools don't encourage people to go out and socialize in real life.

2. Give reasons for the increasing use of the Internet.

Okay. Well, first, the Internet allows us to find information about anything and everything. Students can find help with their assignments online; adults can have any question answered anytime with a simple click. In addition, on the Internet, we can read the news from any newspaper. Nowadays, we can communicate with all of our friends through Instant Messenger programs and emails. On top of being extremely convenient, the Internet also gives us access to the world of entertainment. Most young people like to download movies and music: they play online games whenever they can, and they create personal blogs, which are the equivalent of (=which are similar to) an online journal that friends can access. The Internet is definitely informative, useful, and a lot of fun.

3. How useful is the Internet as a way of finding out the news?

It's extremely practical. There are thousands of websites to read the news from. Actually each newspaper has created its own webpage to offer the latest news to their readers. They refresh the pages every minute or so. Personally, I like to read the news on Yahoo. com because it's a simple website to use, and I also get to check my email inbox on the same website. My father used to get up and go out every morning to buy the newspaper but since we now have unlimited Internet at home, he turns on his computer every morning and every night after work. It's convenient for the whole family, not only children.

4. How do you feel about buying things on the Internet?

It's extremely convenient to buy online. I often visit websites like E-Bay and Taoba (to look for books or other products. They offer very competitive prices, compared to street retail(=stores on the street), and I have so many different choices. In addition, it's very easy to use, and I can do it while watching TV or drinking a cup of tea at home. It's so(relaxing. Some people worry about it being unsafe, but I have bought a lot of stuff and have never been cheated. As long as the website is famous, it is pretty reliable.

5. How can students benefit from using the Internet?

Well, students have access to unlimited resources and information. They can literally find info on everything. However, students also need to go through all the articles they find because a lot of them are not relevant (=irrelevant) to their assignments. But I guess this is why we call it "searching the web."

A Newspaper You Often Read

Tell me about a newspaper or magazine you read regularly.

You should say: how often you read it
how much it costs
whether it is popular in your country
and explain why you like the newspaper or magazine.

- Local daily newspaper? Very popular + cheap in my hometown
- Local news (business, education, employment + events)
- Design + style: well-written, informative, smart, meticulous (details)
- Entertainment: sports + celebrities
- National + international current events = important for students

Let me tell you about the local paper published in my hometown. It is called City Daily, and obviously it comes out on a daily basis. It is the most famous newspaper in my city, and a lot of families and companies subscribe to it. It is very cheap; it only costs one and a half yuan.

Most articles deal with local news. I like to read the business section, because it keeps me informed about the new companies and businesses that open up around my hometown. In addition, journalists often notify us of employment opportunities, or educational stuff, like when they open a new branch of the university, or when an important event is happening in Fuzhou.

The City Daily is well-written. The articles are clear and smart. I think the journalists are quite professional, and they always try to give as much information as possible. I think most of them are very meticulous: they give detailed descriptions of things. On top of this, the design of the newspaper is pretty neat (=cool): they don't only use black-and-white prints, but they have a few color pages. The headlines are very catchy, and they illustrate articles with pictures. It makes the reading all the more enjoyable.

I usually start reading the newspaper at the back, because I am a big sports fan and this is where the sports pages are printed. In addition, I am fond of the entertainment section, especially the part dedicated to new movie releases. It's always fun to read.

Finally, the newspaper provides a lot of practical information on national and international current events. I think it's important for everyone, but especially students, to keep an eye on the news, in order to know what is going on in our country as well as on the international stage. Reading the City Daily allows me to better understand the world we live in. Newspapers are definitely beneficial for young people's intellectual development.

1. Why are sales of newspapers generally higher than sales of magazines?

Well, first of all, newspapers are written for everyone. Young adults, professionals, businesspeople, teachers, senior citizens, everyone is interested in reading the newspaper because the articles actually concern everybody. On the other hand, magazines are usually aimed at a precise group of readers: it could be a magazine for women, or for football fans,

or more specialized aficionados (= fans) who want to learn about science, or nature, or architecture...As a result, fewer people buy these particular magazines. On top of this, newspapers are extremely cheap. In my hometown, the local daily only costs 1.5 yuan.

2. What different types of newspapers are available where you live?

In my hometown, you can buy different kinds of newspapers. First of all, the local daily is the most popular, because people usually enjoy reading about their local community and province. In addition, we also have access to national newspapers from Beijing, but they are often politically oriented, and harder to read. I occasionally purchase a Chinese newspaper published in English: it's called China Daily. It's quite popular among young people who want to improve their English. Finally, it's also possible to find newspapers dedicated to young people, or senior -citizens, or finance, or sports: they just specialize in one subject. We also have entertainment newspapers, but they are not as trashy as British tabloids.

3. Why do some people prefer magazines to books?

Magazines are usually easier to read, because the articles are shorter and they are illustrated with pictures or drawings that make them more attractive to young people. Books are often thick, with 200 or 300 pages. Some people find it challenging and tiring to concentrate on a story for so long. I guess it's just practice. The more you read, the more you want to read.

4. Why do many people nowadays use the Internet as a source of information?

People go online because it has become the fastest way to find information we are looking for. I used to look up words in a Chinese-English dictionary, but nowadays I simply google them. I get my answer in less than a minute and I don't need to get up, or carry the dictionary. Students do the same with any questions they might have, and adults can search for tips on traveling, cooking, history, culture, sports, or just about anything really. It's like having a huge encyclopedia that's always available.

5. What effect might the Internet have on the future of newspapers?

Well, obviously the sales of newspapers will decline in the future. I am sure that it's already happening these days, since everyone reads the news online. People definitely buy newspapers less than before. However, I'm skeptical (= I have doubts) when I hear people say that newspapers might disappear. Many people enjoy reading on paper, and newspapers represent tradition. So I think we'll still have them for a long time. We'll see...

6. What special skills and qualities should a journalist have?

Journalists should obviously be able to write well and be well-organized in order to write interesting articles. In addition, they must be curious and active, because they have to react fast, and go wherever the news takes them. I guess that reporters must also have good interpersonal skills since they have to interview the people who make the headlines.

An Interesting Piece of News You Recently Heard about

Tell me about a piece of news you heard or read recently.

You should say: what the news was and where you heard or read it

if it was significant for many people

how it has changed, or will change, people's lives

and explain how you felt when you heard or read this news.

- . 2 pandas delivered to Australia = good relationship
- . Australian Premier speaks Mandarin = strengthens the bond between countries
- . Pandas in Adelaide will bring money to the zoo (tourism).
- . Expensive enclosure + technology to provide good environment for pandas
- . Research on pandas + experience overseas (like you as a student?)

Last week, the Chinese government delivered two giant pandas to Australia as a symbol of friendship between the two countries. I learned about this while watching the news on CCTV. President Hu Jintao promised to offer the pandas after a visit to Australia in 2007.

The two countries have a good relationship based on commerce and education, as thousands of Chinese students decide to move to Australia every year to further their studies. In addition, this excellent relationship is highlighted by the fact that the current Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd majored in Chinese culture and language at university. He worked at the Australian embassy in Beijing and, as a result, speaks brilliant Mandarin Chinese.

The journalist explained to us that the pandas had just arrived at the Adelaide zoo, in south Australia. The zoo's director said he believed that the pandas would provide a major boost to tourism. Very few zoos around the world can boast of having pandas, so they expect that many Australians will seize this opportunity and come to observe these rare animals.

Australians were very proud to welcome the pair of pandas. Some people were waiting for them at the airport with "Welcome" signs and branches of bamboo. I also learned that it was the first time that pandas traveled to the southern hemisphere. The Adelaide zoo spent AUS \$ 8 million on the enclosure that includes bamboo plants and refrigerated rocks to keep them cool and comfortable in Adelaide's hot summers. On top of this, two Chinese handlers traveled with the pandas and will stay in Adelaide for a few months to help with their adjustment. It was really an important event.

I also found out that the Australians will join Chinese scientists to do some research on the pandas. The 2 pandas will stay in Australia for 10 years, and then return to China. It seems like the pandas and I will share a similar experience as I am also planning to move to Australia for a few years to pursue my studies, and eventually come back home to settle down.

1. What kinds of issues are often reported in the media where you live?

On TV, the news anchors often report on political meetings between our leaders and those of other countries. For example, Premier Wen Jiabao often travels abroad in order to

strengthen diplomatic ties between China and other nations. In addition, we often hear about political reforms and measures the government is taking to improve people's lives. We often receive economic news related to unemployment, or the financial crisis, and how the government is dealing with those issues. Lately, we were given a lot of coverage on natural disasters and their consequences: dramatic earthquakes in Chile and Haiti, typhoons in Taiwan, terrible droughts in Yunnan, and other catastrophes all around the world.

2. How important are newspapers when it comes to influencing public opinion?

I think that newspapers greatly influence public opinion in my country, because they represent pretty much the only way for people to find out what is happening in China and in the rest of the world. Everyone knows newspapers are controlled by the government, but it doesn't mean we can't trust the articles we are reading. We might just not be given every single detail. Newspapers influence people's opinion because millions of people in China read them on a daily basis.

3. How reliable is the information given in newspapers or on TV?

Well, I think we all know we can't always believe everything journalists write because they might exaggerate in order to sell more, or forget some details that could actually be relevant. In addition, I know the national government controls and censors some articles that could have a negative influence on the people or the politicians. Plus, when journalists write an article, we get to learn about news through their point of view, but another journalist might disagree with their opinion. So I believe readers should always take the news with a pinch of salt (-with caution) and make their own judgment afterwards.

4. What responsibilities do journalists have to their readers?

Journalists should be honest and sincere. They shouldn't make up stories or conceal the truth. Journalists have a duty to inform the public and to remain neutral on important issues. I think journalists should not have any political affinities (=sympathy) if they really want to find out the truth. They shouldn't be afraid to ask questions, even if they create controversies heated debates). Journalists have the right to raise contentious (=debatable) questions.

5. What effects can newspapers have on society?

Well, newspapers influence public opinion because people are very likely to believe what the headlines say. In my country, journalists tend to look at the bright side of things whenever they are writing about national issues, so people are more likely to be optimistic. But it's important that journalists relate the real facts without omitting (=forgetting) any important information that could change a reader's point of view.

6. Is it more important for newspapers to report national or international events?

Well, I think it's more important to find out what is going on in our country first, because national issues should be our priority. Afterwards, I agree that it's also essential to learn about the rest of the world, because nowadays, with globalization, we are all concerned about international matters.

A TV Program You Like

Tell me about a TV program that you watch regularly.

You should say: what the program is and when it is shown
what kind of people watch this program
how it is set out and who presents it
and say how you feel when you watch this program.

- . What kind of program? When? Travelogue on CCTV-9 on a daily basis
- . What is it about? Why is it interesting? Travel guide +Chinese culture (stories)
- . What is special about it? It makes people dream.
- . What can you learn from it? China is really beautiful + practice my English
- . Would you recommend it? Young people should watch= informative +relaxing

Although I don't watch much TV because I am busy with my studies and other hobbies, I occasionally enjoy watching a documentary program on CCTV -9 called Travelogue. I think it is aired on a daily basis, but I can't tell you the exact time. I think they show a lot of reruns actually.

I enjoy this show because the host takes us to different places around China, and on some occasions to foreign countries. It is a good chance to learn about different provinces and areas in China. You know how huge our country is: there are so many different fascinating (ethnic) minorities, and historical places. They teach about Chinese heritage; they narrate (=tell) legends or surprising anecdotes (=stories) related to various tourist destinations, and of course they show us how beautiful China really is.

I love traveling, and every time I watch the program, I can daydream and think about how I might visit those destinations too someday. I remember one episode of Travelogue when the host took us, the audience, to Jiuzhaigou National Park in northern Sichuan. They filmed the turquoise (green-blue) lakes. The water seemed absolutely crystal clear, with different shades of blue and green. It looked stunning, and made a deep impression on me. I think this is why the show is so popular, because people who do not have a chance to buy a plane ticket can travel through the documentary.

In addition, the program is in English, so it is a great opportunity for me to improve my listening skills as well as my vocabulary. Unfortunately, I don't understand everything all the time and I wish they offered English subtitles.

Finally, the show is very relaxing and educational at the same time. There are a lot of stupid and useless programs on TV nowadays, and this is partly why I spend more time on the Internet. But I must admit that a lot of documentaries on CCTV-9 are interesting and appealing. I find Travelogue very informative and I would definitely recommend this program to other people.

1.what effects can TV have on a child's life?

Well, TV can offer both advantages and disadvantages for children. First, watching TV can be fun: a lot of programs are entertaining. Some programs are even informative, and

children can actually learn something from watching documentaries or smart cartoons and movies. On the other hand, watching TV can be addictive, and watching too much of it can definitely have a negative influence on children. It's harmful for their eyesight, and most importantly, it's a big waste of time. Children should study or socialize rather than being stuck in front of the screen all the time.

2. How useful can TV be in education?

TV can be an informative and very explicit (=clear) way for children to learn new things. I guess it's always easier to remember things when we can associate (=connect) pictures to what we learn. For examples, when I was a student, my history teacher showed us a movie about the Second World War in Europe, and I'll never forget the intensity (= ferocity) of the battles, and the fear that soldiers must have experienced. Nowadays, many teachers use movies to teach different stuff. In biology, it's much easier for parents to show children a documentary about human reproduction, rather than having to talk about sex to their kids. On CCTV, there are some very useful programs that teach English too. It works.

3. How can showing TV programs from other countries affect local cultures?

Well, I guess that when people watch a movie or a TV series from another country, they can understand how things can be different from their own culture. On one hand, it could open up people's minds. For example, if we watch a TV series like The ER (Emergency Room), or Doctor House, we can realize how well-equipped hospitals in the U.S. are, and how well-trained doctors and nurses are compared to most hospitals in China. But on the other hand, American series could also have a negative impact on our culture. You know, in China, people are shyer, and more traditional than most people in America. TV programs like Baywatch, or The L Word (=about Lesbians), or Gossip Girls really show the gap between Westerners and Chinese society. I might be too conservative (=old-fashioned), but I don't think people can learn much from these shows. They put too much emphasis on lust (=sexual desire) and superficiality. These are not values we ought to teach.

4. What effects can TV violence have on people and on society?

Too much violence on TV can't be too good for our society, because some people might not be able to differentiate (=understand the difference between) fiction and reality. I read a few stories where young men in America went on shooting rampages (=spree) because they said they had been influenced by movies that portrayed too much violence. Action and horror movies really trivialize (=play down) violence, and make it seem acceptable. I think that's the main problem, and that is why young people, who are easily influenced, shouldn't have access to these R rated movies (=classified as unsuitable for kids).

5. Is there a need for government regulation of TV programs?

Yes, definitely! The government already censors movies that air too much violence and sex. It's necessary because children don't need to visualize pornographic (=sexual) or bloody scenes of shooting. There's no way it could be beneficial for our society. Movies are rated according to their suitability for different audiences. Last week in a film I was watching, a character was taking drugs, and enjoying it. I don't think that's a good message for naive young spectators.

An Advertisement that Influenced You to Buy Something

Tell me about an advertisement that influenced you to buy something.

You should say: what the advertisement was about

what kind of people buy this product or service

what persuaded you to buy this product or service

and say how you felt after buying it.

- . Commercials for dietary supplements are frequent.
- . The ad showed us how nice it is to spend time with old people (grandparents).
- . If they take this vitamin, they will live longer.
- . In addition: good for sleep, major organs, vitality, blood circulation.
- . I believed and bought a jar of tablets but I don't know if it is working or not.

A couple of years ago, advertisements for dietary supplements were very popular on TV. Now that people have more money and time, they pay more attention to remaining healthy and lots of pharmaceutical (=medicine) companies have really been cashing in on this trend.

I remember one special commercial that aired all the time. It really played with people's feelings. The ad showed one young man who was thinking about all the good times he was having with his parents. We could see him celebrating his parents' 60th birthday and going to the park with them, in spite of the fact that the parents were getting older and older.

The point was that if older people like our parents or grandparents take these types of vitamins, they will remain fit and healthy, and therefore, we will have the chance to spend more time with them.

The ad claimed that the supplement would have a positive effect on major organs. It also emphasized the fact that elderly people taking the pills would sleep deeply at night. Taking the pills would restore their inner system and improve their blood circulation, at least according to the commercial.

I believed the ad and I bought a jar of tablets for my grandparents. Did it work? I don't know. I'll tell you in 10 years!

vocabulary

- . A journalist writes stories for the newspaper.
- . A photographer takes pictures.
- . A critic writes opinions about books, movies and plays.
- . An international correspondent reports from abroad.
- . A cartoonist makes funny drawings for the newspaper.
- . A copy editor makes corrections before the newspaper is printed.
- . A publisher manages and publishes the newspaper.
- . A news anchor reads the news from a TV studio.

(Source: World Link series)

1. which kind of advertising has the biggest influence on shopping habits?

Definitely TV commercials. Everyone watches TV, and although many people say they really dislike watching the ads, anyone who turns on their TV has to watch them at some point or another. I think that TV commercials are actually quite memorable, because we have an image associated with a catchy slogan and a description of the product. So it's much easier for us consumers to remember the brand. For example, I think a lot of young people are attracted to sports clothes, both Chinese and foreign brands, because these companies always advertise on television.

2. How popular are brand names where you live?

They are extremely popular. You know, in the last 10 years, the economic situation in my country has greatly improved, and many people now get to experience a new lifestyle, with new products and luxury items. We can now say that Chinese society has become a society of consumers, and of course people nowadays pay a lot of attention to the quality of the products they buy. Young people appreciate wearing Nike and Adidas sneakers; everyone wants to get an iPhone or at least a Nokia cell phone. Many women dream of having an LV (Louis Vuitton) purse, and of buying perfume by Chanel.

3. Why are people ready to pay more for certain brands?

People are ready to spend more on famous brands because they know these renowned companies produce high-quality items. In addition, brands stand for social status. If you own an LV bag, or a BMW vehicle, it means that you are successful and wealthy. In my country, the fact that you have money will earn you respect from others. Brands are cool, and even people who don't earn an amazing salary will most likely spend more to buy a brand in order to look good. In China, we talk about "keeping face", that is to say to have dignity: if you own an expensive phone, it means you can afford it; it means you are worth it, even if you spent all your money on it.

4. Do you agree that advertising can be dangerous?

Not really. If people are smart, I mean sensible, they will not be completely gullible naive), and they won't believe everything advertisers actually say. Having Nike shoes will not make you play basketball like Kobe Bryant, and wearing a Hugo Boss shirt will not attract every girl around. People who are really influenced by advertisements and TV commercials are simply too superficial. They probably lack confidence too.

5. What controls do you think there should be on advertisers and advertisements?

I think that advertisers shouldn't lie in order to sell more. They should be honest. More important, when it comes to food and medicine, companies should make sure they sell healthy products, and celebrities should also make sure they know what they are advertising for. I am sure you heard of the milk scandal that killed a few infants in my country 3 years ago. It was really shocking and outrageous to have such products on the market.

6. What do you think of "made in China" products?

I think that "made in China" products are much better than they used to be. Many companies have caught up on research and development (R&D), and I would say that nowadays "made in China" products are more reliable than in the past. (Give examples.)

A Speech You Have Heard

Tell me about a speech you have heard.

You should say: what the speech was about
who gave the speech
what you thought about the speech
and what you learned from it.

- . When? Who gave the speech? Crazy Li
- . What was the speech about?
- . Is he famous? Why?
- . What was special about the speech?
- . What makes a good speech?

A few weeks ago, I was watching CCTV 9, which is the national English TV channel, and I came across a program about Li Yang, the famous Chinese man who came up with the unconventional idea of Crazy English.

Li, or Crazy Li as people nicknamed him, believes that students who want to improve their English should shout English words out loud anywhere, anytime. He believes it is an efficient way to retain (=remember) new words and to gain confidence when learning a second language. Crazy Li created a brand called "Crazy English" and opened training centers all around China. He also wrote books to encourage people to overcome their shyness.

On TV they showed us how Li Yang managed to bring together thousands of people on Tian'anmen Square and asked them to yell English phrases together. It was quite impressive. He emphasized the fact that if they learned English well, they could use their language skills to make money in the future. He persuaded students to practice his technique by going behind buildings or on rooftops and shouting English. And because everyone was doing it, they wouldn't be embarrassed.

Although it seems a bit weird and unorthodox (=atypical), believe it or not, his rallies were extremely popular. The technique still relies on repetition and recitation, which are common methods used in schools in China. Li Yang has become famous and I learned that his schools have around twenty million students across China. He is a good lecturer: he's passionate and energetic, which means he can convince the crowds that his ideas are good.

A Website You Often Visit

Tell me about a website you often visit.

You should say: what the website is about

whether it is a popular website

why you often visit the website

and explain what is special about it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A Newspaper You Often Read

Tell me about a newspaper or magazine you read regularly.

You should say: how often you read it

how much it costs

whether it is popular in your country

and explain why you like the newspaper or magazine.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

A TV Program You Dislike

Tell me about a TV program that you dislike watching.

You should say: what the advertisement was about
 what kind of people buy this product or service
 what persuaded you to buy this product or service
and say how you felt after buying it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

An Advertisement that Influenced You to Buy Something

Tell me about an advertisement that influenced you to buy something.

You should say: what the advertisement was about
 what kind of people buy this product or service
 what persuaded you to buy this product or service
any say how you felt after buying it.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

13 Technology

Proverb:

Imagination rules the world.

(Napoleon Bonaparte)

= Imagination and creativity are essential in order to succeed.

Sample Answer:

A Technological Item You Own (Phone)

A Technological Item You Own (Computer)

Practice:

Something Expensive You Would Like to Buy

Key Words

convenient = useful = practical

well-made = ingenious = reliable

to have access to = to obtain = to get

all the time = constantly = on a daily basis

an accessory = a hand bag, a phone, a scarf, earrings

long-lasting = durable

fashionable = trendy = cool

fun = entertaining = exciting

A Technological Item You Own (Phone)

Tell me about a technological item you own/owned.

You should say: what the item is

how much it cost

what is/was special about it

and say whether you would buy this item again if you needed it.

- . My phone: which brand? Durable. When did I buy it? How much?
- . Describe the phone: slim, light, color screen, reliable battery
- . How often do you make phone calls?
- . Other functions: camera = good quality, MP3 = music anytime
- . Could you live without your mobile? Probably not, it is indispensable to my daily life.

Let me tell you about my Nokia mobile phone. I bought it last year, and I'm very pleased with it because it's a very cool and convenient item I use on a daily basis. I bought a Nokia phone because Nokia is a well-known brand. They produce quality cell phones, and mine is very reliable and durable. I've dropped my phone a couple of times, but because it's very strong and well-made, it did not suffer from the shock.

In addition, my cell phone is extremely slim and light. It's easy for me to carry it in my pockets (or handbag). It's tiny and it weighs almost nothing. It has a very wine color screen, and the battery is very long-lasting. I only need to charge it two or three times a week.

I don't often make phone calls but I send a lot of text messages to my friends and relatives. Besides, I can be contacted anytime, anywhere. My parents feel reassured.

On top of this, my mobile phone offers many other functions. I have access to the Internet and every morning, I can read the news in the bus: it's fun and informative. I have an English-Chinese dictionary so that I can look up words very quickly. I can play games or even chat online with my friends using Instant Messenger. My phone can also be used as a camera and I can take pictures whenever I feel like it. And the quality is actually pretty good.

My phone is a very useful accessory and it would be impossible for me to live without it. It has really become part of my daily routine.

Vocabulary

- . My laptop computer is durable. I won't have to buy a new one anytime soon. it's portable. I can use it at home, in the office, and on trips. It comes with a rechargeable battery.
- . You can buy an underwater camera. it's very reliable, really well-made. Because it's disposable, it's convenient. Use it once and then throw it away. Best of all, it's affordable. You can buy more than one without spending a lot of money.
- . Children love to play with interactive toys. There is nothing like this toy on the market: it's very innovative. It's also cute and attractive.

(Source: World Link series)

1. How is technology used in schools in your country?

Well, there is a computer in most classrooms nowadays. Teachers prepare materials at home to show their students in class. The computer is always connected to a projector, so that teachers can display (=show) pictures, graphs, even movies to their students. It makes it easier for students to understand what the teacher is talking about. In addition, it can attract students' attention and make class livelier. On top of this, in Fujian, there are electric fans hanging from the ceiling in each classroom, because temperatures can get very high here. There might be air-conditioners or heaters in more modern or rich schools across the country.

2. How is the use of technology in education likely to change in the future?

Well, I really believe that in a few years, every student will have his or her own laptop, and students will send their homework only through emails, rather than handwrite essays and exercises. I think that students will also have access to more online books, and teachers will have to adapt to these changes. Teachers will probably have to type everything, and create blogs where students could ask questions and find the relevant information they need.

3. How is technology used in homes in your country?

There is a lot to be said here. Technology has become part of every single aspect of our lives. At home, every household has a TV, sometimes two, actually. People now buy large flat screens to hang on the wall. The quality of the image is stunning. On top of this, everyone has a DVD player in order to entertain the whole family with movies. I would say that most families in China also own a computer, desktop or laptop, sometimes both. Computers can be used for work, as well as for entertainment. You can download music or movies; you can chat with your friends without leaving the house; you can even shop online. It has definitely changed our lives. In the kitchen, technology can be found everywhere: we have a fridge and a freezer to keep food for weeks. Every modern house is well-equipped with a stove and hot plates to cook very fast. A lot of families buy a microwave and a kettle to boil water in an instant. There is a ventilation system too to get rid of the cooking smell in the kitchen. On top of all this, you can add the washing machine, the possible dryer, the alarm clock in your bedroom, the air-conditioner and the heater, the water-heater in the bathroom, and I am sure that I am forgetting other appliances.

4. How does this compare with the situation 20 years ago?

Well, 20 years ago, people did not have much compared to nowadays: no computer, no DVD player, definitely no washing machine or air-conditioner. My parents bought their first computer 10 years ago. My grandparents got a gas stove only like 15 years ago. Before that they had to buy coal to keep the fire going in the old-fashioned stove they had. It was really bad for the environment actually. I think it became common for people to have a TV around 1985 in China; that is only around 26 years ago.

5. Do you think that technology has improved family life?

Yes, without a doubt. Life is more comfortable and convenient. That is why most people spend a lot more time at home nowadays. In the past, my grandparents used to go out all the time; they would meet up with their friends, go dancing, play mahjong or something else. These days, most people stay at home to watch TV or surf the Internet. It also means that family members can spend more time together, although it doesn't mean they communicate more than before...

A Technological Item You Own (Computer)

Tell me about a technological item you own/owned.

You should say: what the item is
how much it cost
how often you use/used it
and say whether you are/were pleased about it.

- . My laptop: When did you get it? What brand? Expensive?
- . Describe: design, battery, wide screen, very light
- . How often do you use it? On a daily basis for my studies
- . And also for entertainment: download, chat, read, listen to music, play games
- . Could you live without your laptop? I am addicted to it.

Last year, my father bought me a laptop from a Taiwanese company and so far I am very pleased with it. The brand is Acer, and it cost my parents about four thousand yuan. I think it is quite reasonable for a nice electronic notebook.

Its design is extremely cool and trendy. My laptop is very slim and light. I can carry it anywhere I go, and it is a pleasure to work on it because the screen is wide, and the keyboard is user-friendly, with large touch-buttons. The battery is long-lasting and I can keep my computer on for more than 6 hours in a row once it is charged.

I use my laptop on a daily basis for different purposes. First, I often get on the Internet to do some research when I have to write a paper for university. I must type some essays and sometimes make some charts for my classes. I also use my laptop to improve my English. For example, I can listen to some audio-recordings online, and I often visit websites related to the IELTS exam. In addition, my laptop can be used for entertainment. I can read the news on line anytime I want. It is relaxing as well as informative. I also download music and movies on the Internet, and my roommates and I frequently get together to watch a film on my computer.

On top of this, I can classify my pictures, and I set up my own blog for my relatives and friends to keep in touch with me.

It would be very hard for me to live without a computer nowadays. My laptop has become an essential part of my daily routine. Whenever I get home, I usually turn it on right away. I know I am not the only one though, as most of my friends are also addicted to their computer and especially computer games. My laptop will be even more useful next year in Australia. I will continue my studies at Sydney University, and I will definitely bring my computer along to study, and to stay in contact with my family and friends who won't leave China.

1. How have computers changed everyday life?

Well, I guess that twenty years ago, in my country, no one had a computer, and most companies didn't own that many either. But in the last 10 years, computers have appeared in every household, and they have become indispensable (= essential) in the workplace. Most jobs require the use of a computer: if you work in an office, if you are a businessperson, if you teach, you need a computer to do your job. Even in most factories, the manufacturing machines are connected to a computer to keep track of the production. Doctors don't handwrite anymore, they type their patients' prescriptions to give them medicine; teachers plan their lessons on a computer and use PowerPoint to show graphs, pictures and other materials. In addition, at home, the computer has replaced the TV for young people. We can download movies, music and games. People chat online with their friends from home. People don't go out as much as before, because of the Internet. The Internet allows us to do research at home instead of going to the library or reading books as we used to do in the past. Computers have become a part of our daily routine, and they have changed our habits in only 10 years' time.

2. Do you think that the use of computers should be restricted and if so, how?

Well, I think that people should definitely not spend too much time in front of a computer but I don't see how we could restrict people from using them. People should be aware that computers do harm to their eyesight, and that staying at home on the Internet is simply not as good as real life. I guess that parents can set a limit on how much their children use the computer. The most important thing is to teach kids to go out and socialize rather than playing online games all day long. In addition, students should not depend on computers too much. Computers correct our spelling mistakes and make everything easier. As a result, computers can, to some extent, make students lazy. Many high-school students look for ideas on the Internet when they are writing a paper, instead of thinking on their own. On top of this, young students should spend more time on their handwriting. You know, with computers, they type in pinyin, and then the computer gives them a list of characters to choose from, so students only need to recognize the Chinese characters. But when you give them a pen, they can't write anymore! I think young people should not depend on computers too much.

3. Do you think that people rely on computers too much?

Definitely! We use computers on a daily basis, at home, at work, and when we study. We download songs and use the computer to listen to music, to watch movies, to talk to friends. People nowadays even shop online! We can find so much information online, and people always look on the Internet to find the answer to everything: students try to see if something has already been written about the topic they are supposed to be working on; my mother looks for new recipes online; my friends book their holidays through an online travel agency; and I store all of my pictures on my computer. Children unquestionably (= definitely) spend too much time on the computer too. The younger generation is addicted to computer games. They are always chatting with their friends online. I think it is a big issue actually, although we can't deny the fact that computers can make our lives much easier.

Something Expensive You Would Like to Buy

Tell me about something expensive you would like to buy.

You should say: what you would like to buy
 how much it would cost
 what is special about it
and say whether it is a common thing to buy in your country.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

- 1. What kinds of things do children spend money on?*
- 2. Many people say that computers are making children less intelligent. Do you agree?*
- 3. What new features would you like to see on personal computers?*
- 4. What role does technology play in children's leisure activities?*
- 5. What effects could using technology have on a child's personal development?*

14 Money

Proverb:

All that glitters is not gold.

= Do not be deceived by things or offers that only appear to be attractive.

Sample Answer:

The Role Money Plays in Your Life

What Would You Do with One Million Dollars?

Key Words

money = cash = capital = dough (slang)

an amount of money = a sum of money

decent = respectable = pretty good

very important = essential = fundamental

expensive = costly = pricey

rich = wealthy = well-off

to waste = to squander.

to buy = to purchase = to acquire

The Role Money Plays in Your Life

Tell me about the role money plays in your life.

You should say: how important money is in your life
what you spend money on and how much you save/invest
if you spend money in the same ways as most other people
and say whether you consider money to be the most important thing in life.

- . Money=essential for daily necessities (food, pay the bills)
- . Studying abroad=high tuition fee=be under pressure=must succeed
- . My parents taught me it was important to save money.
- . In the future: I want to become a...to enjoy my job and make a decent salary.
- . Some people say money can't buy everything...But it helps!

Well, money obviously plays a fundamental role in my life. I use money to buy daily necessities: I have to pay the bills (water, electricity) . I use money every day, and my life would be a lot more complicated if I did not have any money.

Next year, I want to continue my studies in Australia. I am planning to get a Bachelor's Degree in Business at Sydney University. I will need to spend a huge amount of money on tuition. I think it will cost me about AUS\$30,000 a year; and I plan to stay there at least 3 years.

My parents will support me financially, but it also means that I will be under a lot of pressure because I definitely need to study hard and pass the exams. It is similar to an investment in my future: I must pay first in order to make more money later on. My parents have always told me that money was not easy to get. I remember my father telling me, when I was a child, that money did not grow on trees. My father has always emphasized the fact that it was important to save and not to waste money.

In the future, I would like to work for a big company as a manager not only because I like to have responsibilities, but also because I really want to earn a decent salary and lead a comfortable life. I really hope to make enough money to buy a new house for my parents to retire in the countryside.

I agree when people say that money is not the most important thing in life. We say that "Money can't buy everything", but it helps...Without money, our lives would be a lot more challenging. I would not be here taking the IELTS test, getting ready to study overseas for example. Money definitely plays an essential role in our lives.

Vocabulary

- . I always seem to be hard-up these days (=short of money.)
- . I would like to buy a car. My budget is around 150,000 yuan. What can I get for this price?
- . At the age of 23 my father used to work like crazy to make ends meet. He set up his own business.
- . He started from scratch. He didn't have much and he couldn't squander it all on silly things like fancy clothes.
- . He now makes a decent salary, and he likes to splurge on (=indulge in) a nice dinner once in a while.

(Source: World Link series)

1 .How important is it to save money for the future?

It's fundamental to save money for the future for many reasons. First of all, if you really want to enjoy life, you need to put money aside to pay for a holiday or to buy a car or a house. In addition, in case of emergency, it's wise to have money saved somewhere. For example, if someone in my family gets sick, which I hope won't happen (knock on wood!), getting a top-notch doctor or surgeon costs a lot of money in my country, and it's essential to have enough to afford medical care. On top of this, if you want to get married, you need money because girls won't get married to a guy who doesn't have anything. Later on, you have kids, and giving them a good education comes at a price. Saving money is indispensable in today's world.

2. Do parents and children have different attitudes to saving money?

Yes, most probably, because children don't usually fully understand the notion of money. Young people don't need to worry about money or their future, because their parents are taking care of them. However, I think that children's attitude towards money will depend on their parents' behavior. Parents act as role models for their kids and kids will (imitate their parents), no matter whether they're careful about money or don't hesitate to spend it.

3. Do you think that credit cards have changed people's shopping habits?

Yes, definitely! When people go to the mall, they don't need to carry lots of cash with them. So it's very convenient because people can buy expensive stuff anytime and almost anywhere. In addition, even if they don't have much money on their credit cards, people can still swipe them and buy stuff. They go into debt but they usually have a month to pay the bank back. So credit cards definitely facilitate shopping (= make shopping simple) for customers. However, in my country, we still can't use credit cards in every shop, but it's spreading quickly everywhere.

4. Do you think that we will have a cashless society in the future?

Well, it might happen, and maybe sooner than we expect. I guess in the future everyone will have a personal ID card with money on it, just like a credit card, and we'll be able to pay for the subway, or to buy food at any supermarket, convenience store, or restaurant. We'll just need to swipe the card or present it in front of a payment machine.

5. How important is salary when choosing a job?

Well, salary is fundamental when we choose a job, because we all work in order to make a living. If the salary isn't satisfactory, chances are that we'll try to find another job. There are other factors that are important too, like whether the job is interesting or whether there are chances to get trained and promoted in the future, but salary is definitely important for every employee.

6. What jobs do you think will be highly paid in the future?

You mean people who, right now, don't get so much money, but will in the future? That's a tough question... Environmentally-friendly engineers will definitely get a lot of money in the future if they manage to come up with ideas that will benefit the environment. Otherwise, managers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and architects already get a very high salary, and that won't change in the future.

What Would You Do with One Million Dollars?

Tell me about what you would do if you received a million dollars.

You should say: what you would spend the money on

how much you would save

how much you would give to other people

and explain how you would feel when you received the money.

- . Go shopping at first +buy presents
- . I'd buy a nice car for my father=spacious, reliable, classy vehicle
- . I'd purchase a new house for my parents + another flat for investment
- . Invest: a shop or save and wait until I open my own business (set up my company)
- . Charity? Poverty or illiteracy?
- . Traveling

If I ever received one million dollars, it would be so amazing that I would probably scream out loud and jump around for a minute or two; I might even cry for happiness! But then, I would have to think very carefully in order to decide what to do with the money. A million dollars is a large amount but it is not enough to go really crazy.

Of course, on the first day or two, I would go shopping and buy some nice clothes for myself and my best friends. I would buy a couple of gifts for my relatives too. I would make sure that everyone is delighted with my presents, but I would not tell them that I have just won the equivalent of 7 million yuan, to avoid jealousy or greed.

After this, I would definitely buy a nice car for my parents. I wouldn't spend a fortune, but I would buy a vehicle spacious and powerful enough to make my parents' life easier. I would probably pick a German car because they are renowned for being reliable and well-made automobiles.

In addition, I would invest in probably two apartments: one for my parents in Fuzhou, and another one in Xiamen. At the moment, my parents live in an old house in the outskirts of the city. I would get them a bigger place closer to West Lake Park, or along the river, for them to enjoy a better lifestyle. I would purchase a flat in Xiamen, because it is a very pleasant city, with the ocean and the prestigious university, and also because it could be a good investment for the future. I am sure that the price of the square meter in Xiamen will keep on rising in the future.

In terms of investment, I would either try to buy a shop somewhere, and rent it out in order to make money every month, or save the money to set up my own company in the future. It would depend on my studies and my expectations after I graduate.

It would be nice to give money to charity too, but I would need to think more carefully about the cause I would like to support. Poverty and illiteracy are big issues in China. I would need to choose with caution.

Finally, I would definitely use some of the money to travel, and see the world. Europe would be a stunning place to start with.

1. Why does shopping make some people feel happy?

Well, we should really ask this question to some ladies. I guess that it's always a pleasant feeling to get some new clothes that look good. It can make you look better, and people feel more confident when they are pleased with their appearance. In addition, a lot of women consider shopping a hobby. It's relaxing for them. They can spend time with their friends or their mothers, chatting and laughing while trying on new clothes. We all know how much most women worry about their appearance, so it's understandable that shopping for nice clothes and shoes can make them excited. What's more, we are all becoming more materialistic: we all care about having a car, a nice mobile, a good computer, because other people do. We can't help comparing what we have with what others bought. On top of this, if we can buy something nice and expensive with our own money, we will experience a sense of achievement.

2. Are there any dangers of using credit cards for young people and for society?

Yes, there might be some dangers for people who are not that (= so) responsible, because they might buy too much and not realize how much they have spent. Later on, they won't be able to pay the bank back if their balance is very low. As a result, they might have massive (= huge) debts to pay at a very young age if they are not mature (= responsible) enough. I guess having a credit card makes it look very easy to buy things.

3. Can money buy everything?

No, definitely not. Although money can help you with a lot of things in life, cash doesn't buy health, or happiness, or love. Someone could be rich but have cancer. A workaholic could get a high salary but still be on his own when he comes home. However there is no doubt that money can make our lives more exciting. Without any money, I wouldn't even consider applying to a foreign university. I wouldn't get to travel or party with my friends. Money can't buy everything, but it definitely helps.

4. How do governments raise money?

Well, governments raise money from taxes and different fees. For example, when people want to apply for an ID card, or a passport, or a visa, they must pay money to the government. Whenever we want to drive on the highway, we also need to pay tolls. Many companies like real estate agencies also need to pay a high fee to run their business. In addition, I suppose that governments can get a loan from the World Bank or another international bank.

5. If public spending in your country was increased, what should be the priorities?

I think that education should be a priority. Right now, there is a huge gap between schools in rural areas and those in the cities. In addition, the government should hire more teachers, because classrooms are packed; and teachers usually have to face 60 students per class. That's too much for the teacher to insure good results for everyone.

6. Who should pay for services such as education and health care?

It makes sense for the government to pay, but given how populated China is, I think it's normal for every family to pay a small fee in order to put their kids through school. There are millions of children in China, and it costs a fortune to offer a good education to every one of them. As far as health care is concerned, I think that the government should provide some help, but employers should also offer insurance that covers their employees' medical fees.

15 The Future

Proverb:

The sky's the limit.

= The possibilities are endless.

Sample Answer:

A Change You Would Like to Make in Your Life in the Future

A Leisure Activity You Would Like to Start Doing

A Job You Would Be Good at

Practice:

A Change that Might Occur in Your Life in the Future

A Job You Would Love to Have in the Future

Key Words

good for my future = positive = beneficial

difficult = challenging = tough = complicated

useful = practical

educational = instructive

motivated = determined = driven

hard-working = thorough = meticulous

to broaden my horizons = to open up my mind

to create a business = to set up a company

I plan to

I might

I may

I wish to

I dream of

I hope to

A Change You Would Like to Make in Your Life in the Future

Tell me about a great change that you would like to make in your life in the future.

You should say: what the change might be

why you want to change things

how your life will change

and explain your feelings about it.

- . Go overseas to study. Where? When?
- . My situation at the moment
- . Going abroad=challenging but enlightening
- . Motivated, ready to work hard (make an effort)+my goals
- . Work overseas or in China? We'll see. I should have more choices in the future.

If everything goes well, I should move to Australia in a few months, in order to continue my education. I would like to get a degree in accounting there. I started looking up some universities online, and I plan to apply to Sydney University, because it is a prestigious college and they offer a great accounting program.

I just graduated from high school. Unfortunately, my results on the College Entrance Examination were not satisfactory enough to get into Shanghai or Xiamen University. I don't really want to go to a smaller college, because I know that it will be too hard for me to find a good position in the future. This is why I have decided to go overseas.

In addition, I have never been abroad before, so it will be a new challenge in many ways. I will experience a new culture, meet new people, speak English every day, and be on my own for the first time ever. I am sure I will learn a lot.

I know it is going to be difficult, but I am ready to face those challenges. I know it is worth it, because this education should open new doors for my future. I really want to become an accounting manager in a big company. I will have to study very hard, but I am ready and determined to do so. I think this hard work will pay off someday.

The first step is to get a degree in order to find a good first job. Later on, I will see if it is possible for me to find a rewarding position in Australia. If not, I might come back to China, or go to Singapore to work for a few years. I think that this experience overseas will be the first stepping stone towards my future.

vocabulary

In the future...

- . breakthroughs (=advances) in research will lead to a cure for cancer.
- . parents will be tempted to use genetic profiling to select the gender and physical characteristics of their child. But this will pose serious ethical dilemmas (= moral problems).
- . online learning and virtual study groups will replace the traditional brick-and-mortar school.
- . students won't be as dependent on the teacher as they are now. Students will be encouraged to facilitate class discussions and to learn from their peers.

1. Why do many people want to go abroad for an extended period of time?

A lot of Chinese students want to further their studies overseas because they believe that foreign universities can offer a better education, as well as more opportunities for their future. Some people want to find a job abroad in order to see the world and experience new things. In some cases, people expect to find a better job and to make more money. I've heard that many Australian students take a year off after their studies in order to relax before starting out in life (=finding a job). They want to visit many countries and experience life on the road. I think it's amazing for young people to be able to do this. In China, if a student finds a part-time job, he'll never make enough money to fly all around the globe.

2. What should these people do before going abroad?

Well, if they want to study overseas, they need to do the same as me: they must study English and prepare for the IELTS test, and apply to a university in the country of their choice. In order to do so, they must write many letters of motivation and prove that they have enough money to support their studies. After that you need to get the visa, and this is never easy for Chinese people. A lot of students decide to pay an immigration agency to help them with all the documents and requirements involved in the long process.

3. What would you miss most if you went abroad?

I would definitely miss my parents and relatives, as well as my friends of course, but I think that this is very obvious. In addition, I would probably miss the food, especially all the spicy dishes I am really fond of. I might also get homesick from time to time, and depending on where I live, I might find it difficult to get used to my new environment. Life is so comfortable when you are at home, and you speak the language, and you know where to find anything you need.

4. How fast have things changed during your lifetime?

Things have changed a lot! In 20 years, people have changed their lifestyles in many ways: nowadays it is common to drive a car; 20 years ago, everyone used a bike. At home, no one had a computer or a mobile phone; now people think you are strange if you don't own one. In addition, our eating habits have changed a lot too. People frequently go to the restaurant and spend a lot of money on food they didn't use to eat when they were younger, like pizza, chips, or other Western food. I could also talk to you about the price of houses. Twenty years ago, I bought an apartment for 20,000 yuan, but now I could sell it for almost one million! It's crazy, isn't it?

5. Do you think that the pace of change will continue to increase in the future?

Absolutely! There is no doubt that things will continue to change at a fast pace. They say that nothing can stop progress, and I really agree with this saying. There will be more developments in every single field of studies. In terms of science, I am sure that scientists will create new medicines and cure many illnesses. I heard about a doctor who is doing some research on snakes and other predators (=animals that prey on other animals) because they are thought to have stronger genes. In the world of architecture, education and technology, things will keep on developing, which means higher skyscrapers, smaller mobile phones, and new methods to learn English too!

A Leisure Activity You Would Like to Start Doing

Tell me about a leisure activity you would like to start doing.

You should say: what the activity is
 why you would like to try it
 whether it is a common activity where you live
and explain your feelings about it.

- . Kite-surfing: I saw a TV program about it: it seems breathtaking.
- . Water sport: feel the thrill. Amazing sensations + literally flying above the ocean
- . Cool, relaxing + guys who do it are trendy and cool
- . They say you can learn within a week of training (Hainan?).
- . Future: maybe in Australia. But the equipment is a bit expensive.

Let me tell you about one of my dreams: I would love to learn how to kite-surf. I don't know if you are familiar with this sport, but I saw a program on TV about it, and it seems absolutely amazing!

It's a water sport. You ride a small board, sort of like a small surf board, and at the same time, you are harnessed (=attached) to a very large kite. This kite will propel you across the water. It looks stunning, because the surfers can actually get up a lot of speed, and most important, they can fly when they ride a wave. They literally become airborne for a few seconds. It's like a big jump, but very smooth at the same time. It's like they are hanging in the air, following the wind. It must be breathtaking!

I know that people kite-surf all over the world. It's a fairly new activity. But you can do it anywhere as long as the wind is steady, and it always pulls you back towards the beach. If the wind takes you away from the coast, it could be dangerous. People who can kite-surf are just really cool, -very trendy. These guys have no fear, and they are looking for a thrill (=some excitement).

I did a bit of research on the Internet, and they say that you can learn how to maneuver the kite in a couple of days, and within a week you can already be having fun on your own, not far from the coast. A lake is also a good place to learn. But I have heard there is a place in Hainan Island, in southern China, where people meet to kite-surf. I hope to go there someday to learn.

Well, actually, next year I am going to continue my studies in Australia, and as you know, over there everyone surfs. I might be able to find someone to teach me. I might need to rent the equipment at first too, because the wakeboard and the kite are quite expensive to purchase.

1. Why are extreme sports so popular these days?

Well, extreme sports are really thrilling (=exciting). People want to experience new feelings and test their limits. I guess that nowadays people are a little tired of doing the same activities all the time. Occasionally some of them decide to try something new, you know, something out of the ordinary, and sometimes something even a bit crazy! My friends tried bungee-jumping this past summer, and they thought it was absolutely amazing. They said they experienced a real thrill (= an adrenaline rush) and they really had a blast.

Extreme sports seem like a lot of fun, and if you try once, you'll never forget. Skydiving, scuba diving, waterskiing or parasailing must be once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

2. What types of leisure activities are popular with families in your country?

Most families enjoy going out for dinner to appreciate a great meal and spend time catching up with relatives while chatting and relaxing. In addition, a lot of families frequently go for a walk together. In my hometown, there are many mountains that surround the city, and so we can follow many trails up the hills into the forest. It's a good chance to spend time together and enjoy a peaceful activity at the same time. However, I believe that most relatives often watch TV together or play cards or mahjong, especially during the holidays.

3. Compare leisure activities available today with those available to your parents' generation.

Well, in the past people used to read a lot, and they also spent more time outside, fishing, growing vegetables or flowers, or playing cards with neighbors. But things have changed. We definitely have access to more activities these days compared to the past. First of all, thanks to modern technology, and the fact that everyone has a computer these days, it is possible to watch movies online, to play computer games, to chat with friends or even play some online card games or board games. People can also gamble (=play with money) online if they want to. I think they shouldn't but it's still possible. In addition, a lot of new sports have emerged (=appeared) and many people go to the gym or practice yoga with a professional trainer. Some of my friends take belly-dancing lessons, others go rock-climbing every weekend. Now that people in my country are able to earn more money because of the economic development China has recently experienced, people can afford to relax and enjoy themselves more. As a result, many new leisure activities have become popular.

4. Which leisure activities do you think will be popular in the future?

Well, I think outdoor activities will become even more popular in the future, because people will get tired of staying home on their computers. In the last 10 years, everyone got extremely excited at the idea of having access to the Internet and the benefits it brought to our lives, but I believe that very soon people will realize the negative impacts it also has on our health and daily habits. So I guess people will decide to go out more, to enjoy sports and get-togethers with friends.

5. Do you agree or disagree with the idea that more leisure time helps people to work harder?

Yes, definitely! When people get to forget about their obligations (=responsibilities) for a while, they are able to relax, and recharge their batteries. Later on, when they get back to work, they will be able to concentrate on their tasks and will most certainly do their job more efficiently. Everyone knows that when people work on the same job for a long time without taking any time off, they get tired of it.

6. Do you think that people will have more or less leisure time in the future?

I think that people will have more time in the future because everyone seems to understand that constantly working (=working all the time) doesn't make sense if we don't have time to enjoy the money we are making. I believe that in the future, people will really be eager to enjoy life. People realize life is short, and it's important to seize the day (=carpe diem), right?

A Job You Would Be Good at

Tell me about a job you would be good at.

You should say: what the job is
 what skills or abilities are required for the job
 why you are attracted to this job
and explain how you might get this job in the future.

- . I plan to be an accountant: study overseas=training+salaries are better overseas
- . Qualities required: hard-working, precise, meticulous, logical
- . I used to be good at math+science=well-organized
- . Responsible+reliable+efficient+ diligent=qualities my boss will appreciate
- . Good job=stable+decent salary+ possibility to become manager

I intend to become an accountant in the future. This is why I want to continue my studies in Australia. I will study accounting, and I hope to find a good position over there. I strongly believe that the training I will receive there will be beneficial for my career. In addition, I have heard that salaries are pretty high Down-Under (=nickname for Australia). Anyway, we'll see what happens after I get a degree.

I think I will be a good accountant because I have the qualities required for the job: I am precise and meticulous. I always pay attention to details. My friends say I am considerate, and my parents have always asked me to be careful with everything. Plus, I have a logical mind, and I am down-to-earth. I don't daydream much.

When I was in high school, I got some good results in mathematics, especially statistics. I am good with figures (=numbers), and this is what the job is about. I consider myself to be pretty well-organized, and I can work well under pressure too. I know that accountants are always very busy at the end of the month, and they often need to work according to a deadline.

On top of this, I am a responsible person. I am thoughtful, and people can definitely trust me. My boss will appreciate this quality, because I am very reliable. I think that to work in an office, you should also be diligent and efficient. You can't waste time on the Internet or talking to your colleagues. This won't be a problem for me.

I think that being an accountant will be a good profession for me. I want to find a stable job with a decent salary. I hope to be given a chance to take responsibilities, and I will do my best to get promoted to a management position. But one thing at a time; I first need to do well in the IELTS test, and get into a good university overseas.

Vocabulary

- . A police officer (=a policeman=a cop)'s job is to enforce the law.
- . A farmhand (=a farmer) works outdoors.
- . A taxi driver (=a cab driver) knows the city like the back of his hand!
- . A fitness instructor will coach you to help you get in shape.
- . A fashion designer always thinks about what is trendy (=fashionable).
- . A flight attendant (=a steward or stewardess) flies to different cities all the time and assists passengers.

(Source: World Link series)

1 . How effectively do schools prepare people for jobs?

Well, actually, I don't think schools prepare students well enough for their future careers. In

class, we usually learn about theories and general knowledge, which I guess are important, but most courses are not practical enough, so whenever a young person starts a job, he or she has no experience and no clue what to expect from the position. As a result, companies must spend a lot of time and money on training. I think many university departments should provide more internships (=first-hand practical job experience for students) for students to realize what work is really about, and what skills they need to acquire (=get). Schools should definitely be more practical, you know, more pragmatic.

2. What are the benefits of having a long-term career plan?

Well, anyone who has a long-term career plan can actually imagine what the future would be like. And it is important because this can give young people hope and motivation. People who don't have goals (on the short or long term) can't succeed, because they don't know what they want. I think it's beneficial to make plans, even if plans change; at least they pave the way to the future, and make people feel safe, as well as determined and confident.

3. Apart from pay, what is important to people in a job?

Many people are looking for a stable position, with benefits such as insurance, holidays, a maternal leave for women. In addition, many employees sign a contract with a company where they feel they will learn a lot through training and experience. Some young people are very ambitious and want to improve themselves: On top of this, other aspects of work are essential: young people hope they might get promoted and earn more money in the future; relationships with colleagues and the atmosphere at work are also fundamental. And of course, the location of the company is also crucial. Would you work far from home, in a rural area, or in an expensive city? All of this matters when we look for a job.

4. What jobs are more popular with women?

Well, I think that we usually picture women as nurses or teachers, especially for young children in kindergarten, because most women are definitely more considerate and patient than most men. I guess this is the stereotypical (=conventional) idea society has of women. In addition, I think that in the business world, many women in my country work for the HR(= the Human Resources) department because people think the jobs require a lot of people skills based on communication, planning and patience. However, nowadays, you can find women in every field. Women work as police officers, managers, surgeons, and some of them also set up their own companies. Things have changed.

5. What factors should be considered when facing the age of retirement?

We should consider the number of years people have been working. If someone starts working at the age of 18, he or she should be entitled to retire at an earlier age than someone who got a PhD and started work at 26. In addition, the government should also take into consideration the work people actually do. Whether the job is physically difficult or mentally stressful makes a difference. Firemen who risk their lives very often should be allowed to retire earlier. I think it should be the same for most manual laborers whose jobs are physically tiring. On the other hand, office workers can probably work longer because their jobs are supposed to be easier. I guess in China, the government has difficulty because they need to bear in mind the large population of our country. If we ask older specialists to stay in office, they will be able to train young people longer, but at the same time, they should retire to offer more jobs to the younger generations. It's quite a dilemma (= a tough problem).

6. What makes a good businessman?

It's now your turn to answer! A good businessman should be creative because..., hard-working and ambitious because..., good at negotiating... They should also be able to foresee future problems or financial openings...)

A Change that Might Occur in Your Life in the Future

Tell me about a great change that might occur in your life in the future

You should say: what the change might be
why you want to change things
how your life will change
and explain your feelings about it.

- 1. How do people generally choose their future professions?*
- 2. How important is it to have goals in your life?*
- 3. What can make it difficult for people to plan their future?*
- 4. Why is it important for companies to plan ahead?*
- 5. What makes a society feel optimistic about its future?*
- 6. What measures can be taken today to avoid global problems in the future?*

A Job You Would Love to Have in the Future

Tell me about a job you have never had, but would like to have.

You should say: what the job is and why you want to do it
if it requires any special skills or abilities
how it would change your personal life
and explain how you might get this job in the future.

- 1. How does the job a person does affect what other people think of him/her?*
- 2. Which jobs are best paid in today's society?*
- 3. Why are some jobs better paid than others?*
- 4. Which jobs should be better paid than they are now?*
- 5. How can individuals achieve a balance between work and leisure?*
- 6. Compare job opportunities for people with and without a university degree.*

16 Business

Proverb:

A job worth doing is a job worth doing well.

=When you do something, you should do it as well as you can.

Sample Answer:

A Restaurant You Like

A Small Shop You Often Go to

A Company Someone You Know Works for

Practice:

An Organization

Key Words

to set up a business=to start up a company

to enjoy=to appreciate=to be pleased with

attractive=appealing = charming

well-located=well-situated=conveniently located

nice=pleasant=enjoyable

profitable=lucrative=money-making

cheap=reasonable=economical

qualified = capable=skilled=well-trained

A Restaurant You Like

Tell me about a restaurant that you have either been to or heard about.

You should say: what kind of restaurant it is

what special dishes are served there

where it is located

and explain why this restaurant is special.

- A cheap restaurant: Where? How often do you go there?
- Describe what you see when you walk in: tiny, few tables, decorations?
- Good food + reasonable price. Choices = local specialties + spicy food
- A lot of company workers (colleagues) eat together. Great sea food (Fuzhou is on the coast)
- Friendly boss + good service, even if it's not so clean, but savory food.

Let me tell you about a cheap restaurant I often go to. It's located next to the training school where I have been studying English for the last two months. It only takes me five minutes to get there, so it is very convenient. Inside the restaurant, there are huge mirrors on each wall to make the place look larger than it really is.

In fact, it is a tiny restaurant with only four tables inside, but the boss doesn't hesitate to set 2 more tables outside his door, on the sidewalk, whenever there are more customers. When the weather is good, clients love to eat outside even though it is forbidden and the local police try to restrict shop owners from encroaching upon the street.

I frequently go to this restaurant with my classmates because the food is very tasty, and the prices are extremely reasonable. They offer typical Chinese food with a great choice of dishes: local specialties such as sweet and sour pork, as well as fish balls served in soup. But you can also get spicy food, like spicy diced chicken with peanuts, or simple spicy green beans.

A lot of people have lunch there with their colleagues, and I often see people in uniforms such as salesmen or policemen eating there. The sea food is not bad either, especially the fried mackerel (=fish) and the spicy clams. Fuzhou is a coastal city so you can get nice sea food at the local market every day.

In addition, the boss is a friendly old man, and the waitresses remember their customers and what they like to eat. They often give us a small discount when we ask for the bill: they know how to retain their clients. Of course the place is not spotless, and the waitresses don't use liquid soap to clean the tables. So you shouldn't put your elbows on the table if you don't want your shirt to get dirty...But the food is clean, savory and cheap. That's what really counts (=matters).

1. What kinds of small businesses are found in your local area?

Well, there is a great variety of small businesses where I live. There are quite a few shops to start with, especially convenience stores; bakeries, and shops that sell motorbikes. We have a street full of them, with scooters, electric bikes, and 125 cylinder motorbikes. In addition, there are some small-sized companies all around my neighborhood that hire maybe 30 to 50 employees. Most of them sell services and household appliances. There is a real-

estate agency; there is an interior design (=house-decoration) company too. There must be a couple of factories further down the street as well.

2. How important are local businesses for a community?

Local businesses are fundamental for a community. First of all, they create jobs, which is good for the population. If people work in a certain area of the city, it means that they will probably move with their family to this district. This will create a lively neighborhood community which will attract more people. The community can grow bigger and probably wealthier too.

3. Do you think there will be any changes in the employment situation in your area?

I live in the outskirts of the city, so I really think there will be many changes taking place where I live in the future. My neighborhood is changing and expanding year after year. Right now, there are a lot of new houses being built, but many people work far away. I expect a lot of companies to move closer to my home in the near future, creating many job opportunities.

I live in the city center and I don't think there will be many changes in terms of employment there. There are a lot of different shops and restaurants everywhere. The owners might change, but the situation will most definitely remain the same in the future. A lot of small old stores are closing, but they are being replaced by modern ones that still hire people.

4. How can governments help small businesses?

I'm not too sure about that, but I think that governments should try to minimize charges and taxes for the first few years after the company opens. I think they can tax them only once the small businesses are stable and actually turning a profit. In addition, the government could loan money to young entrepreneurs (=people who start their own businesses) who have a clear plan for the future.

5. Compare the benefits of running your own business and working in a company.

Okay, if you work for a company, you will have a fixed schedule and a fixed salary, which is comfortable and safe. In addition, you are not investing any of your money, so you don't need to worry or stress about tomorrow. On top of this, you could benefit from the company's training, and learn a lot from a personal point of view. On the other hand, if you work for yourself, you might have more freedom, in terms of time and scheduling. You don't need to obey anyone else; you make your own decisions, and that's nice. Usually, if you work for yourself, you know why you are working, and you can expect to make more money if you are successful. The more you work, the more you make. It is very motivating and rewarding. If you set up your own company, you will definitely experience a sense of achievement.

6. Are there any disadvantages to running your own business?

Yes, of course. First of all, it's risky, because you must invest quite a lot of money to start with. In addition, although many people think you will have more free time, I believe that you will have to work harder because you will care more about what you're doing, and you will be eager to make a profit. You will probably be stressed too at first, especially if business takes time to pick up (=to be successful). And you will also need to make all the important decisions, so you might be under a great deal of pressure.

A Small Shop You Often Go to

Tell me about a small shop you go to regularly.

You should say: what kind of shop it is
 something about the people who work there
 what you like about that shop
and say whether other people have a similar opinion of this shop.

- . I live in a residential area=lots of people and neighbors=a community
- . Inside the community=one convenience store run by a family=they are welcoming and polite
- . They sell food (packaged food)+household supplies (soap, shampoo, mosquito repellent...)
- . Daily necessities for cooking (eggs, flour, sugar)+a great variety of drinks
- . Everyone appreciates having the shop=convenient (stays open late)+sense of Community

I live in a residential area in the suburbs of Fuzhou. It's a nice place with about ten high-rises where hundreds of people live together. The apartment buildings surround a park and a swimming pool. We are all neighbors, and everyone belongs to the same local community. All day long, you can see mothers cradling their newborns, or elderly people chatting or exercising.

In the middle of the residential community there is a small convenience store where everyone goes to buy daily necessities such as sugar, flour, oil or eggs. It's a tiny store run by a family. The mother usually takes care of the store, but her husband and her father also take turns behind the cash register. They also live in the same residence, so everyone knows them very well and, because they are very friendly and welcoming, their business is doing pretty well.

There are two main aisles in the shop. On one side they sell snacks such as peanuts, dry fruit, chips and noodles. On the other side, they sell household supplies like cleaning supplies, towels, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, mosquito repellent and other day-to-day necessities. Next to the counter, there are big containers of rice and flour. You can help yourself to a bag or, if you want, the shop owner will give you a hand. I often go there to buy a drink when I come back from school. They have 2 large refrigerators with a great variety of sodas and fruit juices.

Everyone appreciates having the store inside our community. Otherwise, we would have to walk all the way to the bigger supermarket, and it would take a lot more time. In addition, the convenience store stays open until 11 or 12 at night every day, and the prices are very reasonable. The shop definitely makes our lives easier, and strengthens the sense of community among residents.

1. What kinds of shops are there near your home?

There are plenty of different shops in my neighborhood. Close by my house, there

is a pretty big supermarket, and next to it there is a street full of stores: clothing shops, convenience shops. There are a few restaurants and fruit grocers too. I frequently go to the bakery there to buy some bread or snacks. They also set up a bookshop, and I believe they are building a KFC across the corner.

2. How do shops nowadays compare to shops in the past?

I think that nowadays there are a lot more shops than in the past. As a result, customers have way more choices than they did 30 years ago. In addition, there are a lot of big shops, like supermarkets, and these places are extremely convenient. I believe that a long time ago, people had to go to different shops to buy everything they needed: the butcher's, the-grocer's, the dairy shop. Nowadays, a superstore like Wal-Mart or Carrefour provides every single necessity. And of course, you can find shopping centers wherever you go, with modern malls that concentrate every single shop you can think of in one place. I think that in the past, everything was a bit smaller, but I believe that the shop owners were also more welcoming, and caring (= considerate).

3. In what ways are shops important to a local community?

Shops are fundamental to a local community. Shops create life in the community. If there were no shops around your house, people would only come home to sleep, and the place would be too quiet, almost dead during day time. In addition, shops provide a good chance to go out and socialize. Women, for example, can meet with their lady friends to go shopping. Families can agree to go out for dinner. Finally, shops create jobs for people. If there are job offers, more people will move into the neighborhood, and this will be good for business. It works as a circle: shops open, people find a job, more people move in, so more shops open.

4. Do you think there will be fewer small, local businesses in the future?

No, I don't think so. I believe that there will always be a lot of small businesses, especially here in China, because a lot of young people want to set up their own companies. They might want to expand their businesses and make it big on the long term, but their companies will definitely be small at first. In addition, I believe that people like to go to small businesses, like small shops or small hair-salons, because usually these places offer better service and quality products.

5. What are the features of a successful shopping center?

I think that a great shopping mall should be modern and comfortable for customers. It should be spacious, and conveniently located. Location is essential if you want to attract clients. The interior of shops should be neat (=tidy) and, most importantly they should offer good quality products as well as good service. If they do so, they will attract and retain their customers. This will create a lively atmosphere and be good for business at the same time.

6. What are the advantages of shopping in a large supermarket?

Obviously, if the supermarket is large, there are more choices for customers. The shoppers can find everything they really need. Large supermarkets are supposed to be more convenient, and they save time because you don't need to run from one shop to another. In addition, because supermarkets sell more, prices are very often lower than in smaller street retail shops.

7. How can shops increase the number of customers they get?

They definitely need to provide good service in order to satisfy customers' expectations. If the clients are pleased with the quality of the products and the service, as well as the price, they will most definitely spread the word (=tell everyone) and come back for more shopping. In addition, shops can offer discounts and advertise for bigger promotional periods. I think offering sales will without a doubt attract customers.

8. Compare shopping in open-air markets and in shops.

I hardly ever go to the public market, but I know my parents do. They buy meat, fish and vegetables at the market. They believe that the products are fresher and of better quality. They might have more choices too, because so many fishmongers and butchers come to display their products. I think that compared with the supermarket, it is easier to talk to the stall vendors and to find out about where the meat comes from, or ask practical (= useful) questions about how to cook the fish. Usually people at the street market are very outgoing, and they take time to talk to their customers.

9. What products are better suited for selling at open-air markets?

People definitely go to the market to buy fresh products such as vegetables, fish and meat. There are other kinds of markets too, where you can buy cheap clothes, or second-hand books. In any case, items sold at markets should be easy to carry for the street vendors.

10. How does the quality of service differ in different types of shops?

Well, the quality of the products varies depending on where you are shopping. For example, in my hometown, we have an area specialized in IT, and you can buy any kind of technological item. But because the prices are quite cheap, you should be aware that the quality might not be as reliable as it would be if you bought it in a licensed store. When it comes to supermarkets, compared to the local supermarkets, big chain stores like Carrefour, the French store, are usually cleaner and better organized. Usually the food there is fresher and cheaper. But it really depends on where you go. You should try many places to make up your own mind.

11. How important is good service to customers in shops?

Good service is essential to customers. Clients expect the shop assistants to be helpful and polite. A simple smile can make such a difference. If the service is great, customers will be pleased. It is very likely that they will come back to buy more in the future. They might even tell their friends about the shop. It is excellent for the shop's reputation.

12. How could some shops provide better service to customers ?

I think a lot of shops and restaurants in China should be cleaner and better organized. I also think that many shop assistants are unqualified. They only know how to greet customers by repeating identical phrases again and again like: "Thank you for coming; we hope you can come back again soon." It gets very annoying and repetitive. In addition, shop assistants should know everything about their products. I hate it when I go to a shop and I ask a question to the young girl working there, and she tells me she doesn't know and she has to ask her supervisor. It is such a waste of time. I believe that salespeople should be well-trained. It would be beneficial to the shop, as well as customers.

A Company Someone You Know Works for

Tell me about a company that someone you know works for.

You should say: what the company does
 who you know who works there
 where the company is located

and explain whether you would like to work for that company too.

- . English training school in my hometown: I studied English there. Common in China
- . 15 teachers: small company, but use a franchise from Beijing
- . Academic department + marketing department + sales department
- . Good place to work = nice atmosphere + reliable staff + pretty good pay
- . Growing every year, but more competition + hard to retain good teachers

Let me tell you about an English training school in my hometown. The company is called Golden English, and it is conveniently located in a skyscraper in the city center. I studied there for 2 months in order to improve my English and prepare for the IELTS test. I made friends with the teachers and the salesmen. You know, in China, these kinds of schools are very common, as many students plan to study abroad or immigrate.

The company counts 15 teachers. It is a pretty small business compared to other establishments. It is a franchise, and the boss from the school must pay money every year to the headquarters in Beijing in order to use the name "Golden English".

I believe there are three departments in the company. The academic department is the one made up of teachers. Their manager is a Chinese lady who is a teacher herself. They organize schedules, plan the classes and place students in the appropriate level. There is also a marketing department. They are in charge of advertising. Their job is to promote the school. They use different methods: they work on the website, and they organize speeches and activities for the school in different universities. They also publish articles in the newspapers. Finally, there's the sales department, with 4 or 5 ladies who sell the courses. They answer the phone when you call in. And if you want to study there, you will have to talk to them first to negotiate a plan and a better price.

This English training center seems like a very nice place to work. People are all friendly and welcoming. The teachers are considerate and responsible. The staff is very professional and reliable. The teachers told me that the salary is also pretty good, especially in the summer during the busy season.

It seems like business is growing year after year, although the competition in the English sector is getting fierce. Nowadays there are so many training schools in my hometown. Students have too many choices, and it is difficult for students to know which school is better. But it is also tough (=difficult) for the schools to retain (=keep) their staff and their customers.

An Organization

Tell me about an organization you know.

You should say: what the organization is
 how many people were in it
 what was special about this organization
and explain how you benefited from this organization.

- 1. Would you prefer working in a big organization or a small one?*
- 2. What industries are there in your hometown?*
- 3. How might people's working hours and conditions affect society?*
- 4. Do you agree that it is good to change careers several times during your life?*
- 5. Aside from those related to computing, what kind of skills do you think will be most useful for getting a good job in the future?*
- 6. Do you think we can learn practical and artistic skills from books or do we really need a teacher?*

Vocabulary

- . This company produces millions of mobile phones and ships them to many countries.
- . They advertise using TV commercials and the Internet. Customers can purchase their products online
- . Customers always want new products. In order to keep their clients, they must develop new ideas.
- . This company employs 200 people. They manage 3 offices in different countries.
(Source: World Link series)

17 Transport

Proverb:

Slow but steady wins the race.

(from The Tortoise and the Hare.)

= Consistent, effective effort leads to success.

Sample Answer:

A Vehicle You Would Like to Buy

A Traffic Jam You Experienced

A Form of Transport You Enjoy Using (Bike)

A Form of Transport You Enjoy Using (Plane)

Key Words

(Traffic is) busy=heavy=congested
fumes=emissions

Nasty=gross=filthy=disgusting
a car=a vehicle=an automobile
convenient=useful=practical

exhaust gas = exhaust

to produce=to emit=to discharge
elegant=classy=sophisticated
comfortable=comfy=cozy

A Vehicle You Would Like to Buy

Tell me about a vehicle you would like to buy.

You should say: what the vehicle is
 whether it would be expensive
 how you would use this vehicle

and explain whether this vehicle is common in your country.

- Which vehicle? Brand, style
- In the past, only rich people had a car, but now the situation is different.
- Describe the car more precisely: elegant, spacious, convertible
- Options + equipment inside
- It's only a dream; I need to make money first!

Although I don't know much about cars, I would love to be able to afford a very cool sports car like a coupe BMW Z4. It is a tiny sports car with only two doors and two seats. As everyone knows, BMW vehicles are very trendy and classy and therefore quite expensive.

A few years ago in China, only wealthy people could afford to buy a car, but nowadays you can purchase Chinese automobiles like the famous QQ car for only thirty thousand yuan, which is extremely cheap. I think that in the future, everyone will own a car, and I will also be able to get one myself.

If I become very successful after my studies, I will definitely pick an elegant BMW, because those cars represent increased social status as well as the fulfillment of a dream. The BMW Z4 looks like a James Bond car. The design is extremely stylish. It is a convertible with a retracting roof.

I can imagine that such a car must be very well-equipped, with a cool dashboard, airbags, and a great stereo system. It most probably has a GYS (Global Positioning system), as well as a remote start so that I could start the engine while walking towards the car.

I could imagine myself making the engine roar and driving along the Fujian coastline to Xiamen or another nice destination. It would be awesome! Unfortunately I need to come back to earth and get back to reality...I only ride a bike for the moment!

Vocabulary :Parts of a car

Sit down and fasten your seatbelt. In order to start the car, you must insert the key into the ignition and turn. Move the gear stick into first gear, place your two hands on the steering wheel, and press the accelerator. You should always look far in front of you through the windshield. If you must turn, don't forget to use the indicator, and look in the side mirrors to see what's behind before changing lanes. At night you should turn on the headlights. When you parallel park in between 2 cars, make sure you don't touch the vehicles, although the bumpers will protect the cars. If you ever get a flat tire, you should have a spare tire in the trunk(="boot" in British English).

1. Which kinds of people own cars in your country?

Up to a few years ago, only wealthy people owned cars. Only people like businessmen, entrepreneurs, lawyers, surgeons, bankers and government officers had enough money to purchase a vehicle. But nowadays, things have changed. First of all, people's salaries have gone up, while the price of cars has decreased a bit. As a result, more people can afford a car, so a lot of middle-class people buy one. I would say that compared with 10 years ago it's become quite common for families to own an automobile.

2. What are the social costs and benefits of car use?

Well, the car industry definitely created and still creates a lot of jobs in China, and it has a positive influence on the economy. However, the production of so many vehicles comes at a cost. Cars have a negative impact on the environment. Cars emit a lot of pollution into the air, you know, exhaust fumes and carbon monoxide especially. In addition, because the number of cars on the road has sky-rocketed (=increased rapidly) in the last few years in China, we have had problems with traffic jams. At rush hour, every single morning and evening, roads are congested, and I think that this problem affects almost everyone in our society, even people who take the bus. On top of this, due to the crazy, messy traffic, more car accidents take place, and thousands of people die every year on the road.

3. What is the standard of driving like in your city?

I'm not so sure about what traffic is like in other cities, but I can tell you that in my hometown, traffic is nuts (=crazy=insane)! There are so many cars, and the roads are usually too narrow. In addition, car drivers don't respect the traffic regulations, and they swerve left and right, without using their indicators (=blinkers). As a result, there are so many traffic accidents. You know, driving a car is a new thing for Chinese people. Most drivers love the feeling, and they get caught up in the thrill of driving and forget about rules and safety. On top of this, many people still ride bikes and motorbikes in my city, but they always try to cut across on-coming traffic, and that's when accidents happen.

4. How could safer driving be encouraged?

I read somewhere that China was the deadliest country in the world in terms of road crashes. In order to curb this serious issue, people need to take responsibility and understand the consequences of their actions. This begins with driving instructors, and also at school where teachers can shape young people's minds. In addition, because it is a national issue, I think that the government should launch a campaign on TV to promote safe driving. Policemen should definitely enforce the law, and reprimand (=punish) people who run red lights or drink and drive.

5. What kinds of problems might cities face if the number of cars increases?

There will undoubtedly be problems with traffic. I mean that it will take more time for everyone to drive to work every morning. This will make people stressed and frustrated. In addition, we can expect that air pollution in cities will get even worse. I read that cars and buses consume a lot more fuel (=petrol) when they are stuck in traffic. The more cars are on the road, the more emissions are produced.

6. What do you think the future holds for cars?

Well, I know that in America most new vehicles are hybrids, that is to say cars that are equipped with a gas engine as well as an electric motor. When they drive for long distances, they use petrol, but for short distances and in towns or city centers, the car runs on a battery which saves on environmental pollution and fuel. In the future, they say that we might be able to use hydrogen gas. Somehow the hydrogen gas is transformed into electricity. It is said to be pollution-free, but I am sure that it is not as simple as it sounds. I hope scientists will quickly find a way to solve these environmental issues.

A Traffic Jam You Experienced

Tell me about a traffic jam you once experienced.

You should say:
when and where the traffic jam took place
whether it is common to be stuck in traffic
how the people around you reacted and
explain how you felt.

- . When? What was the precise situation?
- . Compare with the usual traffic. Why did you get caught in traffic?
- . Rush hour: When? How often? Is it frequent?
- . Roads are narrow; taxis go crazy; motorbikes get in the way.
- . Complained, irritated, annoyed, frustrated + exhaust fumes

A couple of weeks ago, my mother came to pick me up after school. She usually does this every Friday afternoon to give me a ride home. I attend a boarding school and I only get to go home on the weekends.

Usually it takes about 15 minutes for us to get home. My high school is located on the southern side of the city, next to the University campus. But my mother showed up late that time, and we got stuck in traffic. It was a nightmare!

In my city, like in most urban areas, traffic gets pretty bad during rush hour. This time, the roads were completely congested, and it took us an hour to drive home. I could have walked and it would not have taken that much longer!

The problem in our city is that most streets are narrow, and the number of cars increases every day. In addition, there are too many motorbikes and bicycles that always get in the way. On top of this, taxi drivers and new drivers don't really respect traffic regulations, and they swerve left and right, causing a mess.

My mother complained the entire way, and I couldn't help but sighing. It was such a waste of time! I remember sending messages to my grandmother to tell her we would be late for dinner, and my father was irritated because he had to wait for us. The whole thing was so frustrating! Finally, we also complained about the pollution from the many cars' exhaust-pipes and the nasty black smoke buses emit! Another annoying episode of life in Fuzhou...

1. Which type of transport do you think is most dangerous in cities?

Definitely motorbikes! In my hometown, so many people ride electrical bikes, scooters and motorbikes. The problem is that they don't usually respect the traffic regulations, and they could be on any side of the road, even on the sidewalk. As a result, many accidents happen, and people get hurt. Last week, I saw a car hit a motorcycle, and the woman fell from her bike. It was quite violent. People should be extremely careful when they ride their bikes or scooters in the city.

2. What are people's attitudes towards the public transport system where you live ?

Well, the majority of people take the bus in my city because it is a very cheap form of public transport. It only costs 1 yuan. But I really think that people still dislike taking the bus because it is always packed, especially at rush hour around 8 am and 6 pm. You are usually shoulder to shoulder with strangers: you have no personal space. It is not very pleasant. As a result, anyone who can afford it will buy a car. Everyone will agree that it is a lot more comfortable than the bus, even if it releases exhaust fumes and pollutes the environment. I guess it would be nice to have more buses, and actually, there should also be some bus lanes for buses only, to help buses circulate faster in the city. It would make traveling by bus more appealing to people, I think.

3. Do town planners pay enough attention to transport when developing new areas?

I think they do (pay a lot of attention) now. Roads are definitely a lot wider in the newer areas of my city compared to the old city center. Nowadays, every new road counts at least 3 lanes on each side. The problem is that most cities in China were built hundreds of years ago, so most roads are narrow, because they obviously didn't have cars in the past. As a result, a lot of buildings have been torn down (=destroyed) in order to widen the roads, and to accommodate the growing number of cars..

4. Which transport-related problems are the most serious in your opinion?

Well, the growing number of vehicles in the city creates many problems. I believe that the main issue would have to be traffic jams, because it is a matter that concerns everyone. We all waste a lot of time in traffic at some point or another. Traffic is extremely congested at rush hour: people know that it's a big problem, but they keep on buying cars instead of taking the bus or the subway. In addition, I have heard that China was the deadliest country in the world in terms of road accidents. A lot of men drink and drive because they don't realize how dangerous driving can be. On top of this, of course, cars produce air pollution and a lot of noise with the engines and the constant honking of the horn. All of these are major issues that need to be tackled as quickly as possible.

5. What measures could the government take to address these problems ?

First of all, I really think that the government should encourage people to use public transport as much as possible, instead of driving private cars. I think it would be a good idea to actually reveal the total amount of emissions released by a car during a thirty-minute drive, and to compare it to other scary quantities of carbon monoxide produced by different vehicles. The aim would be to make people realize that pollution is a serious matter. In my hometown, the government has decided to widen the roads, but actually, this decision simply entices (=encourages) more people to buy their own vehicles. I really think that buses should have their own lanes on the road. Buses would run faster and traffic would be more efficient from one bus stop to another. Finally, everyone needs to realize that driving a car can be dangerous. In China, since driving is fairly new (=quite new) to people, people only see the fun of it. They only think that driving offers a great feeling of freedom and comfort, but they should also be conscious that thousands of people die on the roads every year.

A form of Transport You Enjoy Using (Bike)

Tell me about a form of transport you enjoy using.

You should say: what the form of transport is and how often you use it
 its advantages
 how much other people use it and why
and explain why you enjoy it so much.

- . I love riding my bike: China=bicycle kingdom+cheap
- . Convenient: fast+no need to wait (compared to bus)
- . Traffic is congested; I can cut across traffic: save time+freedom (breeze, ride anywhere)
- . Good for my health=a good workout
- . Environmentally-friendly: the government and parents should encourage people to ride more.

Well, I love riding my bike! China is known as the bicycle kingdom, and everyone here has a bike. First of all, buying a bike is cheap. Once you have purchased the bicycle and the lock, you don't need to pay for anything else.

Riding a bike is very convenient because you can go anywhere, anytime. If you want to take the bus, you need to walk to the bus stop and then you have to wait for the bus to come. It's a waste of time. With the bike, you can easily jump on (=hop on) and start pedaling.

In addition, in the morning, traffic is very often congested, and cars move very slowly. But with my bike, I don't have this problem because it's easy to cut across traffic. In Fuzhou, there are many bike lanes on the road, so we can go very fast. Sometimes, I even ride on the sidewalk. It's very easy to get around.

On top of this, whenever I ride my bike, I experience a feeling of freedom. In the summer, it's so nice to feel the warm breeze on my face. I can go anywhere, even down the narrow alleys where cars can't drive. It's a great way to discover the city and to have fun.

What's more, riding a bike is a great chance to exercise. It's a good workout for my legs, as well as for my heart. Nowadays, too many people go on diets; I think they should simply ride a bike around: it would be more beneficial for their health.

Finally, everyone complains about the pollution, but the number of cars on the road still keeps increasing day after day. Bikes are environmentally-friendly, and the government should really encourage people to use them more often. I ride 4 or 5 days a week and I really like it, except when it's raining.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a bicycle?

Well, first of all, riding a bicycle is free. You don't need to spend any money on fuel compared with the car. You might have to pay to park your bike in the city, but the price is so low that it is almost non-existent (=nothing). In addition, a bike is very convenient because you can hop on it anytime you feel like it (whereas you need to wait for the bus), and you can go through traffic very easily. It's quick to ride a bike, especially in the city when the distance is short. Of course, it is a great form of exercise, and a good way to keep fit. On the other hand, you can't ride for too long. When the distance is too large, you can't ride your bike and you should take the bus or the train instead. If you live far away from your workplace, you can't depend on your bicycle. And it's the

same when it's raining. It's really unpleasant(=not nice) to ride on a rainy day. You'll get splashed by cars and you'll end up soaked(=drenched=all wet).

2. What different forms of transport are there in your area ?

In terms of public transport, you can take the bus, or pay for a taxi. Some motorbikes can also take you wherever you want for a small sum of money. A lot of people in my city drive their own car nowadays. That wasn't the case five years ago. The government is building a subway too. But I don't know how long it will be before it opens to the public.

3. How might technological advances change transport in the future?

Well, I guess that buses and trains will go even faster in the future. This past year, they opened a new high-speed railway from Fuzhou to Shanghai, and the new train (called the Bullet Train) can go up to 300 kilometers an hour. It is pretty cool because passengers can reach their destination much faster than in the past, and the price is also very reasonable. I suppose that in the future, people will fly more frequently, and who knows, more people might even have their own private planes and jets, just like we have our private cars at the moment.

4. What are people's attitudes towards the public transport system where you live?

Although people complain about buses a lot because the traffic is bad, thousands of passengers still rely on this form of transportation on a daily basis in my city. You wouldn't believe how crowded buses can be in the morning when I go to work (or school)! Sometimes buses are so packed that the driver can't close the doors! It's nuts (=crazy)! However, the local government bought some new buses, and they are wider and more comfortable for everyone. In addition, they don't pollute as much as the old ones, which is extremely important. I told you that the government was thinking about building a subway in Fuzhou, and some people are looking forward to it, while others are less excited because they are afraid that it is a waste of money, since actually Fuzhou is not that huge (=not so huge). We'll see what happens (=we shall see).

5. Who do you think should pay to maintain roads?

The government, for sure! First of all, the government taxes car owners every time they buy gas, so the money can be used to renovate or build new-roads. In addition, it is the government's duty to supply useful infrastructure in order to improve the local people's lifestyle. On top of this, roads can benefit companies and multinationals as they will be able to produce and export faster thanks to well-maintained roads, and as a result they will make more money. So the government will be able to collect more taxes from these corporations and everyone will profit from the first investments.

6. Tell me about an important transport development in your country.

I think the major change that took place in the last 10 years is the phenomenal increase in the number of cars on the roads. A few years ago, there used to be only taxis in my city. But nowadays, there are thousands of cars on every road, at any time of day. As a result, the city has changed. Roads were enlarged, so many houses were torn down (=destroyed); parking lots were built, and bridges, highways, and tunnels mushroomed throughout the area. I am pretty sure that the same thing happened in most Chinese cities. People enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle because they don't need to put up with the crowds on the bus, and they can also save time. But in China, we say that every coin has two sides, and the development of cars has also caused a lot of problems, especially when it comes to the environment.

A Form of Transport You Enjoy Using (Plane)

Tell me about a form of transport you enjoy using.

You should say: what the form of transport is and how often you use it
its advantages
how much other people use it and why
and explain why you enjoy it so much.

- I love flying
- When I fly, it means I am on holidays=relaxing
- Impressive view from the plane=spectacular, picturesque+example
- Great service: food, blanket. Comfortable seat (incline the seat, tray table, movies)
- Flying is quick (compared to buses or trains). Next flight=overseas to continue my Studies

Although I don't often get a chance to take a plane, I really like flying.

First of all, whenever I go to the airport to catch a flight, it's because I am on holidays and I am about to travel or go back to my hometown to see my relatives and visit my friends. So I always feel very relaxed and anxious to get going.

In addition, I love the spectacular views from the plane. I really like to sit by the window to enjoy the scenery from above (=from the sky). When the plane takes off from Fuzhou, I can see the rice fields around the airport as well as the impressive mountains. Fuzhou is surrounded by picturesque mountains and forests. Last year, I flew to Hainan and the plane followed the coastline for a long time. It was quite a sight from the plane!

I also like to fly because of the service in the plane. They serve us food and drinks, and the flight attendants are always polite and helpful. On top of this, the seat is usually comfortable and I can incline the seat in order to take a nap. It's pretty cozy. There is also a little tray table so I can turn on my computer or read a book. It's convenient.

Finally, flying is very quick. Last year I flew to Hong Kong and it only took 2 hours. It would have taken at least 12 if I had taken a bus there.

I am looking forward to my next flight. Hopefully it will take me to Australia where I hope to continue my studies.

18 Pollution

Proverb:

A stitch in time saves nine.

= By taking immediate action we can prevent a fault, damage or trouble from getting worse.

Sample Answer:

A Polluted Place
A Form of Pollution in Your City

Key Words

exhaust fumes = exhaust gas = emissions

smoggy+ dusty+ thick air

rubbish=garbage=waste=trash

alternative fuels=non-conventional fuels

to recycle= to reprocess、

to litter=to throw garbage onto the ground outdoors

disgusting=filthy=gross

clean=spotless

A Polluted Place

Tell me about a polluted place you have either seen or heard about.

You should say: where this polluted place is
 why it is polluted
 how people feel about this place
and explain how the situation could be improved.

- . My hometown's river is polluted: it is famous for being large, and impressive polluted
- . It used to be an attractive place with crystal clear water + beautiful colors = swim
- . Now = polluted + smelly. Factories release their chemical waste there.
- . In addition, people litter because it's not a nice place anyway.
- . We should enforce legislations on environmental issues.

Unfortunately I will tell you about my city, and more precisely, I will describe the river that runs through my hometown. The Min River is the largest and most famous river in Fujian Province, but nowadays, sadly it is also infamous for being extremely polluted.

Thirty years ago, the water was crystal clear. We could see fish at the bottom of the river. The water was pure, and people loved to gather on the banks of the river to fish.

My grandfather told me that the water used to reflect different shades of green and blue, according to the sky and whether or not it was a sunny day. People used to swim there, and it was a great place to hang out with friends, or your girlfriend. It was considered to be a stunning and romantic site in Fuzhou.

But nowadays, the river is polluted and smelly. Factories have been releasing their chemical waste into the river for years. As a result, the color has changed greatly. It is completely dark, and there is a lot of seaweed, or should I say riverweed?

Because it is not such a pleasant place anymore, people litter, and you can see plastic bags and bottles floating on the surface. I would definitely not swim there anymore! It is too disgusting.

We should introduce strict legislation on environmental protection, and spend money to update the sewer system. When I see that so many sewer drains end up in the river, it makes me sick, and it drives me crazy!

Vocabulary: Water Pollution

- . Raw sewage (=untreated human waste) and industrial waste contaminates the rivers. Some factories dump pollutants directly into the rivers. It's shocking!
- . Sewage disposal is a major problem in my country. Untreated sewage water can pollute the environment (and cause diseases such as diarrhea = causes you to go to the toilet a lot...).
- . Most cities suffer from some degree of water pollution, and people lack access to safe drinking water.
- . People dump litter in rivers, too. I read that plastic packaging takes 400 years to degrade in water.
- . Factories should try to reduce the amount of waste they produce; and we must neutralize chemical waste before allowing it to enter water systems (= sewers and drains that carry water).

1. What are the main dangers to the environment where you live?

Well, there are many serious issues we should deal with in China. In my area, there are a lot of cement plants that produce an incredible amount of dust, as well as a lot of carbon dioxide emissions. And at night I know they burn a lot of different chemicals and other materials in a kiln (= brick oven) in order to create cement. It emits very black smoke which must be highly toxic. In central Fujian, you can find a lot of coal mines, and people complain about severe water pollution. I guess that many steel plants, iron factories, and chemical manufacturers release polluted waste in the rivers. It's awful. I went to different websites to get some info and I was shocked by the pictures I found. In addition, now that people can afford a car, people drive to work every single day instead of taking public transportation. Cars emit exhaust fumes, especially during traffic jams at rush hour. It's hard to be optimistic about the situation. On top of this, people litter in the cities, and we use way more plastic and paper wrapping than we actually need. And in the countryside, people throw everything in the rivers, particularly in small towns where people receive no education. It's a real shame.

2. How concerned are people about these dangers?

I think that young people are more concerned about these dangers than the older generations, but I think everyone feels helpless, because we don't seem to have the power to do anything. It seems like government officials are the only ones who have the ability to take effective and constructive measures. Everyone realizes that the water is polluted, that the air is full of dust and other nasty (= disgusting) particles, and people talk about these forms of pollutions, but no one seems to take action.

3. In what ways is the environment protected in your country?

Well, I know the government has implemented (=put in place) a lot of laws in the last few years to help tackle all these environmental issues. Since 2008, all supermarkets, department stores and shops are prohibited from giving out free plastic bags. Customers need to buy them instead. I think it is a great measure but it is not enough. I believe we should completely stop producing plastic bags, because if you really think about it, we don't need them, and they always end up being burnt or floating in a river anyway. In addition, because desertification remains a serious problem, our government has initiated a "Green Great Wall" to circle the encroaching desert (=the desert that is spreading wider every year). It's essential to hold back the desert because it creates sand storms, which I am sure you have heard about as they are frequent in Beijing and they also threaten our agriculture. Finally, I know they are passing some laws to modernize our industrial sector and slow down pollution. But I think we shouldn't be trying to slow it down — we should really be taking measures to reduce it dramatically.

A Form of Pollution in Your City

Tell me about a form of pollution in your city.

You should say: what form of pollution it is
where the pollution comes from
how people feel about this
and explain how the situation could be improved.

- . My city: pollution is a serious issue like most big cities in China.
- . Air pollution: cars emit exhaust fumes.
- . Factories, industries release black smoke: chimneys + cement factories
- . Dust + coal + people spit a lot + many old people cough
- . Government's answer: improving transport + using cleaner fuels + modernizing technologies

I was born and raised here in Fuzhou, and I have come to realize that my city is unfortunately quite polluted. I guess the situation is not as serious as in other large cities, but it still is a major issue, especially in terms of air pollution.

First of all, in the last 5 years or so, the number of cars has increased significantly in my city. The Chinese economy has grown so much in the last few years that many people are now enjoying the benefits of a comfortable and modern life. As a result, traffic has become a serious concern in my city. Every day at rush hour, traffic is congested, and cars emit way too much exhaust fumes. We also have some old buses that release nasty black smoke into the air. At the bus stops, people usually cover their faces with their sleeves because of the gas produced by these old buses. It's really nasty.

In addition, in the outskirts of my city, there are many factories and industries that pollute the air by burning chemicals and other stuff in their chimneys. I know that there are a lot of cement factories around my city, and they also emit a lot of polluting gases and dust. I think it's quite disturbing to actually think about all the pollution that surrounds us.

We can witness the air pollution on a daily basis whenever we step outside, and also at home. There is always a lot of dust hanging in the air. And at home, we need to dust off the furniture very frequently, otherwise our house gets dusty and dirty very quickly. This doesn't happen so much in the countryside. It really means the situation is bad in urban areas. On top of this, people complain of the fact that many men and women spit in public. I agree that it is disgusting, but there is a reason why people do it. I think air pollution causes people to cough, and they say it also causes many lung problems.

The government is trying to tackle this issue, and I think that the situation in my city, because now that people have reached a certain level of worry more about the environment they live in. Right now, the local government is working on improving transport infrastructures by widening the roads and facilitate smoother traffic flow. I really hope scientists will soon come up with an alternative source of energy to replace petrol. And I think the government should also compel industries to modernize their technologies in order to reduce carbon emissions. These are the new challenges of the beginning of the 21st century.

1. What can individuals do to protect the environment?

That's a good question we should actually ask people in every single household in China. I think that we should all consider how much waste we produce. We should try to recycle paper and plastic. I know that in Europe many countries compel families to recycle at home, throwing away their waste in different bags according to its nature: paper in one bag, plastic in another, food waste in a third one. In addition, we should try to limit the amount of water we use when we shower or cook. Water is very precious, and it is not infinite. On top of this, we could try to walk or ride a bike more often rather than driving. Newspapers should also write exposes on factories that pollute the air and rivers, to demonstrate how shocking it is. Everyone complains about pollution, but it is up to us to make a difference.

2. What role can education play in environmental protection ?

Well, it is fundamental to teach young people to respect the environment because the future belongs to them. The younger generations will soon be responsible of the planet, and they should definitely be aware of the challenges they will face in the future. I think that if children understand the gravity (=seriousness) of the situation, they will make the right decisions when they grow up. School teachers and parents can teach them how to follow an environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

3. What are the limits of environmental education?

Well, I suppose that young people can learn how to take care of the environment for the future, but that is not very helpful when it comes to dealing with the present situation. Environmental education is used to explain pollution and prevent it from happening again in the future, but it doesn't help remove the pollution that's already there. Education and prevention are definitely useful, but that's not enough. Governments should also punish, restrict, and take stern (=strict) measures to solve the current problem.

4. Who do you think should pay for cleaning up pollution?

I think that the government should make the factories and large companies that polluted pay a lot of money to repair the damage they have caused. They should be fined heavily. I also think that we could fix a tax on plastic and paper, for companies to limit the use of useless wrapping. The other day, I bought a box of cookies, and every single biscuit was wrapped in a plastic film. It was such a waste! In addition, the government should also allocate a lot of money to clean up the air and the rivers, because it should be a national priority.

5. Compare your attitude towards the environment with that of your parents and grandparents?

Okay, I think that actually there isn't so much of a difference between my attitude and my parents', because they taught me I shouldn't litter or waste anything. At home, we always save paper, boxes, and plastic bags to reuse them later. That's the way we were educated. But I guess that my grandparents save plastic bags to save money, and I, on the other hand,

try not to use them because I know they will end up in a river, or burnt in the atmosphere. You know, nowadays we hear so much about pollution and global warming that the younger generation must be more conscious of (=aware of) and sensitive to these problems than older people.

6. Will the international community ever come to an agreement on how to solve these environmental issues?

I sure hope so ! I hope they will very soon, but every country will have to make some concessions (=sacrifices) because the decisions they make will definitely have an impact on national economies. For example, if we ban the production of plastic bags, or if we forbid people from using their cars, many companies will lose money, and many people will become unemployed. I hope that more jobs can be created to actually protect the environment, and that we can think of new ideas on how to improve this critical situation. I really believe that some drastic (=extreme) measures will have to be taken sooner or later. In English, you say "better late than never", as long as it's not too late to reverse the mistakes that have been made in the last century.

19 The Weather

Proverb:

The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike.

= No matter how good or bad a person, he or she must still face the everyday problems that confront us all.

Sample Answer:

Your Favorite Season
The Weather in Your Hometown
Snow

Key Words

Hot=scorching=boiling hot	temperatures get as high as 38 in the summer
Cold=freezing	chilly=cool=a little cold
Nice=pleasant	a breeze=a light wind
Mild=moderate	extreme=intense
Impressive=spectacular	strong=tough

Your Favorite Season

Tell me about your favorite season.

You should say: what the season is
 what the weather is usually like during this season
 what you can do during this season
and explain how the season influences your feelings.

- . My favorite season is autumn: pleasant with mild weather, compared to summer.
- . Colors change in autumn spectacular
- . People can go out: beautiful season to go for a walk
- . In Chinese philosophy, fall=union between people and families (Mid-Autumn festival)
- . Autumn is a season of contrasts=life and death; in between (summer+ winter)

My favorite season has to be the fall, or "autumn" in British English. It's a pleasant time of the year because of the temperature. In Fuzhou, summers are boiling hot and humid. You will sweat a lot. Fall is more moderate; the weather is mild, and everyone is thrilled when the summer is finally over.

When fall shows up, the colors of the tree leaves change. They turn red and yellow, which is quite spectacular. Fuzhou is surrounded by mountains and forests, and it's really spectacular to see those stunning shades.

Because the weather gets better, people dare to leave their air-conditioned houses to go out shopping or to the park. As I told you, in the summer, it's really too hot to do anything. In the fall I enjoy hiking in the forests and the mountains that surround my hometown.

In Chinese philosophy, fall is very significant. Fall represents union, and it's a time when Chinese people get together and share their feelings before the year comes to an end. It is the period where the crops have been harvested, and this is an occasion for family reunion, represented by the full moon. Poets describe autumn as a season that will make people feel homesick. They always depict a sad period of the year that will encourage people to get back home to reunite with their loved ones.

It's a period of contrasts because, in autumn, leaves turn red, and red in China represents life; but the leaves also represent death as leaves fall and winter will soon kick in.

Vocabulary

"Human activity has already begun to destabilize (=knock off balance) the global climate, as greenhouse gases reach levels that are higher than they have been for 20 million years. Experts predict forecast) that we will experience increasing climate fluctuations changes, variability) with more intense storms, droughts no rain), and stress to all ecosystems. Dramatic changes in global climate patterns will require us to make equally dramatic changes in the patterns of human living:"

(by Duane Elgin)

1 . Do you think the weather can affect a person's mood?

Yes, definitely ! I think a lot of people can feel lazy and tired on rainy days. Whenever I hear the rain fall in the morning, I'm quite reluctant to get up. Same in the winter: I'd rather stay in bed under warm blankets than get up and go to class ! On the other hand, when it's sunny out, it usually gives people energy. I think I am more productive when the weather is nice, especially in the morning.

2. What is your favorite type of weather?

Well, I like warm sunny days, especially in the fall, when the weather is rather mild. I like it when the leaves start turning yellow or red, and the sky is clear blue. I think it's the best season, and the best weather. I gotta (=I've got to) tell you, I hate the rain, particularly in the city: it makes everything so inconvenient, and the sidewalks become very dirty when the dust and water mix together. I'd rather stay home when it rains.

3. What months get the most rain where you live?

Usually spring is the rainy season, but I think that nowadays the weather is a bit weird, so it can sometimes rain quite a lot in the summer. I guess we usually get more precipitation (rainfall) around May and June. Sometimes it rains for a whole week without stopping. And last year in the summer, we got a lot of showers. They last 20 minutes and they cool the air down. And then it gets hot again. I don't like the rain in the city, but I know it's essential for the forests and fields that surround the city. The rain makes the land green and fertile (productive).

4. Is the weather ever unusual or extreme where you live?

Yes, definitely. On the coast of Fujian, we get typhoons pretty much every year. Usually they hit Taiwan hard, and cause a lot of damage over there. So I guess we are a bit sheltered behind Taiwan, but we still get a lot of rain and wind. Usually some streets get flooded, and schools close for a couple of days. Two years ago, in one of the main avenues in my city, the cars were half-way under water. Some people even died.

Yes, definitely ! In the winter we get a lot of snow, and two years ago, we suffered from a heavy snow storm that paralyzed (=blocked) the whole region. Buses couldn't leave the city, trains got stuck on the way, and some roofs collapsed. It was a terrible winter.

5. Why is it important to know weather predictions in advance?

I think it's important to know what the weather will be like for people who plan to go traveling, or for those who plan to spend time outside for a special occasion. In addition, when there are weather alerts for a typhoon, a tornado, or a hurricane, it's obviously vital to be aware of what might happen. These are extreme circumstances (= situations). Otherwise, I don't think we need to check the weather forecast on a daily basis, because we shouldn't try to control everything. I guess it's simply a habit old people develop. I don't think young people worry too much about tomorrow's weather.

6. What is the hottest natural temperature you have experienced?

I think a couple of years ago, in the summer, the temperatures in my city rose to 39 degrees Celsius. It was boiling hot out there, and it was absolutely impossible to go out. We turned the air-conditioner on and waited for night time to go out. It was so hot that summer that many elderly people fell sick. Some even died.

The Weather in Your Hometown

Tell me about the weather in your hometown.

You should say: what the weather is usually like in different seasons
 whether people often discuss the weather in your city
 what people think of the weather in your city

and say whether you think the weather in your city is better or worse than in other cities.

- . Where is your hometown? Influence on the weather? Fuzhou=south=pleasant climate
- . Winter? Mild winters in Fuzhou; temperatures never go down much.
- . Spring? Rain=the region is very green.
- . Summer? Hot and humid; boiling hot; extreme temperatures+ occasional typhoons
- . Autumn? Beautiful, warm and comfy. Colors change=spectacular

I come from Fuzhou, and as you know, this capital city of Fujian Province is located in southern China, only a few kilometers away from the coastline. As a result, the weather in

Fuzhou is considered to be very comfortable all year round, or at least most of the time. The climate is extremely mild in the winter. Usually January and February are the coldest months of the year, but I really think that global warming has had an effect on the weather, and temperatures never get below 10 degrees anymore. We have had snow once in Fuzhou, but it was a very long time ago, and it was a unique occasion, I think.

In the spring, the temperatures are very pleasant, but it often rains. Sometimes it can rain for ten days in a row. This explains why Fujian Province is so green. Fuzhou is surrounded by mountains and forests, and this is one of the reasons why Fuzhou is a great place to settle down. We sometimes get typhoons in Fuzhou, but usually Taiwan gets hit first and we only get a bit of rain and wind. Some of the streets get flooded but it never lasts too long, and it doesn't cause much damage.

On the other hand, summers are quite hot and humid. My grandfather always tells me that the weather did not use to be as hot as it is nowadays. Last summer, the temperatures reached 38 degrees. It was boiling hot outside. If you ever go out in the summer, you will sweat a lot. But if you get up early, or stay up at night, the weather is very nice as you can wear very light clothes and flip-flops (=sandals) all the time. There are many banyan trees, you know, those huge trees where the branches grow roots, all around the city, and many old people like to sit under them in the shade to chat with the neighbors or play mahjong, a typical Chinese game.

My favorite season is the fall, when the leaves turn yellow or red. We almost get to see a beautiful blue sky every day. The temperatures remain warm until November. It's just a great time to go to the park or climb one of the surrounding mountains.

Overall, Fuzhou offers a great climate. I am afraid that if I go to Australia, I might find the weather very hot and dry down there.

1. How do people's clothing change in different seasons?

Well, when the weather gets cold in the winter, people need to wear more layers, and the materials of the clothing also change. Usually people wear wool sweaters when it's very cold, but in the summer, we usually favor cotton, and light garments (= clothes). In the summer, girls are more likely to wear skirts and dresses, but in the winter everyone wears trousers, and sometimes people wear heavy tights underneath, even guys. In my hometown, the weather doesn't get freezing, but because we don't have heaters inside, it can get pretty chilly, especially if you don't move around. So we drink a lot of hot water to keep warm.

2. Are there any climate differences between southern China and northern China?

Yes, definitely. China is a huge country and the differences are quite obvious. The weather in the north is continental with lots of snow and hot and dry summers. The south is tropical, with humid weather conditions and warm temperatures all year round.

3. Do you think the climate has changed much in recent years in your hometown?

Well, my grandparents always say that the weather has changed a lot, but I can't really notice many differences myself, probably because I'm still very young. However, my grandparents always complain that the weather varies (= changes) very quickly: one day is very warm and humid, and the following is cold and windy. In addition, my grandparents say that the winters are not as strong as they used to be. I think the 4 seasons were more obvious in the past. Nowadays, the differences are very slim. It must be the effect of global warming, I suppose.

4. What are the consequences of global warming?

Well, global warming is synonymous with (= equals to) an increase in the temperatures on Earth, so it obviously creates climate changes. Global warming causes seasonal changes, and it also alters (= changes) the intensity (= the strength) and the frequency of climatic events. For example, we seem to get more typhoons and hurricanes, and they are becoming stronger than in the past, because the oceans are warmer. Climate changes also trigger heavy precipitations (= rainfall) and snow storms, just like the one we experienced two years ago here in China. Broader effects are expected to include the melting of the glaciers in the north and south poles, which will result in rising sea levels worldwide. It's pretty scary.

5. How can extreme weather conditions affect the economy in your country?

Well, extreme weather can have dramatic consequences on agriculture and housing. In 2008, some regions in China experienced a terrible snow storm that paralyzed whole areas for a couple of weeks. It destroyed many roofs, and business in these areas was literally frozen. It happened during Spring Festival, which is a very lucrative (- profitable) period of the year, but because thousands of people were stuck in the bus or train stations, people didn't consume or travel as much as expected. It represented a big loss of income for many companies. In addition, the government had to allocate a lot of money to rebuild the destroyed houses. Last autumn, severe droughts hit northern China, and the government also had to provide financial help to the farmers who had lost everything in the sand storms.

Snow

Tell me about snow.

You should say: whether you have seen snow before
 how you feel about snow
 whether your country gets snow in the winter
and explain how snow can influence people's lives.

- South of China: I have never seen snow before.
- Must be beautiful in the countryside
- Causes problems in the city and on the roads
- Snow storm in 2008 in China: people were stuck in train stations during Spring Festival.
- Dream: go skiing in the Alps or in Canada (Olympic Games)

I come from Fujian Province in southern China, and in my hometown, it never snows. My parents told me they had seen snow once only when they were kids. But for me, I have never experienced freezing weather, and as a result, I have never had a chance to play in the snow, to make snow balls or a snowman.

However, I have seen stunning pictures of snowy landscapes in the countryside. It looks spectacular and very peaceful. It seems like winter covers the whole natural world with a white blanket. I know it must be extremely cold, but it looks so relaxing at the same time.

On the other hand, snowfall always causes serious problems in the city and on the roads in my country. Last winter, the snow fell heavily in northern China, making it difficult and risky to drive. In addition, due to the pollution and the exhaust fumes cars emit, snow turns all brown and black in the city. It looks disgusting.

In 2008, a major snow storm hit central China. Many people died because of road accidents, or because their roofs collapsed. What's more, tens of thousands of people were stuck in buses and train stations over Spring Festival. You know, in China, it is the busiest time of the year in terms of traveling, because everyone wants to go back to their hometown for the week-long holiday. Unfortunately, the journeys were made impossible by the extreme weather conditions.

A few months ago, I watched the Winter Olympic Games held in Vancouver, Canada, on TV. And I was stunned by the beautiful snowy mountains. One of my dreams is to go to the Rocky Mountains in the U.S. or in Canada, or maybe the Alps in Europe, and learn how to ski or snowboard. It would be without a doubt an unforgettable experience, and a great chance to try some extreme sports like snowmobiling, or cross-country skiing.

20 Clothes

Proverb:

Don't judge a book by its cover.

=Do not be deceived by appearances.

Sample Answer:

An Item of Clothing You Wear on Special Occasions

A Traditional Item of Clothing in Your Country

A Uniform

Key Words

to dress up=to wear elegant clothes

to look elegant=to look smart

old-fashioned=conservative=traditional

stylish=cool=trendy=fashionable

formal=serious; casual=relaxed

clothes=an outfit=garments

jeans=denims

trousers=pants=slacks

An Item of Clothing You Wear on Special Occasions

Tell me about an item of clothing you wear on special occasions.

You should say: what the item is
why you bought it
if you own many clothes of the kind
and explain on what occasions you wear it.

- . I am young and I don't often dress up compared with Americans (who go to school balls)
- . I own one nice shirt. My mother bought it for me, after a whole day of shopping:
- . Describe the shirt: long sleeves. What color? A collar. When could I wear it?
- . I always wear a white shirt at school = basic, no special feeling.
- . I don't know when I will wear it again + I need a tie = more shopping but I don't like it.

Well, as you can see, I am still very young and as a student in high school I don't get many opportunities to dress up. I know that in America, students get to go to different formal dances or balls. They even have what they call "prom" before they graduate, but in China, unless you go for a job interview, you don't really need to buy any formal clothes.

The only formal or more sophisticated clothing item I own is a nice button-down shirt. My mother bought it for me last year for my cousin's wedding. My mother took me to the mall and I thought it would be easy but we ended up spending the whole afternoon there. But after visiting many shops, we found it!

It's a light blue shirt with long sleeves. I don't think it's anything amazing but it's my only nice shirt with a collar. I could wear it for festivals but we don't really need to dress up for Spring Festival. I could put it on if I ever go to a fancy restaurant in the future.

At school I have to wear a white shirt every day. It's supposed to be a dressy shirt but because I wear it every day, I don't feel like it is special anymore. I think it's a good idea to wear a uniform, by the way, but the problem is that our uniforms are just not trendy fashionable) enough. They are usually too big for most students and young people are always happy to get home and change into a T-shirt or something more casual.

I really don't know when I will wear my nice shirt again. But it would be better if I could have a tie to match the shirt, and nice slacks (=trousers) with a belt to look better. The last problem is that I hate shopping and, believe me, going shopping with my mother is a real nightmare.

Vocabulary

- . I don't have an instinct for fashion. I wear casual clothes. My look says I'm a laid-back relaxed) kind of guy. I'm most comfortable wearing jeans, a T-shirt, and my flip-flops.
 - . My mother says that I come across as lazy and unintelligent because of the clothes I wear. She says they're not distinctive enough. She says they don't reflect my personality.
- (Source: World Link series.)

1. Describe the modern styles of clothing in your country.

Okay, well, that's a tough question because trends come and go. But I guess that every teenager and young person enjoys wearing jeans and T-shirts. A lot of young men wear sports clothes, and a few foreign brands, like Adidas and Nike, are really popular with the young crowd. Concerning girls, I would say that most young ladies wear rather tight clothes that accentuate their figures and emphasize their femininity. And in the last couple of years, miniskirts or shorts have become very fashionable, especially with boots or high heels.

2. How much influence does fashion have on children and young adults?

I think that fashion definitely has a major influence on young people and the way they shop and dress. Everyone cares about his or her appearance, but it's even truer for teenagers, because at that age, they are shaping their personalities and personal style. I think young people want to follow the norm and fit in, and in order to do so, they must follow the trends. Whoever is not trendy will be seen as different from the rest of the group. Famous actors, singers, and athletes play an important role when it comes to fashion, because they set the norm. Buying cool clothes allows young people to feel more confident.

3. Do you think that men and women have different attitudes toward fashion?

Yes, definitely! Women usually enjoy shopping, and they regard it as a hobby. Women are more likely to go shopping with friends in order to relax and enjoy themselves. On the other hand, most men I know only go shopping when they really need to buy something. Men go to the mall with a precise aim, whereas women might just be curious to see what shops have to offer. Women wouldn't mind shopping for hours while men will easily get tired and frustrated if they don't find what they are looking for. With regards to money, men might also be more careful with the way they spend their cash, while women won't hesitate if the clothes make them look good. I think that both sexes really have distinct attitudes to shopping.

4. Why do some people follow fashion in your country?

Well, I guess it's nice to look good and trendy. People want to buy cool clothes in order to make a good first impression on others, and they also want their friends to think that they look nice, or elegant, or hip (=cool). Looking attractive is important in society. Wearing nice clothes definitely gives people confidence. In addition, people enjoy spending time with pretty girls or handsome guys: it's always more pleasant than talking to someone very ugly, I guess. Although it makes me sound a bit superficial (=shallow), I think it's true: we're all attracted to beauty.

5. What are some of the negative aspects of the fashion industry?

I think that the main negative influence is that people care a little too much about their appearance and we tend to judge people upon their looks way too much. Everyone knows we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but unfortunately many people do. In addition, because people follow fashion, it seems like everyone wears the same kinds of clothes. Every young person wears the same items, the same brands. It's not really creative. On top of this, supermodels on stage are always very tall and skinny. As a result, many young ladies want to be as thin as they, and they consider themselves fat. It could be dangerous to their health, when they start skipping meals and eating less, to look better.

A Traditional Item of Clothing in Your Country

Tell me about a traditional item of clothing in your country.

You should say: what the item is
 what makes it special
 if it is common for people to own such item
and explain who usually wears this traditional item of clothing.

- Qipao = Mandarin gown: famous: fashionable for 100 years (trends come and go)
- 17th century: qipao = wide + loose. 1930s: tight + revealing
- Mix of tradition + modern style: shorter, sometimes comes with a jacket
- Elegant and sexy: sleeveless, and slits on the sides
- I have one for the summer: necessary to wear high-heels

Let me tell you about the most famous item of clothing in China. It is a one-piece dress for women, and we call it a qipao. I think that many foreigners call it a mandarin gown. The qipao is extremely popular in my country, and actually it's been fashionable for the last hundred years.

It was first designed during the Qing Dynasty, that is to say in the 17th century, but at the time, the qipao used to be a wide and loose garment for women to wear at any age. The dress would cover the whole body, and it had a straight cut, and it would hang straight down the body, so that you couldn't see the ladies' figures. But after 1900, things changed. In Shanghai, women from the upper-class modified (=changed) the style. The dress became tighter, and nowadays women still wear this version of the qipao. It actually accentuates (puts emphasis on) the shape of a woman's figure.

Nowadays, the dress is very trendy. Designers mix both traditions and modern trends to suit women's expectations. The dress has become shorter, sometimes falling above the knee. The collar has also changed. It could be a high neck, or a lower one; it could have the opening on the side. It varies.

The qipao dress can be worn for both formal events and more casual days. It is an elegant dress that usually comes in bright colors. I have seen a lot of dresses lately in the shops with embroidery on them. The needlework is extremely precise, and most dresses are quite expensive. Very often nowadays, the dress is slit on each side and quite high sometimes. It reveals (shows) a woman's legs, and people think it can be very sexy. I know that foreign women also want to buy such dresses when they travel in China. It's a symbol of Chinese culture.

I have one qipao at home. I bought it with my mother two years ago. I only wore it a few times, on special occasions. I think it's very graceful, but because it is a very tight dress, I don't particularly feel comfortable in it. In addition, I need to wear high-heels with it, which is a bit troublesome.

1. Why do people still sometimes wear traditional dress?

Well, to be honest, very few young people in China wear traditional clothes, but occasionally on festivals or other special occasions some women decide to wear a qipao. It's more common for older people to wear handmade clothes, and these garments usually include traditional buttons, a low cut collar, and embroidery on the chest. In my country, a lot of people from ethnic minority groups actually stick to the old traditional clothing. They wear it because they make their own clothes, but otherwise very few Chinese still wear traditional garments.

2. Compare the importance of traditional dress now and in the past.

Well, in the past most people used to wear traditional clothes, and I think that a lot of families actually made their own, or bought them from local seamstresses or tailors. This is why they were not influenced by foreign styles or materials. Nowadays, people buy their clothes in retail shops, and the clothes follow Western designs and trends. The clothes we wear nowadays are not handmade, and they are quickly manufactured. Very few people wear traditional Chinese clothing in my country, except for a few very old people, or on special occasions like weddings or funerals, or traditional performances for tourists. I guess traditional clothes reflect the culture, but I'm afraid that nowadays they belong to the past.

3. How is a person's choice of clothes influenced by different situations?

We choose the clothes we're going to wear according to where we are going, and what we are going to be doing. You are more likely to pay more attention to your outfit if you have an important meeting, rather than if you go to the supermarket. I think that women are even more careful than men. Their choice of clothes might also depend on their mood a lot. For example, a woman might wonder if she wants to attract attention, or rather be discreet(= Unnoticed.)

4. What can we learn about people from the clothes they wear?

Well, once again, we shouldn't judge a book by its cover (= we shouldn't judge people according to their appearance)but I guess we can judge how much a person cares about his or her appearance, so it means we might be able to realize if a person is very superficial or not. In addition, we can decide if the person is neat and tidy, creative or not, eccentric(=unconventional)or classic, old-fashioned or trendy, sporty or sophisticated. I guess clothes always reflect one or two sides of our personality.

A Uniform

Tell me about a uniform some people wear in your country.

You should say: who wears it
 what the uniform looks like
 why they have to wear a uniform
and explain how people feel about uniforms in your country.

- . Every student must wear a uniform=a tradition=an institution
- . Describe: white shirt, dark blue jacket and pants; red scarf for younger students
- . Is it a good idea to wear a uniform? Yes, no need to worry about clothes=saves time
- . Everyone can recognize students=discipline+safety
- . But the uniform is a bit old-fashioned=not trendy

Every student in China needs to wear a uniform at school from primary school all the way to the very last year of high school. The school uniform in China is an institution, and I believe my parents and my grandparents also had to follow this tradition.

The typical school uniform in Fujian consists of a white shirt with a dark blue jacket and trousers. It is a very simple ensemble and usually teachers ask their students to wear a pin with the name of the school on it. Primary school students also need to wear a red scarf around their necks. Red is the national color. Children wear what looks like a red triangle on their backs. It represents one corner of the Chinese flag.

I think wearing a uniform is a positive thing for students because everyone looks identical. It erases the social differences between students who come from different backgrounds. It is harder to see whose parents have money and whose are not so rich. In addition, students don't need to worry about what to wear and they can save a lot of time in the morning.

I think teachers like students to wear a uniform because it makes it easier for them to discipline their students. A uniform represents organization and respect. It means that students should obey and listen. I think it's a little bit like the army. The generals wear a different uniform from the simple soldiers, just like the teachers wear their own clothes. They easily stand out and appear superior. On top of this, everyone can recognize students in the street so students cannot do too many bad things for fear of being noticed right away.

I think the main problem with the school uniforms in China is that the clothes are a bit too old-fashioned. Some students are reluctant to wear them because the clothes are too large for them or too conservative, not cool enough. I know that in Australia, students can wear trendy and colorful uniforms with their school logo embroidered on a sweater or polo shirt. I can imagine that it must be a lot nicer than our school uniform here.

Vocabulary

Basically, I go for anything that I think flatters my figure. Just like anyone else, I like to look good. At work I want to reflect a more conservative image. I want my look to say I am professional.

(Source: World Link series)

1. How popular are school uniforms in your country?

In China, every student needs to wear a school uniform, from primary school all the way to the last year of high school. There might be some schools that don't require students to dress up, but I believe they are quite rare. School uniforms are very simple. In secondary school, students put on a dark blue jacket with a white shirt, and we have a sports uniform too: that is, a sports sweater with the inscription "Xuexiao" on the back: it means "school" in Mandarin. To tell you the truth, I think that the uniforms are quite boring, and far from stylish. In addition, when I was in primary school, I had to wear a red scarf around my neck, because red is the national color.

2. Are uniforms a good thing because they make everyone appear equal?

Yes, I think so. That's one of the advantages of wearing a uniform. You can't tell the rich students from those who don't have so much money. Well, actually, it only limits the differences, but in fact you can still see if a student has money or not by the bag he or she carries, or the shoes he or she wears. I think that the biggest advantage of the uniform is that students don't waste time in the morning picking the clothes they would like to wear. It reminds students they should focus on their studies, and not so much on their appearance.

3. What are the other purposes of uniforms?

Well, students can easily be recognized in the street. If they skip school (=don't go to school), or if they want to enter an Internet cafe (because in China students are not allowed to go in), or if they do something bad, people can quickly spot them and intervene (=take action). I think that, in addition, school uniforms help teachers to enforce discipline. People who wear a uniform are more likely to listen and obey. Uniforms represent organization and seriousness. Maybe students also feel like they are all similar, so it is easier for them to talk to each other and socialize.

4. How important are clothes as an expression of personality?

I would say that clothes are extremely important nowadays. I think that clothes reflect people's tastes. You can judge if people care about their appearance or not, you can see if they are rather shy or outgoing. Sometimes colors can also express whether or not people are active, enthusiastic or even optimistic. On the other hand, I was raised to believe that we shouldn't judge a book by its cover. Appearances can be deceptive (=can deceive you). A man might wear a suit on a daily basis at work, and you might think that he is serious and reliable, but in fact he may go out every night, drink a lot of alcohol and lie to everyone. Very often, clothes reflect your professional position rather than your personality.

5. How are people judged according to the clothes they wear?

I guess that nowadays first impressions are very important, and first impressions are usually based on appearance. So it's essential to look as good as possible in order to please others, and to gain confidence within yourself. In a lot of jobs, people will judge each other according to their appearance. A teacher who wears sneakers doesn't look so professional. A doctor who doesn't wear a white coat might not be taken seriously. Young people can also judge each other according to the clothes they wear, and this could create gaps between rich and poor kids. This is why I think it's great to actually have kids wear a uniform at school.

If you judge people at first glance, you will have to rely on their physical appearance, their

manners, and the way they dress. If you only follow your first impression, then clothes are very important, because they reflect social status and style. But I think that smart people know you shouldn't judge people too quickly. You can't be too superficial (= only care about appearance. Shallow people are never appreciated.

21 Food

Proverb:

**The way to a man's heart is through
his stomach.**

=Most men love to eat, so feed your husband well and he will always love you.

Sample Answer

Someone Who Is Good at Cooking

A Special Meal You Ate

A Health Problem

Practice:

A Picnic or a Meal You Ate Outside

Key Words

to barbecue=to grill

delicious=tasty=savory

a special dish=a specialty

a great cook= a chef

Chinese cuisine=Chinese cooking

sea food=crab, lobster, oysters, squid...

a mix of flavors/taste=sweet, sour, spicy, salty

stunning =sensational=brehtaking

Someone Who Is Good at Cooking

Tell me about a person who is good at cooking.

You should say: who the person is
 what dishes this person can cook
 how often he/she cooks
and explain what other people think about this person's cooking skills.

- . Who? An amazing chef (my mother)
- . She learned when she was young + she often talks about and learns about cooking.
- . Sea food+ other specialties
- . On the weekend=special meal. My father and I are lucky.
- . On big festivals=she tries even harder and delights everyone.

Let me tell you about my mother who is a terrific chef! She can cook pretty much everything, and she always spoils me and my father with delicious food.

My grandmother taught my mother how to cook when she was very young and she picked up a lot of recipes from my granny. They frequently talk about cooking together, and they like to try new dishes. My mother has a wide collection of cook books and I often see her skimming through them to surprise the family with new dishes.

As you know, Fuzhou is a coastal city. As a result, we often eat sea food and my mother can prepare crab, lobster or shrimp with a variety of sauces and spices. It's so good! So tasty! I really enjoy it when she cooks spicy food. She really seems to know how to mix herbs and spices.

She spends a lot of time in the kitchen and my father never complains about it. Each meal is a treat, especially on the weekend when she has more time. For my birthday, she always puts together a great meal to make me happy.

And I'm not even talking about the big festivals...she decorates the table; she boils, fries, steams, stews, bakes. She's a stunning cook and if you give me 9 points, I will invite you to taste her specialty: roast duck! It's sensational!

vocabulary

- . The potato chips are salty and crispy.
- . The fresh vegetables are crunchy. I like to eat crunchy apples(=it makes a sound when I take a bite).
- . American popcorn is always buttery. I don't think it's very healthy. It must be fattening.
- . My mother is a chef. She knows how to cook a juicy steak to perfection!
- . This food has no distinctive flavor. It tastes bland to me. It's a bit boring, to tell you the truth.
- . At KFC they serve crispy fried chicken. It's pretty tasty.

1. What kinds of food do people in your country like to eat?

Well, it really depends on the area, and you know that likes and dislikes also vary from one person to another. In my province, people frequently cook sweet food. One of our specialties is sweet and sour pork. If you go to western China, chefs usually prepare spicy dishes. A lot of people enjoy eating their local traditional cuisine. But on the other hand, a lot of young people have gotten into the habit of eating Western fast food, and the local McDonald's or KFC is constantly crowded. The food there is different from what people usually eat at home, and their marketing campaigns are also very efficient.

2. Do you think that most people in your country eat healthily?

Yes, I definitely think so. In China, most people, like me and my family, are used to cooking at home. It means that the food we eat is clean and not too oily. In addition, typical Chinese cuisine always involves eating a lot of vegetables, as well as rice, and frequently fish or sea food as well. This kind of food is very nutritious and healthy. Although it is true that a lot of people occasionally go out to eat fast food like pizza, greasy hamburgers or oily noodles, I still think that a majority of people in China pay attention to their eating habits.

3. Do older people and younger people like the same kinds of food?

I think that they basically enjoy the same kinds of food, but young people also like changes, while older people usually stick to the same food week after week. I guess that the older you get, the more you need to be careful with what you eat. I believe that young people are always willing to try new restaurants and new flavors. Many young people are attracted to foreign cuisine such as food from Japan or Italy. I think it would be easier for me to convince my classmates to eat in a Thai restaurant than to persuade my grandfather to do so, for example.

4. What kinds of food do you think will be more popular in the future?

I think that traditional local food will be more popular in the future, because people will get tired of globalization and the international influences it brings with it. I think that in 5 or 10 years, foreign restaurants won't be as cool as they are nowadays, and people will get back to cooking their own food and following old recipes.

5. Is food an important aspect of cultural life in your country?

Definitely! Food is a major aspect of Chinese culture. We love to eat great food in China. We are always very proud of our local specialties. Actually, eating tasty food is a priority in life for most Chinese. When people travel, they always want to taste new delicacies and flavors. You might know that in China, when we greet each other, we don't ask "How are you?" like in English, but we ask people if they have eaten yet. We say, "Hello, have you eaten?" Food is an essential part of our culture.

6. How important is food for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays and festivals?

Food is extremely important for big celebrations. In China, there is no party without food. For Spring Festivals, families spend hours preparing the most fantastic meal of the year. For a wedding, guests are invited for a big meal. A wedding dinner will last for a long time, with a great variety of dishes. Food is a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture.

A Special Meal You Ate

Tell me about a special meal you ate.

You should say: where and when you ate
 what the occasion was
 what was special about the meal
and explain what other people thought of the meal.

When? Where? Why?

Describe the place in detail

Describe the food

Describe the atmosphere

·In the future...

For my mother's birthday, my father decided to invite the whole family to the nicest hotel in the city. We had dinner at the Shangri-La hotel, and it was the first time I'd ever been to such a fancy restaurant.

The Shangri-La is the most renowned hotel in my hometown. It's a prestigious five- star palace, and only rich people can afford to stay there. I was amazed by the setting: the ceiling in the hotel is extremely high, and the place is really well-decorated with paintings and chandeliers. It is a pleasure and a privilege to eat there.

My father booked a table for the three of us as well as my grandma on my mother's side of the family. He put our names down for the buffet, so that we could eat everything we wanted, and as much as we liked. It was absolutely incredible! There was so much tasty food available, you wouldn't believe it! First of all, the sea food, with crab, lobster, shrimps and oysters...I filled my plate twice, and I enjoyed every bite! Then I went to get meat: the beef filets were stunning, and the pork chops were out of this world! Later on, we had dessert, and my father kept on getting chocolate pudding. I completely fell for the apple pies.

My grandmother did not eat that much because she says she must be careful with her diet, because of her health, but she enjoyed looking at us feasting (=eat a lot). My father told the waitresses it was my mother's birthday, and they gave us a cake to take home. They also brought many little cup cakes with candles on them, and we all sang the birthday song. My mother laughed a lot, and I think she was sincerely happy.

It was a memorable meal, and I hope to get a chance to go there again soon, although I know it must be very expensive. I think that in the future, once I have a great job, I will invite my family to such restaurants on a regular basis, because it is truly enjoyable to eat in a top-notch classy) place like that.

1. What is the most important meal, breakfast, lunch or supper?

I think that in China, lunch is the fundamental meal. As a student, I have a two-hour break, and I can go home to eat. My grandmother usually prepares some amazing food for me and my parents. She always asks me to eat more in order to get plenty of energy to get

back to school and study hard. Very often, dinner is a light meal. My family frequently eats porridge, and drinks some soup for dinner. They say it's not healthy to eat a lot at night.

2. Compare the people in your country's eating habits nowadays and 20 years ago.

Okay. I think that twenty years ago, people did not spend as much money on food as nowadays. Twenty years ago, people worried about having enough to eat, rather than eating healthily. Twenty years ago, a lot of people used to grow their own vegetables, or they would go to the market to buy food. Nowadays, everyone goes to huge supermarkets to buy imported products from other provinces or countries. In addition, people rarely went to the restaurant in the past, but it has become very common these days. I think that people also eat a lot more meat today. Meals are richer and more nutritious than in the past. Many people now eat oily and unhealthy food. You can see that people in China are much bigger now than in the past. Obesity (=being too fat) has become a problem for young kids.

3. Do you think there are problems with food safety nowadays?

Yes, definitely! Did you hear about the milk scandal that took place in China four years ago? It killed quite a few babies and some factory managers were actually sentenced to death after the trial. I think we are all a bit worried about the food we eat. We wonder what chemicals farmers use on the vegetables they grow. We are concerned with hygiene (= cleanliness) in restaurants. We hear stories about genetically modified corn and rice. It's a bit scary, and I don't know how we have come to this.

4. What should the government do to solve the food safety problems ?

There should be more controls and inspections on farms and in food factories. I think the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers should be restricted. There should be strict standards to follow. Maybe farmers should be encouraged to grow less, but they should make sure that the quality is better.

5. If I gave you a choice, would you rather manage a hotel, a restaurant, or a tea house?

I would choose to run a restaurant, because I think there is more money to be made. In China, people spend a lot of cash on food. If the food is good, and the environment pleasant, people won't mind spending a few hundred yuan on a meal. I would need a lot of money to start with, in order to rent a nice place and decorate it properly. The kitchen equipment must be expensive too. Then I would need to hire a good chef to guide the other cooks. It would be a lot of planning.

6. If you were preparing a special dinner for 6-8 people, what would you cook?

I like cooking, although I hardly ever cook at the moment because I live on campus at university, and I don't have access to a kitchen. But If I had to arrange dinner for my friends, I would definitely grill a fish with soy sauce and ginger. I would also fry mixed vegetables and sliced pork with onions. In Fuzhou, we really enjoy eating crab, so I would steam a crab for each guest. It is actually very easy to do if you know what you are doing. On top of this, I would probably prepare a soup with radish (=a white vegetable) and stewed pig bones, but I would have to check the recipe with my father first.

A Health Problem

Tell me about a health problem people face in today's society.

You should say: what the problem is
 what causes this health problem
 what the consequences are for people's lives
and explain what people could do to prevent this health problem.

- . Malnutrition+ obesity=many children are overweight.
- . Fast food chains are everywhere.
- . People don't cook so often. Why?
- . Consequences for health: high blood pressure, vascular+cardiac problems
- . How to solve the problem? Education+enjoy Chinese food

Unfortunately in China, more and more people, especially the young ones, suffer from malnutrition and obesity. Usually Chinese people are thin and healthy. We have a body and genes that prevent us from getting too overweight. But in the last 5 years, our eating habits have changed with the appearance of new products directly imported from Western countries, or related to Western influence.

Nowadays, fast food chains have mushroomed all over the cities, and places like KFC, McDonald's, or Pizza Hut are always crowded. People also buy quick food in supermarkets: they eat a lot of snacks and soft drinks which are not good for their health.

People don't cook as much as the older generations used to. Parents are very busy with their job, and I believe that a lot of grown-ups have become a bit lazy. Because they also have more money, they go out to restaurants more often. The problem is that the food is very frequently oily there.

With obesity comes a lot of other health problems such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular(=heart) problems. If people get fat, their lifespan is likely to be shortened.

I believe we can solve this problem through education in schools and on TV. We should instruct adolescents on healthy eating habits, and encourage people to enjoy traditional Chinese cuisine, as it is both savory and healthy.

Vocabulary

- . Vegetables: cauliflower, green beans, cabbage, carrots, eggplant, lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes, spinach.
- . Meat: chicken wings, chicken feet, beef steaks, pork chops, mutton, lamb (=baby mutton).
- . Organ meat(=the insides of animals): liver, kidney, heart, tripe, sweetbreads(=pancreas of calves)
- . British cooks, it seems, have lost their taste for organ meat. But take the heart for example, the less popular cuts can be delicious, as well as nutritious. Liver dishes are high in protein and low in fat.
- . This is so good! =It's out of this world! =it's so delectable! =It's a taste from heaven!

1. Who do you think should pay for health care?

Well, I think that the government should try to help as much as possible when it comes to hospital fees. On the other hand, I realize that China is so populated that it would represent a huge undertaking to pay for everyone's health care. Right now, more and more rich people get private health coverage, but every company and employer must provide insurance for their workers. I think it is very good that our government made a policy to enforce this regulation.

2. Do you think that people take enough responsibility for their health?

Yes, I think so. People realize that health is the most precious thing they have, and that they should be careful. Some men don't exercise enough, and drink too much alcohol, which is detrimental (=harmful) to their health. They will probably understand that they should have led a different lifestyle when they start to suffer from high blood pressure or, worse, heart disease or liver cancer. It might be too late by then though.

3. Do you think that the government should promote a national health drive?

I think that the government is doing its best to give people access to a free or at least cheap health care. Of course, it is always possible to improve the situation, and to allocate more money, and make some reforms in terms of social welfare, but in China, everything is more complicated because of the large population. This year, and for the first time ever, the government managed to distribute money to farmers all over the country, in order to improve farmers' living standards and health care.

4. How have health services improved in your country in recent years?

First of all, a lot of hospitals have been modernized, and thanks to new technologies, it is easier for doctors to make the right diagnosis (judgment). In addition, patients can enjoy a better environment: hospitals now provide more rooms and more space for patients. A lot of doctors now receive a better education, and experts share their results on their research. This really benefits people's health. In terms of policies, the government has asked some factories to produce some pills and tablets at a cheap price, and the government has distributed those medicines in the countryside to people with low incomes. On top of this, as I just told you, farmers now receive insurance from the government, so they can go to the hospital just like the people in the city.

5. How well are health care staff (doctors and nurses) trained in your country?

They are better trained than before. Doctors in China have to study medicine for 4 or 5 years, and then pick a specialty: whether they want to become a physician (=a general doctor=a GP, practitioner), or a pediatrician (= doctor for kids), or a dermatologist (= skin doctor), or a gynecologist (= a woman's doctor). Nurses also receive professional training. Many people actually study overseas and come back to practice in China.

Not so well, in my opinion. I think that most doctors only have a Bachelor degree, and they have not acquired enough experience to deal with some serious illnesses. I think that some hospitals in big cities have a great reputation, while others are considered to be second-rate (=second-class). If you needed to get a serious operation, you would need to get to a modern city where surgeons are specialized and professional. Services could definitely be improved.

A Picnic or a Meal You Ate Outside

Tell me about a meal you ate outside.

You should say: where and when you ate
 what the occasion was
 what was special about the meal
and explain your feelings about eating outside.

- 1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of eating in a restaurant?*
- 2. Is it common for people in your country to go out to eat?*
- 3. Why is fast food so popular today?*
- 4. What do you think of vegetarians?*
- 5. How does Western food influence Chinese people's eating habits?*

22 Sports

Proverb:

No pains, no gains!

=You must work hard if you want big results.

Sample Answer:

An Exciting Sport You Play or Watch
Something You Do that Is Good for Your Health
Something You Do to Relax

Practice:

Someone Who Won a Competition
A Sports Competition

Key Words

to exercise=to keep fit=to work out

to collaborate=to team up= to cooperate

Liu Xiang runs the 110-meter hurdles.

Facilities=pool, stadium (track and field), gym

A racket is required to play badminton, tennis, ping-gong.

strong muscular=athletic

precise=accurate

Fascinating=captivating

An Exciting Sport You Play or Watch

Tell me about an exciting sport you either play or watch.

You should say: what the sport is and why you like it
 if it is popular with other people in your family/country
 where and when you play or watch it
and say how you feel when you play or watch it.

- Basketball: When did I start playing? Is it a popular game in China? Easy to learn?
- Healthy=good way to keep fit (upper body and legs)
- A team sport=need to collaborate and help each other+great way to socialize
- It's important to try to win: great feeling. Determination and ambition are important.
- On TV, NBA is impressive, especially the last minutes of the game.

I started getting interested in basketball about three years ago because all of my classmates were total NBA fans, and they kept on talking about the games they watched on TV. In addition, they also got together after class to shoot some hoops. Although I did not know much about basketball, I quickly learned the rules, and now I really enjoy playing with my classmates. Because I am pretty tall, this game is good for me, and I have improved very quickly.

I think playing this sport is very healthy because it can keep me fit. It is a good workout for both legs and arms. It involves a lot of running and jumping around, but you also need to be precise in order to score.

I like to play basketball because it is a team sport, and so you need to collaborate if you want to win. Everyone must attack and defend together if you hope to win. No one can be lazy or selfish, and we have to help each other and work as a team. On top of this, it is a good chance to socialize and to hang out with my friends.

It is a very exciting game because we compete to win. I think there is no better feeling than fighting hard if you end up winning the game. You can feel the thrill when you come first!

I often watch the American basketball league on the sports channel, and the matches are captivating, especially the last couple of minutes of the fourth quarter, when the teams are always tied. They commit a lot of fouls and shoot free throws. There's a lot of suspense. We all expect them to make one last amazing shot to win the game. It is a very exciting sport to watch.

Vocabulary

- if you play darts, you should aim at the bull's eye(=the center)on the dartboard.
- You play tennis and ping pong with a racket. You must serve to start playing.
- you play badminton with a racket and a birdie(=that flying thing you hit over the net).
- You play golf with a golf club. Players attempt to hit balls into each hole of a golf course.
- If you want to get stronger, you should lift weights. Buy some dumbbells so that you can do it at home..
- My grandfather frequently plays chess on the weekend. He carries his chess set everywhere he goes.

(Source: Test Your Vocabulary by Peter Watcyn Jones)

1. Why do boys and girls often play different sports?

I guess that most girls cannot compete with boys, especially at basketball and football. Those games require a lot of strength that girls don't have. So they choose different sports. In China, girls play badminton a lot, because they can easily find another girl to play with. If they want to play basketball, it will be hard to find 9 other girls to join in. Girls enjoy yoga, dancing, and swimming, because they can relax and work out at the same time. Girls don't want to get stronger, I think. They simply want to remain fit and flexible. On the other hand, a lot of guys want to get strong. They like to break a sweat and exercise hard. It must be related to their mentality(=mindset=frame of mind=attitude)

2. Why don't some people want to play sports?

I suppose it must be related to their education and their personality. If their parents didn't encourage them to practice sports at a young age, chances are they won't enjoy running and competing. In addition, some people simply don't see the point of (= understand why) exercising. These people usually like to read and listen to music. Sports require motivation, and being a little aggressive too. Some people simply don't have this mentality. Some might say they are a little lazy. I think everyone is different: in English you say "to each his own," right?

3. Are famous sportspeople good examples for young people to copy?

Yes, definitely! I think a lot of famous athletes can be great role models, because they are hard-working, motivated, and persistent. These champions never give up, and this is a great message to pass on to children. In addition, they can make children dream, and it's important for them to have goals and ambitions. In China, many teenagers regard Kobe Bryant or Yao Ming as their idols. These celebrities represent an ideal for children. They also show great values. For instance, everyone knows that Yao Ming is very considerate and generous. He donated a lot of money to charity in the past. Young people can learn a lot from him.

4. What part does competition play in other areas of people's lives?

Well, young people in China know that they will have to compete in their future life. First of all, at school they must get better results than others if they want to have a chance to enter a prestigious university. College graduates must then compete to find a good job. Nowadays, it is quite challenging because of the huge population in China and the economical crisis, and of course employers have also become more demanding. So people have to be ready to compete on the job market. Later on, when they have a job, they might need to compete in order to make more money. Many positions require workers to attract more customers to their company and to find better marketing strategies. If you are not competitive, you will lose your job. Finally, you might also need to compete to charm the lady (or the guy) you have fallen in love with...

5. Do you think that society will become more competitive or less competitive in the future?

I don't see how things could get less competitive. Young people have very high expectations, and everyone wants to succeed in order to lead a better life. In terms of business, it will be essential to be more creative than others to make money. I think that students will also be required to study harder to achieve their goals. It seems like life is going to be tough (=difficult) for everyone.

Something You Do that Is Good for Your Health

Tell me about something you do that is good for your health.

You should say: what is it you do
 how often you do it
 whether you do this activity alone or with other people
and say why it is good for your health.

- . Running/jogging: Since when? How often?
- . Good exercise: muscles + heart
- . Mental health + persistence + no stress
- . If I don't do it...
- . Stretching + healthy food

I try to go running as often as I can. I started this activity when I was in high school. At the time, my father and I would go jogging at night, after I did my homework. It was a good chance to spend time with my Dad since the two of us were extremely busy all the time. Nowadays, I try to go running at least twice a week, but it depends on my schedule.

First of all, running is a great form of exercise. It's beneficial for my heart, as I try to maintain my efforts for at least 45 minutes every time. It's a sport of endurance. I need at least 15 minutes to warm up, and then I try to go a bit faster to break a sweat. It's definitely a good workout, especially for my legs: it can make my calves, my quads and my hamstrings much stronger.

My PE teacher at school always told us that running could reduce the risks of cardiovascular disease (= heart problems). My mother sometimes goes running too, but it's because she wants to lose weight. In my case, I don't really run to get stronger, but more to relax and forget about my homework and stress. As a student I am very busy. Running is a great way for me to release all the pressure I accumulate because of the competition and the heavy workload at school. In addition, when I run, I try to push my limits, and it teaches me how to remain determined and persistent.

I found out that if I don't go running on a regular basis, I am more likely to get tired easily, even frustrated (= irritated). I think that running gives me energy, even if it makes me tired right afterwards. The following day, I usually feel refreshed and dynamic (= energetic). Whenever I feel sad or disappointed about something, I put on my sneakers (= trainers) and I go for a run. Jogging definitely has some psychological benefits for me.

On top of this, I stretch for a long time after running, in order to relax my muscles and avoid being sore the following day. I think that running is a great way to keep fit, although it could be a little hard on your knees, which is why it's important to remain flexible. And of course, it is fundamental to keep a healthy diet. PE teachers and parents should emphasize on this point with young children. Exercise and nutritious food are the necessary ingredients for a healthy lifestyle.

1. What are the benefits for adults of doing sports ?

Well, I think the advantages are almost the same for adults as they are for children. Adults do sports in order to keep fit. When people get older, it is sometimes difficult to remain slim and energetic. Exercising on a weekly basis allows you to feel better, and to think more clearly. When you go for a run, or after a good sweat, you will feel relaxed. It is a great chance to forget about your daily worries. Finally, adults are busy with their work, and they might not have so much time to hang out with their friends. Playing basketball or badminton gives them an occasion to meet up with friends or relatives.

2. What do you think of the saying "a healthy body leads to a healthy mind"?

I couldn't agree more with this saying. I definitely think that when you exercise and you are fit, it will be easier for you to concentrate on your work. I go running two to three times a week, and after a workout I feel refreshed and calm. And actually if I don't go running for a few days because I am too busy and my schedule doesn't allow me to do so, I feel tired, and I find it hard to be efficient at work. I truly think that people who are overweight will get tired easily in their studies or work. Couch potatoes are never as productive as people who exercise.

3. Do you think schools should emphasize team sports over individual sports ?

I think that both are extremely important. Team sports are always beneficial for young people, because they can bring everyone closer together. In our society, it is very important to learn how to collaborate and get along with others. However, individual sports are also helpful, because kids also need to learn how to rely on themselves. I think that individual sports can teach young people how to be strong-minded, and determined. When a girl is running (around the track) in order to get a good mark, she can only depend on herself. I think there's a lot to be learned through individual sports.

4. What are the dangers of having no regular relaxation?

If people don't take time to relax and instead keep on working hard all the time, they will definitely get tired, and they might even become sick. Workaholics and people who work under a lot of pressure might become irritated (= annoyed=upset) easily, and they might bring their work problems home with them. I think that someone who doesn't know how to relax will miss out on all the good things life has to offer. If people always have a busy schedule and can't spare time to have fun, their friends will think that they are dull (= boring). In addition, if you never relax, I believe that you won't be able to focus on your job as much as you should, and your results will most likely be disappointing.

5. How can people do exercise without spending much money?

Well, young people usually play basketball outside, which doesn't cost them any money. The courts at school are always free. In addition, jogging and hiking also don't cost a cent. You can also keep fit at home by doing push-ups and crunches (=to work on your stomach muscles) in your apartment, or skipping just outside your house. All of these don't require any subscriptions to a gym or a club.

6. Is it better to exercise in a group or by yourself?

It depends on what you like. Some people like team sports because they can socialize and encourage each other. It's usually more fun. Others prefer to train alone, because they can fully relax and forget about their problems. Some people also like to exercise on their own, because they can go at their own pace.

Something You Do to Relax

Tell me about something you do to relax.

You should say: what is it you do
 how often you do it
 whether you do this activity alone or with other people
and say why this relaxes you.

- . Swimming: especially in the summer+indoors in winter time=pleasant+ relaxing
- . Summers are extremely hot and humid: stressful. Swimming is a great answer to this problem.
- . Great exercise: good for my whole body
- . No stress=I can forget about my problems at work. Water=peaceful
- . I can go on a day-trip outside Fuzhou: many stunning rivers, calm and beautiful.

My favorite hobby is swimming, and I try to swim as often as possible. Obviously, it is always more pleasant to get wet in the summer, and there are also some nice indoor swimming pools in my city, so it is possible to practice this sport all year round.

The weather in Fuzhou can get extremely hot in the summer. If you go out, you will sweat a lot, which is really not a good feeling. I believe that this extreme weather could be a cause of stress. Swimming can be refreshing when you feel worn out (=tired).

Swimming is an excellent form of exercise, and I believe it is good for every single muscle group. You can develop your shoulders and arm muscles when you do the breast stroke; when you kick with your feet, you give your legs a workout. And naturally, it is very beneficial for your heart, as you have to breathe in and out and maintain a constant effort to stay afloat.

I love to get into the water. It is so relaxing. It's a good way for me to forget about my daily worries, which are usually related to work (or studies). It definitely reduces the harmful effects of stress. I like to lie on my back and float. I put my ears in the water, and everything becomes silent. It is so peaceful, so enjoyable.

I am lucky because Fuzhou is surrounded by mountains and forests, and there are some stunning rivers which are perfect for going for a swim. During the summer holiday, I can go with my friends to a place called Yongtai. It's about 45 minutes away from Fuzhou. There are many waterfalls, and the water is crystal clear. It's like paradise!

1. What are the most popular ways of relaxing in your country?

Well, it really depends on people's age. I think that most middle-aged people enjoy watching TV after a long day at work. Nowadays, everyone has a computer, so they can also download movies for free. I believe that it is very common for young people to chill out while watching a film with their roommates or relatives. In addition, most young adults like to surf the Internet. They read articles online or chat with their friends using Instant Messenger programs such as MSN or Skype. Young guys are frequently very big basketball fans, and they play or watch the NBA as often as they can. On the other hand,

senior citizens like to get together with their neighbors. They play mahjong or go dancing together.

2. Do men and women choose to relax in similar ways?

Actually, I do think that women and men relax in a similar way (=I emphasize the fact that I really think that they have similar hobbies). They both like to meet their friends for a good dinner. Both men and women enjoy watching TV or going to the cinema. They might like different kinds of movies, but their hobbies are pretty much the same. In addition, they both know that doing sports is extremely important for their health. Men might play basketball or football, and women frequently go swimming or play badminton. I think that one of the only big differences is that most Chinese women truly enjoy shopping, but men would rather go to the bar to unwind (=to relax) with their friends.

3. Do you think that people's lives are more stressful than in the past?

Definitely! Nowadays, people worry a lot more than in the past. First of all, it is difficult to find a well-paid job. More and more students graduate from university with a degree, but still can't find a suitable job. Life is challenging. Young people also have higher expectations than in the past; as a result, it's easier for them (for us) to get disappointed. In addition, life is more expensive than in the past. So people need to have a decent job in order to lead a comfortable lifestyle.

4. How can stress at work affect your personal life ?

If something goes wrong at work, it will bother you a lot, and it might be hard to forget about the problem, even when you get home. Ideally (= in a perfect world), it would be nice to be able to leave work behind and enjoy life with family or friends completely, but I am afraid that is almost impossible. People focus on their work a lot, especially ambitious people who want to do a great job. Work is often a priority in people's life, and a husband who is stressed at work might get frustrated (=annoyed=upset) when he gets home and his baby is crying or his wife is complaining. It's hard to balance both success at work and a happy personal life.

5. What changes in lifestyle and work practices might help to reduce stress?

First of all, I think that bosses should not ask their employees to work overtime unless it is really necessary. In China, a lot of workers have a tight schedule; they often work long hours. I think that a good boss should arrange a better timetable for his or her staff. In addition, I think that companies should try to organize more social activities for the workers in order for everyone to get to know their colleagues better. Workers should also get enough sleep at night in order to be well-rested before they go to work. If they are tired, they might become impatient. I think that doing sports regularly will also give them a chance to reduce their stress levels.

Someone Who Won a Competition

Tell me about someone who won a competition.

You should say: what the competition was about
 if it is a popular competition
 whether it was easy or hard for the person to win
and say how you felt when you saw him/her win.

1. What are the most common ambitions young people in your country have?
2. How important is ambition for young people's development?
3. What are the dangers for young people of being overly-ambitious?
4. Is a certain amount of difficulty in life good for people?
5. Are there more or fewer challenges for individuals in the modern world?

A Sports Competition

Tell me about a sports competition that you have seen or taken part in.

You should say: what the competition was and when it took place
 if it was popular with other people in your family/country
 where and when you played or watched it
and say how you felt when you saw or took part in this sports competition

- 1. How important is it to provide sports activities at school?*
- 2. Why do some young people want to play sports professionally?*
- 3. How important is good luck and hard work in sporting success?*
- 4. What are the benefits for a country of holding a major international event like the Olympics?*
- 5. Why do some people avoid challenges?*

23 Art

Proverb:

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

=What is beautiful to one person may not be beautiful to others.

Sample Answer:

A Famous Sculpture
A Work of Art You Have Seen or Heard about
A National Art Form
A Performance You Enjoyed Watching
A Movie You Recently Watched

Practice:

Something You Made by Hand
A Family Photo

Key Words

Amazing=stunning	impressive=spectacular=remarkable
Beautiful=gorgeous	creative=imaginative=innovative
Carved=sculpted=engraved	fantastic=extraordinary=magnificent
Calligraphy=art of writing=inscriptions	
to represent=to reflect=to mirror=to depict	

A Famous Sculpture

Tell me about a famous sculpture.

You should say: what the sculpture was
 who made it
 what you thought of it
and explain why it is so famous.

- . I don't know much about art but I can try to depict the Terra-Cotta Warriors of Xi'an.
- . Famous tourist destination. Emperor had thousands of statues made before his death.
- . Each statue is different=unique+life size+carved by hand
- . They were found by some farmers who were digging a well=attracted researchers
- . The site is gigantic+impressive. I would love to go there.

I am not an art expert so I won't be able to tell you about famous sculptures like The Thinker or the Statue of David, but I will try to describe the Terra-Cotta Warriors in Xi'an. This place has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in China.

The story goes that the Emperor Qin Shi Huang was afraid of dying. As a result, he decided to surround his mausoleum with replicas (=copies) of his army. He had up to 7000 statues of Chinese soldiers and horses created and today you can still see most of them.

Each statue was handmade and great attention was paid to details. Actually, every single warrior has a different facial expression and hairstyle. I can't imagine how much time it took for the artists to create all of them. What is even more surprising is that they are all life-sized statues.

Twenty years ago, all of them were still buried, but some farmers found some pottery as they were digging a well, which attracted archaeologists' attention.

There are probably hundreds more statues still buried around. I have seen pictures and it looks like a gigantic pit (hole excavation). The site is most impressive. I have never been there, but I believe that the visit must be worth the long trip.

1. How important is it to teach students to draw, paint, or sculpt?

Well, I think that it is important for every child to learn some artistic skills. Kids should have the opportunity to study and practice drawing when they are young. I believe drawing is a good chance for young people to develop their imagination and their sense of beauty. Later on, in high school, I don't think it is so important unless the student shows some interest in these activities.

2. What can students learn from studying the art of different cultures ?

I guess that art represents a culture, so if students learn about the art of different countries, they can learn about the history and the traditions of those countries, as well as the people's mentalities (=frame of mind=way of thinking) at the same time. For example, if you study Italian paintings from the 19th century, you'll also learn about the catholic religion and the social system that they had in Italy 200 years ago. I think it's a great opportunity for children to realize that the world offers many different cultures and ideas.

3. What makes some paintings so valuable?

A painting will be very precious if it is the work of a famous artist. Painters such as Da Vinci, Van Gogh or Picasso became so popular that their art is highly estimated, and one painting can cost millions of dollars. I guess their style was unique or very innovative at the time. A painting could also be valuable because of the time the artist spent on it.

4. What kinds of art can people see in public places?

In my hometown, there are many statues in different parks. The local government asked some local artists to share their sculptures with the public. It is a very good idea, and these works of art give a special atmosphere to the parks. In addition, I regard architecture as a kind of art too. So people can see beautiful facades in the old quarter of the city, as well as at the local temples. On top of this, there are quite a few art museums in bigger cities. It is a good chance for everyone to experience local art and learn about the artistic methods or skills needed to create it. In terms of craftsmanship, it is usually more common to see these arts in the countryside. I went to Hunan last year, and in a small village, there was a woman who showed us how they used to weave in the past. She had a very old weaving machine, and she showed us her work. It was so precise: it seemed difficult but yet so beautiful! You should have seen the table mats she made: gorgeous!

5. How important are art galleries in modern societies?

I think that art galleries are extremely important to societies because they display the objects societies consider beautiful. Art galleries are great places for people to appreciate fine art. They allow people to daydream, and they enhance (= develop) everyone's imagination. I regard art museums as sophisticated places. Only refined people can fully enjoy art. I think that children should be taken to art galleries, and a guide should explain to them why paintings are meaningful and what they actually represent. Everyone should understand that art expresses feelings. I really think that if every child and student could have access to some kind of art, the world would be more peaceful and beautiful.

6. Why do many people enjoy painting as a hobby?

Painting must be relaxing, I guess. It could be a good way for a person to forget about his or her problems. It's a quiet activity for people to unwind, and use their creativity at the same time.

7. Should governments spend money on providing art in public places?

Yes, definitely! Art can embellish (= decorate) our surroundings. And it is believed that people who live in a beautiful environment are more likely to be kind, polite, and patient.

A Work of Art You Have Seen or Heard about

Tell me about a work of art you have seen or heard about.

You should say: what the work of art is
 where it is and where you saw it
 whether you are generally interested in works of art
and explain what particularly interests you about this work of art.

- Da Vinci's Mona Lisa: most famous painting ever
- Da Vinci's work +background to the painting
- The enigmatic smile
- It was stolen for patriotic reasons.
- Future: I hope to get to see it in Paris someday.

I will attempt to describe Leonardo Da Vinci's famous Mona Lisa. It is without a doubt the most prestigious painting in the world, and everyone can easily recognize the portrait.

This masterpiece was painted in the 16th century, during the Italian Renaissance. It is an oil painting, and it represents a half-length portrait of a woman. The sitter was the wife of a rich merchant of Florence. Her first name was Lisa, and Mona is a contraction of ma Donna, which means "my lady" in Italian. They say that Da Vinci worked on the portrait for 3 years, and then put it away for a couple of years before finishing it right before his death.

The amazing amount of time he spent on the painting explains why there are so many details to her facial expression. Everyone knows that Mona Lisa displays an enigmatic smile. Her eyes are also quite stunning. I have heard people say that they seem to follow you wherever you are standing looking at her. Her face is very bright compared to the dark clothes she's wearing. Da Vinci said that he wanted to represent eternal femininity (=womanliness). I guess he succeeded, because she has been one of the most famous women in the world for more than 500 years!

The painting also comes with some amazing stories. I learned that at the beginning of the 20th century, the painting was stolen from the Louvre museum in Paris. It took the police 2 years to recover it, although the theft was very simple: an Italian man, who was employed at the museum, hid it in a broom closet and walked out with the painting under his coat. He was a patriot, and he thought that the painting should be returned to Italy. Oh yeah, I forgot to say that many people who have never seen the painting might believe it to be a large frame, but actually it's pretty small in size.

Although I don't know much about art, I truly hope to get a chance to travel to Europe in the future. I would love to get a chance to visit art museums in Italy and France. The architecture, the fountains, the statues, the old buildings; it must be breathtaking. I will also definitely stop in Paris to admire the Mona Lisa. It must be a once-in-a-life-time experience.

Vocabulary

- Contemporary art is very different from what used to be considered art 100 years ago.
- This kind of art is very abstract. I find it very hard to understand what the painters want to express.
- I love the way the artist uses perspective in this painting. It really seems to give some depth to the painting. It's a great illusion.

1. What is art according to you?

Well, that's a tough question, because nowadays art can actually represent so many things. Art can be a sculpture, a painting; it could be architecture, or music as well; it could be a design, or a specific skill that touches people deeply, and has an impact on their senses. Art is supposed to make people react; usually it affects people's perceptions of what is beautiful and nice. Since people have different points of view, different people enjoy different forms of art.

2. Should art be beautiful?

Well, here I'm gonna (= I'm going to) have to say "no" because I have seen many drawings and sculptures that were definitely considered art, although I thought they were extremely ugly. Art must create feelings; if it creates beauty, then it's even better, but it doesn't have to be beautiful. For example, the Mona Lisa, for me, is not beautiful. However, the techniques, and the feelings it creates when her eyes seem to follow you are stunning. It doesn't mean it's a gorgeous portrait. In addition, beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder(=observer), so different people will disagree whether a piece of art is beautiful or not. For example, I'm sure that some people really find the Eiffel Tower ugly. It's art, though. And there are also some paintings that describe wars and dead people. They make us react, and that's what art is really about.

3. Do you think that art is important to life?

Yes, definitely! Art gives color to our lives, it stimulates our imagination, and it makes people react. Without art, our lives would be very boring. Imagine: no pictures, no paintings, no TV, no colors. It's absolutely impossible to live without art. And by the way, even prehistoric societies used to draw on walls in their caves. It really means that humans are created with a sense of aesthetics (= perceptions + beauty). Art is a way for us to express our feelings, and it also generates (= creates) beauty and satisfaction.

4. Can having artistic skills help develop people's characters?

Yes, definitely. Take music for example. People use musical instruments to express their feelings. A young man can play hard rock to convey his anger or his stress, and others can play classical music because they enjoy peace and quiet. In addition, artistic skills are usually developed in class or in a group after school, so these classes are a great chance for students to meet people who share the same hobbies. They will realize they belong to a group and this will strengthen their likes and dislikes; they will become more confident about their own characteristics.

5. Which artistic skills do you wish you had?

I wish I could play the guitar. I love the sound of this instrument, and I think that people who can play the guitar are so cool. It's by far my favorite instrument because it can be adapted to play any style of music on it: we could play relaxing blues, or faster rock, or colorful flamenco. You know, anything is possible with a guitar. But it takes a lot of skill and practice to play. I think I might start learning after I graduate and find a stable job. It requires time, and I am not very coordinated, so I will probably need a lot of time!

6. Do you think we can learn artistic skills from books or do we really need teachers?

Well, I guess that talented people can learn artistic skills through books if they are imaginative. However, I think it's much faster and easier to learn with a teacher, because teachers offer guidance and advice. Teachers act as models too. A student who learns the piano will most definitely learn quicker if he has someone next to him to show him how it is done.

A National Art Form

Tell me about a national art form in your country.

You should say: what the form of art is
 how popular it is
 whether you are generally interested in works of art
and explain what particularly interests people about this form of art.

- Paper-cutting: ancient art = paper was invented in China
- Decorations: "window flowers" in Chinese = popular, especially around Spring Festival
- Female activity in the past: women could be judged by their skills. Now = expensive
- Meaningful: identical to calligraphy + Chinese zodiac animals = common
- Good luck = prosperity, health, harvest

My country is famous for its wide variety of art forms, especially folk arts: every Chinese person is familiar with embroidery, calligraphy, or handicrafts such as the making of Chinese knots. But in these 2 minutes, I will tell you about my favorite form of folk art, which is Chinese paper-cutting; you know, cutting paper with scissors in order to create a landscape or a portrait. Paper-making is one of the four great inventions my people came up with (along with gunpowder, the compass, and printing). Paper-cutting has existed for thousands of years.

Paper-cutting is extremely popular around Spring Festival every year. We buy paper-cuts as ornaments, and we usually stick them on windows or doors. In Chinese we occasionally refer to paper-cuts as *chuang hua*, which means "window flower". They decorate and bring life to our windows. In addition, some artists incorporate (= include) paper-cuts into the making of lanterns. The results are always stunning, and very traditional.

In the past, in the countryside, women would be judged upon their ability to shape paper. I know that my grandmother is very skilled at paper-cutting and paper-folding. Last year, I visited a shop where both a man and his wife designed all kinds of paper-cuts. The price of each piece was actually very high. They had them in albums, or framed for you to pick. It was gorgeous.

Sometimes artists first fold the paper and cut it. In this way, a symmetrical design is revealed when they unfold it. The designs are always meaningful. It's very common for artists to cut out the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, you know, like the dragon, the snake, or the horse. This year is the year of the rabbit, so I am sure you have seen many paper-cut rabbits on windows everywhere. I particularly like it when they mix a drawing and some Chinese characters, just like calligraphy. It's always so precise. The artist must be very careful and meticulous.

Usually paper-cuts are made of red paper in China. Red is the national color to start with, and on top of this, it also represents good luck. For the New Year, offering red paper cuts to someone means we wish them prosperity and health. In the countryside, red implies that we wish farmers good weather and good harvest.

1. What traditional crafts are still found in your country?

We can still find many different forms of arts and crafts in China. The first type I can think of is calligraphy. A lot of artists specialize in this art, and they create beautiful

scrolls and paintings for people to decorate their houses with. Just like every other traditional handicraft in my country, calligraphy is both beautiful and meaningful. In addition, a lot of old women have a gift for embroidery. They use a needle to create some amazing pattern son clothes. Paper cutting, puppetry, and the craft of making Chinese knots are also very long-established. Although they date back thousands of years, these art forms are still popular around Spring Festival. Fewer and fewer people are actually able to make them, so the price of each handmade craft can be very high these days, but people still like to buy such decorations from local artists. And it is not rare to see people observe the artists in their workshops in touristic areas. These traditional crafts represent one aspect of our cultural heritage.

2. How do people feel about handmade items as compared to machine-made items?

Well, handmade handicrafts are always more expensive because they are unique (= of one of a kind) and they usually require a lot of time and skills to create, so people appreciate them much more than something made by a machine.

3. Do you think that handmade arts will be widely available in the future?

No, I seriously doubt that handmade arts will be very common in the future. I am sure that some artists will still be able to keep the traditional arts alive, but it won't be as common as it used to be 100 years ago. It seems like we don't teach young people those forms of art anymore, so they are very likely to slowly disappear or at least become a lot less available.

4. How has machinery taken over from humans when it comes to making things?

Well, in the last 50 years, machinery has replaced our hands in many situations, whether it be at home, at work, or in our hobbies. First of all, at home, most people now own a washing machine, and don't need to hand-wash their clothes as often as before. I think that very soon in China, people will also own a dish washer too (most Western families bought one in the 1990s), although rich families would rather pay for a maid to take care of the household chores. In addition, at work, especially in factories, machines have enhanced efficiency and increased production. Workers have had to adapt to machines. Machines are now used in factory assembly lines, and manufacturers only need real people for the more precise tasks or to repair the equipment. Machines also do the most dangerous or most inconvenient jobs which has made working in a factory safer than before. Nowadays, because very few people have the skills required, woodworkers, carvers and tailors are regarded as artists and their prices are usually high. Everyone recognizes the quality of their items, however.

5. What are the effects of increased automation on people's lives?

I think that the mechanization and computerization of many aspects of modern life has facilitated our lives (= made our lives easier) a lot. People don't need to work as hard as before. Manual workers are not required to (= don't need to) carry such heavy loads as in the past, factory workers can enjoy a safer environment, and people at home can save time thanks to their car or their washing machine. We take the elevator, we call our friends on their mobiles anytime, and we watch movies on computers. All these items have made our life more exciting and definitely more convenient. Some people might tell you that it has also made people lazy. It is possible, but I think it all depends on how much you use these technological products. It's up to people to decide whether or not they want to be lazy. I prefer having the choice (rather than having to do everything all the time by myself).

A Performance You Enjoyed Watching

Tell me about a performance you enjoyed watching.

You should say: what the performance was
 where you saw it
 what you thought of the performance
and explain what was special about the performance.

- The Olympics' opening ceremony in Bird's Nest (massive) = impressive show
- High expectations + represented history + modernity through the performance
- Zhang Yimou = famous director. Creative. 4 inventions
- Printing technique = soldiers in a box going up and down like waves (precise rhythm)
- Other performances = drums, martial art, minorities + theme song = splendid

My answer might not be so original, but I found the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games absolutely stunning. Of course, as a Chinese person, I am quite patriotic and it's obvious that I was very proud that China got to host the Games, but I really feel that the performance that took place at the Bird's Nest, the massive stadium built for the occasion, was spectacular.

It was such an important moment for everyone in China, because we had been expecting this event for years. The rest of the world finally recognized the emergence of China as an important player in today's world. I think this is what the show depicted: our Chinese heritage, with thousands of years of history, and the modernity and the changes still taking place in today's China. And the perfect example of this combination (of ancient and modern) was mirrored (= represented) by the scroll (use your hands to show how it opens) that was unfolded on the stadium's field.

The whole show was designed by Zhang Yimou, a famous film and event director. He is renowned for being creative, and he often plays with colors in his work. He managed to display Chinese history during the ceremony. For example, the four inventions we are most proud of, including paper-making (represented by the scroll), gunpowder (represented by the magnificent fireworks), the compass, and the printing technique, were all on display.

Talking about the prints or seals, you must have seen the soldiers inside the boxes that symbolized Chinese prints. And on top of each print, there was a Chinese character. They all went up and down in turn according to a very precise rhythm, just like a wave. That was one of my favorite moments.

Besides, everyone remembers the thousand drum players and the thousand martial art (kung fu) experts. Different Chinese ethnic minorities also came down to play music and dance. We listened to the theme song *You and Me*. It was amazing, lively, splendid... almost magical! .

1. What makes some events more popular than others?

I suppose that the most successful events are those that happen on a regular basis, because people look forward to them with anticipation; For example, the summer or winter Olympics, the football World Cup or the Asian Games occur every four years, and people are always excited when the time comes. In addition, some events are renowned because they have been happening for many years. Events usually grow more popular with time

when they are well-organized. The number of participants (=members) at the Xiamen Marathon is growing larger every year, and at the same time the event is becoming more famous. Last year, the World Fair took place in Shanghai, and the organizers used the history of the event to promote it. They compared the main exhibition building to the Eiffel Tower that was assembled (=put together = built) in 1889 for the World Fair in France. I think that advertising for an event is a key strategy when it comes to making it a success.

2. What kinds of local events are common in your culture?

Well, I can think of a few local events happening in most Chinese cities. First, before or during most festivals, some associations organize parades in the streets to celebrate the New Year. Some local artists often perform the famous lion and dragon dance on New Year's Day. Two weeks after Spring Festival, most cities arrange a display of lanterns in the streets. This attracts many people, and streets are usually very crowded on that day. In addition, many senior citizens get together and put on a performance to promote Chinese opera and Chinese puppet shows. All these events happen most commonly around Spring Festival. On Dragon Boat Festival, local groups will take part in rowing competitions. At other times, cities might organize different exhibitions or sports events, like a marathon for example.

3. Do you think that local events are important for building a sense of community?

Definitely! Local events bring people closer together. It is a good chance to get to meet your neighbors, or help as a volunteer to improve life in the community. In addition, these events create a sense of community in your neighborhood or city, and that makes everyone's life more enjoyable.

4. What sorts of people enjoy helping to organize local events?

I think that people who most frequently help organize local events are senior citizens because they have more free time, and they want to keep on being useful to society. In addition, everyone agrees that their experience can be useful in creating successful events. I know that some university students give some of their time to local associations, or charities, because they are required to gain social experience, and they feel they can learn something from it. People who organize local events should be creative, considerate and patient.

5. How can hosting local and national events affect local areas?

It really depends on what the event is, but organized events definitely have a positive effect on cities and regions. When the city of Beijing held the Olympics, it was a huge deal for our capital, as well as the entire country. Many new facilities were built, such as the Bird's Nest stadium and the Water Cube, you know, that massive swimming-pool complex. In addition, roads and bridges were constructed and the subway was extended and improved. The government asked people to be as civilized and welcoming as possible. The Games not only had a huge impact on the economy, but were also beneficial in terms of the environment, and also acted as a way to spread Chinese culture. I believe that local or national events always promote the area where they are held (and its assets). Cities that do not organize anything never get their time in the spotlight (= people's attention).

6. What part is played by the media in local and national events?

The media definitely help promote local or national events. The radio can report on activities that are taking place in your city, and this will attract more people. The TV can advertise for events and remind people that it could be fascinating to attend. I think the media act as a platform (= a stage) to spread the news and entice (= tempt) the crowds.

A Movie You Recently Watched

Tell me about a film you have recently watched.

You should say: what the title of the film was and where you saw it
 what the story (plot) involves
 whether you have seen films by the same director
and explain how you feel about this film.

- Avatar: blockbuster: dazzling + breakthrough in terms of technology (3D)
- A science fiction epic film: plot (Humans want to mine the resources of a new planet)
- Visual effects: dreamlike jungle (fairy tale) + music (soundtrack)
- Breathtaking scenery (inspired by Huang Shan)
- Environmental values = preserve nature + aboriginal tribes

In January I went to see a major blockbuster called Avatar. I am sure that you have heard of it, or even seen it, because everyone talked about it when it came out. They say it was a breakthrough in terms of film-making technology, because it was released in 3D. It was my first time seeing a movie in 3D, and I must admit that I was dazzled by the picture and the impressive special effects. Avatar is a science fiction epic film. I thought the plot was quite simple, even if the background scenery was very creative and absolutely stunning. The action takes place on another planet (called Pandora), and humans are mining the mineral reserves of the new planet. They are looking for a very expensive type of rock. The problem is that the jungle where the precious stone is to be found is inhabited by indigenous people, who of course live very pure, traditional lives and who are ready to fight against the greedy humans.

What impressed me most were the visual effects. The story unfolds in a breathtaking jungle, but every plant and wild animal living there seems to come from a fairy tale. The director, James Cameron, really did an amazing job creating the background. And the music, you know, the soundtrack, was also excellent. Because of the 3D technology, I felt like I was part of the movie, and I actually put up my hands to protect myself a couple of times when they were fighting because it seemed so real!

I remember a scene where the hero of the movie rides a flying dinosaur, and the view is absolutely spectacular, just like a dream. I read that the mountains where the indigenous tribe lives were inspired by the famous Chinese mountains of Huang Shan, in Anhui.

Finally, I really enjoyed the movie because Cameron emphasized the fact that we should protect Mother Nature, as well as the aboriginal tribes who live in peaceful unspoiled areas. I think it's impossible to over-emphasize the importance of preserving our forests and the biodiversity of the world.

Vocabulary

- I like to go to the movies to watch historical epic films (= about legends and heroes) because the settings and the costumes are always impressive.
- I'm really into animated movies. I love every Disney movie, but my favorite is Aladdin because of the soundtrack: the music is absolutely brilliant, and the plot is so thrilling and imaginative.
- I'm not that crazy about big American blockbusters(= hits) because they usually focus too much on special effects. They also think that having a strong cast (= many famous actors) is essential. I generally prefer low-budget movies that show innovation, and if possible a bit of suspense. I hate it when the storylines are too predictable (= unsurprising) .

1. What are the most popular types of films where you come from?

Well, I believe that everyone has different taste, but in general men love action movies, such as war or martial art films (=kung fu). Women are keen on romance and romantic comedies. A lot of kids are big fans of movies like Harry Potter, and other films of the fantasy genre, because they make them dream. I know that most of my classmates frequently watch horror movies because they are quite thrilling.

2. Do you think that film-watching habits might change in the future?

As you most probably know, a lot of people download movies on the Internet and watch them at home. It is very convenient, and free, but I am afraid that this free ride will sooner or later come to an end, and people will have to pay to watch movies online. I also think that the next generations will watch more movies in the original version, because their English level will be better than ours is now. So people will follow the stories in English with subtitles, and we will not dub the voices into Chinese anymore, which will be great in some respects.

3. Do children and adults enjoy the same types of films?

Not exactly. Children love cartoons and animated movies. I believe that most grownups don't mind them, but would prefer watching different sorts of films, with real actors, and a more elaborate (=complex) plot.

4. Why do many films nowadays show a lot of violence?

That's a good question, and it fuels (= create) a lot of debates. I think that many men like to watch violent movies because, maybe deep inside, men need this kind of adrenaline rush (=intense excitement) but cannot experience it in real life. I think that young men always dream of having super-powers, and being able to crush (= destroy) anyone they dislike. Nowadays, we live in a pretty peaceful society even though there are occasional crimes, and violence simply lets people escape from reality. However, I think problems can sometimes happen when some people stop being able to discern (= distinguish) what is real from what is fictional.

5. Compare the popularity of national and international film stars in your country.

Well, China is definitely opening up to foreign movies, especially thanks to the Internet, but I still think that Chinese movie stars are more popular and recognizable than most American or British actors. For example, a lot of young people look up to actors from Hong Kong and Taiwan such as Jackie Chan and Andy Liu. On the other hand, a lot of Korean actors and actresses are gaining fame through soap operas and movies produced by Chinese directors.

6. Which qualities help actors and actresses become famous film stars?

Well, actors and actresses should without a doubt be charming and attractive if they want to become famous. I think that if an actress is truly gorgeous, it will be easier for her to be remembered. In addition, actors need to be talented. They need to be able to express different emotions and to pretend to be someone else according to the needs of the film director. I think it must require a lot of energy, preparation and concentration.

Something You Made by Hand

Tell me about something you made by hand.

You should say: what the thing was
 why you made it
 how you made it
and explain what other people thought of it

.

A Family Photo

Tell me about a family photograph you particularly like.

You should say: when the photograph was taken
 who took the picture
 who is in the photograph
and explain how you feel when you look at it.

1. *Are photographs better than postcards as a record of travel?*
2. *Why do some people use a professional photographer for family pictures?*
3. *How important are photographs as a record of family life?*
4. *Why are photographs often used in advertisements?*
5. *Assess the value of photographs in communicating the news.*
6. *How important are photographs as a record of history?*
7. *What is the function of the photograph of the author on a book or the performer on a CD?*
8. *What are the similarities and differences between a good photograph and a good painting?*

24 Music

Proverb:

Variety is the spice of life.

=Life becomes very monotonous without some break or change
in the daily routine.

Sample Answer:

- A Song You Enjoy
- A Public Event You Took Part in
- A Childhood Song You Remember
- A Famous Singer in Your Country

Practice:

- A Piece of Music or a Song that You Particularly Enjoy

Key Words

melody =tune =rhythm

lyrics + chorus =words to a song

soothing =gentle =tender =calming

a mix of genres =a combination of instruments

stunning =dazzling =captivating

meaningful =well-written

lively =energetic =passionate

catchy =memorable

A Song You Enjoy

Tell me about a piece of music or a song you particularly enjoy.

You should say:

- what the music/song is and where you first heard it
- who wrote it or sang it
- if it is popular with other people

and explain your feelings when you hear this music/song.

- Title; when? famous ?
- Meaningful + well-written (lyrics)
- Melody (gentle, harmonious, smooth)
- Singer + voices
- Music video + KTV

Let me tell you about a very famous song that came out in China in 2008. The song is entitled Beijing Huanying Ni in Chinese. It translates as Beijing Welcomes You. The song was aired non-stop on TV and on the radio, and I am pretty sure that everyone in China downloaded it onto their computers. It met with great success, and if you ask anyone in my country, they will be able to sing it without hesitation.

As you can guess, the song was released a couple of months before the summer Olympic Games were held in our capital city. You know, it was the first time that China has hosted such a competition, and it was a big deal for the government and the population. The aim of the song was to capture the spirit behind the Olympics, and also to inform everybody that Beijing was ready. The lyrics are very meaningful and well-written. The chorus was extremely catchy, and I think that everyone in China heard the song on a daily basis for like 2 months. We almost heard it too much.

In addition, the melody is very subtle, very smooth and gentle. It starts very slowly, but the pace quickly picks up to give more energy to the song. At several points during the song, there is an instrumental intermission, and that's a great time for people to hum the tune. There are trumpets and drums in the background. It sounds great!

More than 50 celebrities sing the song. Each singer sings a verse or two, and they all join in during the chorus. Some of them have stunning voices, and they can go very high. I especially like the very first voice we hear. It's a little girl who has a very pure voice.

Finally, if you watch the music video, you can see the singers performing in front of all the major monuments in Beijing. We get to peek at the Great Wall, at the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven and the hutongs, you know, those ancient streets, very famous in Beijing. The city looks dazzling. Of course the sky above is very blue, and it seems like a very attractive place to go to. If I ever go to Beijing in the future, I am sure that I will have this song in mind. Whenever I go to karaoke with my friends, we still always pick this song, because everyone can sing along, and it's a great chance to bring everyone closer together.

1. Should music be studied as a school subject?

I think so, because music is a form of art, and we have access to it on a daily basis.

unlike painting or sculpture. So I think it's important to understand music. Music always expresses feelings, and this is what teachers should teach their students. In addition, students could learn about the history of music, and also about international music, because every country has its own rhythm or style. But teachers should make class fun. I remember when I was in middle school, our teacher asked us to play the flute, and to sing some very old songs all the time. It was quite boring.

2. How important is music for a country?

Music is essential for a country. First of all, every country has its own music, which means that music can represent national identity. In addition, music is a good way to relax, and if citizens can take it easy when listening to music, it means they won't do bad things, or they won't complain about their bosses or the government. In English you say that "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast" (= music has the power to soften angry people). On top of this, music definitely brings people together, so it creates feelings of patriotism. For example, when the national anthem is playing, people will be proud of being Chinese.

3. How can a national song or anthem create feelings of patriotism?

Very often we hear the national anthem before an important sports event, when it is important to win, or after the competition, when our country has triumphed (=won = come first). So when we see a Chinese athlete with the gold medal and we hear our national anthem at the same time, it definitely makes us proud of being Chinese. It makes us more patriotic. In addition, the lyrics of the national anthem are always very meaningful and stirring (= motivating). In the Chinese national anthem, the lyrics invite everyone to fight for China, and to rise against the nation's enemies. Music can definitely be used to bring people together.

4. How important do you think traditional music will be in the future?

Well, we never know for sure what will happen in the future, but I think that our traditional music will become more fashionable very soon. I think that people might get tired of globalization and international music. Young people might enjoy the traditional sounds, as well as the skills required to play ancient instruments. Some famous artists like Jay Chou (= Zhou Jielun) already mix modern rhythm with traditional sounds. I think that might get even more popular in the future. Traditional instruments like the erhu, pipa, or guzheng sound absolutely stunning.

5. Would you like to learn how to play any musical instrument?

Yes, I would love to learn how to play the piano. I love the sound of it, and I think it would be a great way for me to relax and forget about everything else. I love the sound of this instrument. At home I often listen to a Chinese prodigy (= genius) called Lang Lang. He plays the piano like no one else. He started playing at a very young age, and now he's a renowned star in my country. I'd like to learn, but it must be super hard.

6. Tell me about traditional music in your country.

It's your turn to answer!

A Public Event You Took Part in

Tell me about a public event you attended at some point in your life.

You should say: what the event was
 what you and other people did at the event
 whether this event was successful
and explain why it was meaningful to you.

- Zhou Jielun came to my city for a concert: expensive tickets but worth it!
- Crowded + stalls (souvenirs) + stage (describe the setting)
- Fireworks + people cheered + clapped + awesome atmosphere
- Zhou = stunning musician + energetic performer + creative = tradition + modernity
- It was my first concert but = memorable. I hope to go to another one abroad.

I am a big fan of a Taiwanese singer called Zhou Jielun. Last year, he came to Fuzhou to give a concert. The concert was held inside the open stadium of Fujian Normal University. As soon as I heard he was coming, I called one of my friends who studies there to ask her to get me a ticket. My friend decided to buy us two very good seats up front, and although it was a little expensive, it was definitely worth it!

We arrived at the stadium early: we were so excited! The place was very crowded already, and there were many stalls outside selling T-shirts and other souvenirs with photographs of Zhou Jielun. It was around 6 pm, and we saw the sun go down just before our favorite singer came on stage. They had arranged a big stage in the end zone of the stadium, with seats on the field and the track, and other people sitting on benches up in the stands.

When Zhou Jielun appeared, some fireworks went off and the crowd cheered and clapped like crazy. People were all close to each other, and the atmosphere was absolutely fantastic. He sang his new songs, as well as his previous hits that everyone knows. So everyone sang along: it was awesome (= great).

In addition, Zhou Jielun is a stunning musician. He plays the piano, the guitar, and the drums. He is also a very energetic and passionate artist. He always manages to mix tradition and modernity through his melodies and lyrics.

I had seen a lot of concerts on TV and on DVDs, but this one was the first I attended in person. And it was a memorable one. I truly hope that I will get to see another live performance soon again, maybe in Australia, where I plan to continue my studies.

1. What kinds of public events are popular in your country?

I am sure you know how much Chinese people like singing. As a result, many concerts are organized on a weekly basis in my city, and I am certain that it's pretty much the same all around the country. In addition, many sports events take place all year round: professional basketball and football games bring together quite a lot of fans. I think that each city is recognized for a specific public event: Xiamen hosts a stunning marathon along the beach, with fifty thousand runners in 2010; Harbin has the impressive Ice Festival and

Canton organizes the China Import and Export Fair, which attracts thousands of visitors every year.

2. What are the benefits of holding those public events?

These events attract thousands of people together. They boost the local economy and allow people from different backgrounds to communicate and collaborate. In addition, they put the spotlight on cities as journalists report about the event on national media.

3. What makes some events more popular than others?

I think that it depends on the nature of the event. First of all, events that have been organized for many years are more likely to be popular than those that have been recently created. The Xiamen marathon did not attract so many people the first five years it was organized. In addition, some events will always seem more fascinating than others because of their historical reputation or the memories the name of the organization brings up. For example, a football World Cup will always be successful because it makes the fans dream. The summer Olympics remind everyone of past champions, and amazing records, such as Li Ning, or Carl Lewis (= 9 gold medals) or Jesse Owens (= Black athlete who won 4 gold medals in 1936 in Munich, in front of Hitler). On top of this, I believe that the media can definitely make a public event more famous by reporting about it, and spreading news of its merits.

4. On which occasions are there large crowds of people in your city?

Weekends are always busy in the city center. People meet their friends downtown to go shopping. The streets are packed, and traffic gets congested. It happens on a weekly basis. But it is even worse for the big festivals, such as the Lantern Festival that takes place two weeks after Spring Festival. Everyone goes to the central square of the city to appreciate illuminated lanterns hanging from the trees and in the windows of the main buildings. Last year, just before Christmas, people went shopping in the city center because the department stores offered tempting sales, and the streets were absolutely chockablock (=squeezed = jammed) with people.

5. What are the possible problems of having large numbers of people at public events?

Well, a lot of things could happen when large crowds of people get together like that. First, a lot of pickpockets (= thieves) might take advantage of the situation to steal wallets, purses and mobile phones from the pedestrians (= walkers). Every year after Spring Festival, we always read about the great number of thieves that were arrested by the police. It is very important for the police force to provide security in the streets. Some people might get mad (= angry), or even violent during big events. In addition, if there are (way) too many people in the streets, people could get pushed or even crushed. It might well be dangerous for children as well.

A Childhood Song You Remember

Tell me about a childhood song you remember.

You should say: what the song was and where you first heard it
 whether it was a popular song
 who sang it to you
and explain your feelings when you heard this song.

- A nursery rhyme: extremely famous
- When & where did you learn it?
- Lyrics are meaningful.
- Melody is simple but gentle (or lively).
- Why is singing important for children?

Let me tell you about one of the most famous nursery rhymes in China: "世上只有妈妈好 (Shishang Zhiyou Mama Hao)". It is a song about children's love for their mothers, and the title translates into English as "A Song of a Loving Mother".

It is a song that every single child has learned and sung in kindergarten. The song actually comes from a popular Taiwanese movie that came out in the late 1980s. The movie depicts (= describes) the difficulties of a pregnant woman who comes from a destitute (= impoverished) background. The movie was a success, and the plot was so poignant (= touching) that everyone who watched the film cried and cried. Even my father wept. The song is just like the film: it's moving.

The lyrics emphasize how important a mother's love is to a child. It says that if a child is deprived of the mother's attention, he will suffer. In addition, the children who sing this song highlight the fact that having a mother is the most precious gift for a child because mothers are reliable, considerate, loving and optimistic.

It's a touching and delicate song and the melody is extremely soft and gentle. The lyrics are simple and very catchy. Everyone can easily remember the words and sing.

Teachers in day-care centers and kindergartens often teach the nursery rhyme to young pupils. I remember singing it as a first-year student in elementary school. It has become common for children to show their affection to their mothers by singing it whenever it's possible, especially on Mother's Day.

Do you want me to sing it to you?

A Famous Singer in Your Country

Tell me about a famous singer in your country.

You should say: who the singer is
 how you found out about him/her
 what is special about him/her
and explain why you like this singer.

- Zhou Jielun: from Taiwan + extremely famous
- Age + appearance + fans
- Music styles = modern + traditional
- Creative songwriter + musician
- Actor too + director: promising future

Let me tell you about one of the most successful Taiwanese pop singers of the past 10 years. His name is Zhou Jielun, but he's also known as Jay Chou in English. In spite of his young age, he's made a name for himself all over Asia.

Jay Chou just turned 30, but I think he still looks quite young. It's probably because he's extremely energetic on stage. I wouldn't call him handsome, but he's definitely charming. He can count on teenage fans, and many young people really appreciate his music as well as his philosophy of life. Jay Chou is famous for being hard-working and meticulous (= precise). He is often called a "control-freak". He's a perfectionist and that's why people like him.

I'm fond of his music for different reasons. First of all, he mixes traditional melodies with Western styles, and this is very innovative. He often asks musicians to accompany his singing with traditional Chinese instruments such as the guzheng and the pipa, and he combines the whole thing with either R&B or rock music. In a couple of songs, he even blended classical music with Spanish guitar. He describes his own genre of music as cross-cultural, definitely international.

In addition, Jay Chou is a celebrity because he writes his own songs: he actually comes up with the melodies himself, and he also writes the lyrics. I think that's actually how he started in the show business: he was a composer at first. The themes he approaches are pretty different from other singers too. He chose to sing about many contemporary issues such as domestic violence (= between a man and his wife), drugs, as well as the gap between rural and urban areas in China. And frequently, he mixes ancient poetry with modern Mandarin. It's very creative.

On top of this, he was chosen to interpret a few roles in movies, and I think he's quite a good actor too. He's extremely talented. He's so well-rounded; it's almost unfair to be gifted like he is! Last year he came to Fuzhou to give a concert, but I was on vacation at the time, so I missed his performance. I truly hope I'll get a chance to see him on stage someday.

A Piece of Music or a Song that You Particularly Enjoy

Tell me about a piece of music or a song you particularly enjoy.

You should say: what the music/song was and where you first heard it
 who wrote it or sang it
 if it is popular with other people
and explain your feelings when you hear this music/song.

- 1. Where do people go to listen to music in your country?*
- 2. What are some of the good and bad things about going to a concert?*
- 3. How has technology changed the way people listen to music?*
- 4. Why do some people choose to learn to play a musical instrument?*
- 5. What might be the best age to start learning to play a musical instrument?*

Vocabulary

Music makes children more imaginative (= creative). Research says that early musical training helps develop brain areas involved in language and reasoning. Recent studies show that students who study the arts are more successful on standardized tests such as the SAT. They also achieve higher grades in high school.

Music performance teaches young people to conquer their fears and to take risks. Some music makes me feel inspired. It gives me energy and strengthens my motivation. Music cheers me up. Music can help me to surround myself with positive energy and help me look on the bright side, letting stressful events roll off my back more easily. Nice music calms the nerves and allows us to forget about whatever is stressing us out.

It's just another song about love. It's always the same thing. Most of them don't have much depth. Songwriters either lack inspiration, or they simply think that the public is naive! They should really banish banality (= ordinariness) and try to sweep us off our feet (= impress us deeply) with something new.

25 Animals

Proverb:

Once bitten twice shy.

=If a person has been tricked once, he will be more careful and alert the next time.

Sample Answer:

A Wild Animal
A Domesticated Animal
A Bird

Key Words

He's as strong as a horse.	A cow moos.
I was as sick as a dog yesterday.	A pig grunts.
Our dog looks ferocious but in fact he's	A dog barks.
as gentle as a lamb.	A horse neighs.
Don't worry about her. She wouldn't hurt a fly.	A lion roars.
Don't be so stubborn. = Stop being pig-headed.	A mouse squeaks.
It's raining cats and dogs. =It's really pouring today.	A lamb bleats.
Long time no see! We haven't met in donkey's years!	A frog croaks.
He told the teacher I hadn't done my homework: I can't believe he would rat me out like that.	
Jim got fired because his sales results were not good enough. It's a dog-eat-dog world in business.	

A Wild Animal

Tell me about a wild animal.

You should say:

what the animal is and where it lives

what it looks like and how it behaves

how the animal is special

and explain why you chose to talk about this animal.

- The lion = king of animals + feline. Where can we find them?
- Hunters= canine teeth, powerful legs +jaw
- Fur + baby cubs, famous because of The Lion King movie
- Males and females look different: females have no mane.
- I would love to see them in nature, not in a cage.

Let me tell you about the lion, the king of animals, and also my favorite creature. The lion belongs to the cat family, and it is the biggest of the felines. Lions can be found in eastern Africa in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania.

They live in the grassland and are renowned for their hunting skills. They eat weaker prey such as zebras or antelopes. The lion can bring down and kill large animals with its powerful legs and its strong jaw. It has very long canine teeth.

Lion fur varies from light brown to yellowish-reddish. The lion's babies are called cubs, and they are usually born with spots on their fur that vanish when they reach adulthood.

Male and female lions look distinctly different. The lioness lacks (= doesn't have) the male's thick mane (= hair around the head). I read that the manes make hunting more difficult for lions, and they also keep the male lions hot when temperatures get warm. But this mane makes lions appear larger; it is their way of impressing and intimidating (= scaring) other animals. It is a symbol of their power and virility.

I have seen lions in a cage at the zoo once but I would love to go to Africa to observe their daily lifestyle. One of my dreams is to go on a safari someday.

Vocabulary

Elephants are large grey mammals; These four-legged mammals have a very short tail, but huge ears that they usually flap around to ward off flies. They are mostly famous for the massive trunk they use for drinking, gathering food, or carrying heavy things: I saw a TV program where trainers in Thailand make elephants pick up and carry heavy tree trunks. It's quite impressive. In Africa, elephants are still hunted illegally for their tusks. Poachers want them because the ivory trade is extremely profitable. Elephants are famed for their memory and intelligence.

--Marc Griffith

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of keeping animals in zoos?

Well, first of all, keeping animals in a zoo gives us a chance to see some rare and

wild animals we would never get to see (otherwise) other than on TV. In addition, I think that scientists and zoo staff do some research on the animals in order to learn more about the species and to protect them from extinction. In China pandas now mostly live in zoos because they have to be protected from poachers (= hunters) and from the expansion of farming in forest areas. On the other hand, people often complain that the cages are too small, and that animals seem to lose their wild instincts in the zoo. I went to the zoo a couple of years ago, and a lot of animals looked sad, almost depressed.

2. How do people in your country feel about wild animals?

I think that people now realize that wild animals should be protected. In addition, we are always fascinated by animals like tigers, lions and bears. They represent Mother Nature's beauty. In the last few years, we have heard a lot about the panda, which is now our national symbol, as well as the Tibetan antelope. We often connect these wild animals to beliefs and legends too.

3. Why could some wild animals become extinct?

Animals became extinct because of hunting, pollution, and the destruction of the places where they live. Some animals are killed by hunters (= poachers) who want to sell their skins or their tusks, as is the case with elephants and rhinos, for example. In Brazil and many other countries, deforestation causes the displacement of animals. If the animals can't find food for themselves, they will die out.

4. Should extinction be dealt with nationally or globally?

There should be some international laws to protect wild animals. I think that the situation is better now than it was 30 or 40 years ago, but last week I still saw some terrible images of Japanese fishermen hunting for whales. It seems highly immoral, and so brutal (= cruel). Countries should share the responsibility of safeguarding animals that represent our world's natural heritage.

5. Do any animals have a special significance in your culture?

Yes, definitely. Many animals have a special significance in Chinese culture. For example, the dragon is a symbol of kingship, and our emperors always had a dragon on their walls, or embroidered on their clothes. In addition, dogs are supposed to be loyal; cows are hard-working (horses are hard-working in english-speaking countries); monkeys are smart. But my foreign teacher told me that in English, monkeys were stupid. It's confusing! In China, tigers symbolize power and courage; the phoenix is synonymous with (=is the same as) good fortune; butterflies represent love. We have a legend where 2 young people could not get married because their families disapproved of their wedding. They both died, and became happy butterflies and flew away together. It is the Chinese version of Romeo and Juliet!

6. Should bloody sports like bullfighting and fox hunting be banned?

Well, I don't know much about such activities, but I definitely find it hard to understand how people find fun in them. I guess it must be related to the country's culture, that is to say Spanish culture for bullfighting, and British traditions for fox hunting. I think we should avoid killing animals whenever it's possible, but there must be some traditional aspects of the sports that I don't know or wouldn't even understand, I suppose. So the people who created these traditions should be the ones to decide to put an end to them if they are really cruel.

7. What do you think about people who buy fur coats?

It's now your turn to answer!

A Domesticated Animal

Tell me about a domesticated animal.

You should say: what the animal is
 whether it is common in your country
 what it looks like
and explain whether you like or dislike this animal.

- My cousin's dog: When? How long?
- Describe the dog's looks.
- Activities + well-trained
- Qualities + importance for a kid to be brought up with a dog
- Future: big house with space for dog and kid

I have never had any dogs or cats because when I was a child, we needed a license to own a pet, and I think that dogs also cost a lot of money: you must feed them, wash them, and take them to the vet (= veterinarian). It's not as easy as it sounds. However, my young cousin Minnie has had a dog for a couple of years and she truly loves her pet.

Her dog is a Golden Retriever. It is a pretty big dog with a lot of energy. It has a long muzzle with a long tongue. Its coat is very dense (= a lot of hair), and it has a creamy color. It is so soft that everyone likes to pet it. Its tail is quite long too, and he keeps on wagging it all the time. He's a very lively dog. I like to tease the dog by scratching his ears. It's got these long soft ears and I sometimes turn them inside out. It makes him shake his head very strongly. It's amusing.

I know that Minnie or her parents take the dog for a walk at least twice a day. They live next to a park, so it's pretty convenient for them. When my uncle goes jogging, he takes the dog along. You know, he has a leash, and it is good exercise for both of them. Actually, the dog is well-trained, and he can obey simple orders. He understands when we ask him to sit, or lie down, and even to be quiet. He's very obedient. Actually, I have never heard him bark, now that I think about it.

My aunt told us she had done a lot of research to find out which breed (= kind) of dog would be the best to have with a young child in the family. She said that Golden Retrievers are kind and friendly and very sociable. We all agree that the dog is smart and also eager to please. I think it's good for my young cousin to be brought up with a dog, because she must take care of him. It gives her a sense of responsibility. In addition, you know in China, with the one-child policy, many kids feel lonely. Now at least Minnie has a loyal companion at home.

Last year, we took a day-trip to the countryside, and we found a gorgeous place to have a picnic next to a river. Minnie and her dog were swimming all afternoon long. In the future, I would love to have a big house with a backyard. I think it would be great to see my child play with our dog there.

1. Is it common to keep a pet in your country?

Yes, it is pretty common for people to have a dog or a cat at home. Many families get a fish tank full of fish or sometimes just 1 or 2 gold fish. Some people buy a bird too, such as a parrot or a budgie. There are a lot of pet shops in the city now and children love having a puppy or a kitty at home to play with.

2. Why do some people think that keeping pets is good for children?

It can be beneficial for children to have a pet because the animal can become a good companion. In China, with the one-child policy, many children often feel lonely. The pet can make them smile, and give them the impression that they are not on their own. In addition, some parents believe that having a pet can give children a sense of responsibility. The kids must walk the dog, clean it, and feed it. It could be a good chance for children to learn how to take care of weaker and younger creatures. I think that children with pets might learn how to be more considerate and thoughtful.

3. Should there be laws to protect domesticated animals?

Yes, I think there should be. Animals should not be mistreated. People should consider animals as their friends. They are almost defenseless against us, so we should show our humanity by protecting both wild and domesticated animals. In September 2009, legislation was drafted in my country to prevent deliberate (= intentional) cruelty to animals at home, on farms and in laboratories.

4. What characteristics are associated with particular animals in your culture?

Well, that's interesting because I was talking to my foreign teacher at school the other day about this topic, and we realized that animals represent different characteristics in Chinese and Western cultures. For example, I found out that Westerners believe that monkeys are stupid, while in China we consider monkeys to be smart animals. I guess that they are clever animals, but more stupid than humans in many situations. In English, pigs are dirty, and in Chinese pigs are lazy and stupid. Otherwise, in China, we believe that dragons represent nobility and wisdom, pandas are kind, dogs are loyal, snakes are untrustworthy, and cows and buffalos are hard-working (horses are in Western minds).

5. What are some of the ways in which animals are used in your country?

Well, a lot of animals such as chickens, ducks, pigs, and all the farm animals really, are used to provide food. In addition, cows and horses are used on the farm to plough the land and pull heavy loads. I think that farmers often use animals' dung (= excrements = poop!) as fertilizer for their crops. On the other hand, some animals are kept as pets, and they keep us company. We like to have them around because they are pretty, kind and soft.

6. Do you think it is a good idea for people who live in the city to have pets?

No, I don't think so. In the majority of cases, the animals don't have enough space in an apartment, and the people are usually too busy to actually take good care of them. Nowadays, both mothers and fathers work, so the pet is often left alone at home. In addition, dogs and cats shed (=lose their hair) everywhere, and I think it's quite disgusting when you have dogs' hair on your clothes, or everywhere on the floor. And when it rains, dogs make the house dirty. And when they're young, they might chew the furniture or scratch the walls. If I owned a flat, I wouldn't allow my tenants to have a pet at home.

7. What are the living conditions of farm animals like in your country?

Well, I'm no expert on animal life in rural areas, but I think their conditions are quite satisfactory, with enough food and space to lead a decent life. In the past, I think farms were dirty, but nowadays, farmers know they should clean up the stables and barns to ensure a better environment for animals, and food safety for consumers.

A Bird

Tell me about a bird.

You should say: which bird it is
 whether it is common in your country
 what it looks like
and explain whether you like or dislike this animal.

- Many birds in China (pheasants, doves, pelicans, pigeons...). Where?
- A parrot: stunning colors, dazzling bird: looks energetic
- What do they eat? Seeds, fruit. It has a tongue.
- Smart animals. They listen. Many people use them as pets.
- They can talk: imitate human voices. They hate loneliness.

Last year I went to the Hong Kong aviary. It's located in the Hong Kong Park in the heart of the city. They built an amazing place for people to observe different kinds of birds, like pheasants, doves, cockatoos, even pelicans.

But the most astonishing and colorful one in my eyes was the parrot. It's such a stunning bird with very bright green and red feathers. It's also an exotic bird, which is why people are always impressed by it, because it makes pigeons and seagulls look quite dull (= boring) in comparison.

The bird I saw was eating on a branch. The staff at the aviary feed the birds with seeds and fruit. As it was busy pecking the fruit, I had a good chance to observe it. Parrots have a curved bill (use your hands) and a tongue! I'm not a bird expert, but I remember thinking it was quite funny and surprising to notice a bird with a tongue!

I learnt that there were many different kinds of parrots, with different colors and different sizes. I think these animals are absolutely incredible and really smart. When you talk to them, they seem to listen and look at you. This is why so many people like adopting a parrot as pets.

As you know, parrots have the ability to imitate human voices and people have always enjoyed a good laugh over this. One of the employees at the aviary told me that parrots were very smart but they did not like to stay on their own. They need to interact with other birds or humans. It's quite fascinating!

Vocabulary

- Dogs are cute and friendly. My dog is so soft that I like to pat him all the time. My dog is very obedient; he always listens to commands. He is very quiet; he never barks. He's very friendly; he would never growl or show his teeth to anyone.
- Cats are very independent. They like to hang out outside, and you never know when they'll be back. But whenever they are hungry, they'll make sure to let you know by meowing constantly! Cats are extremely soft, and I love it when you pat them and they start purring. It's so cute! However, cats are pretty unpredictable: you never know what they will do. They might scratch you when you are playing with them; their claws are actually very sharp. Cats like to play with humans but they can also be dangerous. I have learned to be very cautious with them.

26 China

Proverb:

Where there's a will, there's a way.

= When a person really wants to do something, he will find a way of doing it.

Sample Answer:

A Public Event You Took Part in
Agriculture in China
How to Treat Your Friends Who Visit You
A Controversial Issue in Your Country
A Product Your Country or Region Is Famous for

Key Words

China is located in Asia.

huge =gigantic =massive

amazing = stunning = impressive

spectacular =picturesque

calligraphy =the art of fine handwriting

chopsticks in Asia =knife and fork in the West

ethnic minority group =racial or cultural group

patriotic=loyal to your country

hospitable =welcoming

disciplined = dutiful

A Public Event You Took Part in

Tell me about a public event you attended at some point in your life.

You should say:

- what the event was
- what you and other people did at the event
- whether this event was successful

and explain why it was meaningful to you.

- July 2008: Olympics torch relay in my hometown (from Greece to 6 continents then China)
- Got up early + went to the big square in city center + the mayor passed the torch to people
- Important patriotic occasion = the government promoted the event = people felt involved
- Clapped + cheered + sang + smiled = beautiful day
- Unforgettable day + memorable photos = I wasn't in Beijing but I was still a part of the festivities.

In July 2008, I went to the center of Fuzhou with two friends, to watch the Olympic torch relay. As you know, Beijing organized the summer Olympics three years ago, and before that, the torch was carried all around China. Actually, it was lit in Athens, Greece, at the birthplace of the Olympic Games, and then traveled through six continents. Later on, it arrived in China, and went through every single province.

Although this public event took place three years ago already, I remember it very clearly. I got up extremely early to get to the main square in the city, and I was surprised because the place was already crammed with people. There was a stage in the middle of the square, where the mayor of the city held the torch and gave it to Hou Yuzhu, a famous volleyball player from Fuzhou, and she went off (= left) with the torch for the first few hundred meters. Then she passed it on to someone else. .

It was a beautiful sunny day, perfect for the occasion. Everyone was really excited. The Olympic Games were a huge deal for China and the people because it was the first time we held such an important international competition. In addition, the government tried very hard to make

every citizen feel involved in the Olympics. At the time, TV and print journalists were constantly reporting on the torch relay. Everyone knew when the torch would come to Fuzhou.

When the torch appeared, everyone clapped and cheered. You should have seen the smiles on people's faces. The funny thing is that there were so many people that most of us did not see the torch very clearly, but it was a great chance to go outside, and feel patriotic. People carried Chinese flags everywhere and some young children even had Chinese flags painted on their faces. We could buy T-shirts with the Chinese colors and the Olympic rings on the front.

It was a memorable event, and we took a lot of cool pictures. The streets were absolutely packed with people. I have a picture of 2 young men who climbed a lamppost to have a better view of the relay. They still held Chinese flags, and also had a megaphone to sing patriotic songs. I did not go to Beijing that summer, but I felt that I was still a part of this important event.

1. Do you think that people behave differently when in a group?

Definitely! I think that we are all a little different when we are in private from when we are in public. Some men might be shy and quiet when they meet new people, but they could be relaxed and more talkative with their family. I think this is why girls always want to meet their boyfriend's friends and family. It's because they want to see how the man behaves in a familiar environment. They will be able to see the real him, you know, his real personality.

2. Why do many people encourage their children to join groups?

I think that parents always want their child to be a member of a team because it is important for kids to socialize and make friends. Being part of a group will allow children to communicate with other young people and to expand their social skills. Nowadays, it's fundamental to have good interpersonal skills. In addition, parents believe that it is better to play or learn with others rather than to be alone. A lot of young people like to stay in front of their computers at home, but parents consider this as a bad habit. I think that hanging out with other people is more fun and interesting.

3. How can older people benefit from belonging to a group or a club?

Well, belonging to an association must be rewarding in many aspects. First of all, it's a great chance for senior citizens to make friends, and find people who might have the same hobbies. Retired people might feel lonely if their children are out working. It is important for them to socialize in order to keep busy. When they become a widow or a widower, they must go out to keep their mind busy, and avoid becoming depressed. In addition, elderly people can volunteer for charity associations in order to help their communities. They will feel useful again by working and assisting others.

4. What are the benefits of being part of a team?

There are many different benefits of being part of a team or an association. First of all~ you can meet new people and make new friends. Joining an organization is a great chance to socialize. In addition, you can learn how to collaborate with others. I think that team spirit is a great feeling to experience, because you can feel useful by helping others, and at the same time, you know you can rely on your partners. I also believe that you can achieve better results if you work together as a team. You can reach your goals faster, so you will definitely get a sense of success and accomplishment.

5. How important is it to maintain individuality?

It is fundamental to maintain individuality. Even if you are part of a team, you should fix yourself some personal goals, because you can't always depend on others. In addition, if you improve yourself, everyone will benefit from it. Nowadays, I think that it is important to think by one's self, and make decisions independently. In China, we receive an education that does not

encourage individuality or originality (everyone learns the same things, and everyone must learn the same philosophies), but it is essential to be creative and independent in today's world. You should realize what is good for your own future. Plus, I think it is very nice to have time on your own sometimes. I was raised as an only child, and I enjoy being alone from time to time.

6. What kinds of public events are popular where you live?

Well, in my city there are a lot of concerts held in theaters or stadiums. In addition, during traditional festivals, it is very common to see parades in the streets, as well as exhibitions and performances unfolding in the city center. We usually have the Dragon Dance for Spring Festival, and it is followed by the Lantern Festival which brightens up the whole city. There is also a very popular road race in my city. People from all over the province come to take part in a 10-kilometer run.

Agriculture in China

Tell me about agriculture in your country.

You should say: how important agriculture is in your country
 whether it is difficult to be a farmer
 what the main agricultural products are in your country
and explain what people think about the agricultural world in your country.

- Millions of farmers in China = number 1 in farm output
- Difficult life for farmers
- Townships: farmers share the land
- A lot of farmers move to the city
- Innovations in the field: organic food + production techniques

Agriculture plays an important role in the Chinese economy. I read somewhere that there were some 300 million farmers in China! That's a huge number and that is why China is ranked number 1 in the world for farm output (production). Chinese farmers mostly produce rice, wheat, potatoes, peanuts, tea and cotton.

Although there are many farmers all around the country, most of them have a difficult life and they struggle to make money. The problem is that they don't have so much land to cultivate. In the mountains, farmers cannot use machinery to work the fields. They must use a cow or buffalo to plough the land. It's very labor-intensive. In addition, the weather can have some dramatic consequences for farm productions.

Most farmers work together. They create their own little groups made up of different families, and they all farm the land together. Most plots are organized into community areas (we call "townships").

As China continues to industrialize, big sections of agricultural land are converted into industrial land. Farmers lose their farms and they very often migrate to the city to become factory workers. There is a big gap between urban and rural lifestyles and most young people don't want to stay in the countryside. They believe they could have a better future in the city.

However, there have also been some recent innovations in Chinese agriculture, such as the development of organic agriculture. Farmers in some areas understand that they must organize crop rotation (to allow the earth to produce more) and use compost and biological pest control in order

to be more successful. This is beneficial in terms of food safety and export opportunities.

Vocabulary

Several regions are losing their biodiversity as a variety of plant and animal habitats (= Homes) are destroyed to make way for human dwellings. The loss of these plant and animal species presents us with an important ecological (= environmental) challenge: what can we do to stop the destruction and to safeguard some of the world's most important natural resources?

(Source: World Link series)

1. Do animals play an important role in your country's economy?

Definitely. Both the agricultural and the food sectors depend on animals. I know that in the countryside there are many pig farms, as well as chicken and duck coops (=farm buildings). We rely on these animals to feed the large population in the cities. In addition, it is possible to find a lot more dairy cattle throughout the country than it was 10 years ago.

2. What are the living conditions of farm animals like in your country?

I am not an expert, and I have never spent that much time on a farm, but I think that the living conditions of animals are not so great, mainly because animals don't have so much space. Space on a farm is usually limited, and just outside my city, I have seen birds like ducks and chickens fenced in together (= caged in) by the thousand.

3. What industries are important in your country?

Well, China is a huge country, so there is a great variety of industries, which play an essential role in our economy. I believe that the manufacturing industry plays a key role in our Chinese economy. I can think of the heavy industries, which are mostly located in the north around Beijing, Tianjin, and Henan Province. These industries produce metals, machines and cars. You know that the car business is booming in China at the moment. In addition, there are the light industries, with factories that produce different materials such as cotton, silk and paper. I am from Fujian Province, and my area is famous for its shoe industry. There is a place near Xiamen where you can find hundreds of shoe factories: they manufacture sneakers, leather shoes, boots, high-heels, everything. I should not forget the agricultural industry either, because China counts 30 million farmers who support our economy. They grow vegetables, fruit, livestock, as well as cereals such as rice, corn, wheat and barley. What's more, the service industry is growing larger every year, with tons of people working in banks, government, tourism, retail, education...

4. How do you feel about organic food?

Well, I think that food producers should definitely limit the amount of chemicals and pesticides they use on their crops. We hear a lot about genetically modified food and it doesn't sound so appealing. I think that pesticides and insecticides can be useful, but they should only be used as a last resort (= in extreme cases). I think that more and more customers will buy organic food in my country. Now that people's living standards are higher, they are ready to pay more in order to enjoy safer, and maybe tastier, products.

5. Should governments give financial support to the agricultural sector?

Of course! Nowadays, there is a huge gap between farmers' and city people's living standards. Farmers who cultivate a very small portion of land cannot make that much money. The government does allocate insurance and financial support to farmers, but it is still not enough for them to lead an easy life. In January, for the New Year, the government passed some policies to lower the taxes for farmers, and to modernize the agricultural sector.

6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of technological developments in farming?

Right now, I can only see advantages to the modernization of farming in my country. Many young people leave the rural areas where they were born because they know they cannot make any money if they stay to work in the fields. I believe that if they had access to modern farm equipment, they would be able to cultivate more land, and they would make more money. I read in my history books that modernization could make farmers lose their jobs, but I think that so many men are reluctant to become farmers that these technological developments might actually encourage more young men to farm the land, instead of moving to the cities to look for a different job.

How to Treat Your Friends Who Visit You

Tell me how people in your country treat their friends who visit them.

You should say: whether it is common to have guests over in your country
 what people do to make their guests feel good
 what people usually talk about with their guests
and explain why it is important to be hospitable.

- Chinese people must be hospitable + welcoming = make sure guests feel at ease (good seat)
- Tea = a must-do = tradition (how does this unfold?)
- Snacks, food always on the table
- Conversation: family, mutual friends, good memories we have in common
- Possible wine for big occasions, casual or formal manners according to who the guests are

Being hospitable and welcoming is extremely important in China, and we always try very hard to make our guests feel welcome. When my parents or I invite friends over, we always make sure they can have a comfortable seat around the coffee table, usually on the couch or an armchair.

We first sit in the living room and enjoy a cup of tea. Well, actually, we offer many cups of tea because in China we serve green tea in tiny cups. This is a must-do when you receive friends. First, we boil water and use it to clean the cups and utensils, then we serve tea and drink while chatting and catching up with each other.

My mother always gives fruit and candy to our guests. I think in China there are always plenty of snacks on the table. My father likes to eat peanuts, so we always have a basket of peanuts near the sofa. We don't often invite people for dinner at home, but we frequently go out for dinner together with friends or relatives.

When we invite people over, I think it's essential to ask them about their family to show them that we care about them. Later on, we can ask them about mutual friends (=friends we have in common) and I believe we often like to reminisce about good memories.

If it is a special occasion, like Spring Festival, or National Day, we might open a bottle of wine or liquor to celebrate the holiday together. It really depends on whether the guests are male only, or if it's a family, or what kind of relationship you have with them: if he's a real friend of yours, you can relax a bit and the atmosphere will be more laid-back; but if the guests are work acquaintances, then it's probably important to make a good impression at all times.

1. What gifts do people in your country give when they visit someone's home?

Well, it is very common to bring some tea or some food when we pay a visit to people. During the big festivals, it's common to buy fruit and snack baskets. Hosts always appreciate them. If you visit elderly people, you can offer vitamins or dietary supplements. Flowers are also always well-received.

2. Compare visits from relatives and visits from friends.

Well, first, I would say that there are two kinds of friends: your close friends, and your connections (= guangxi), that is to say the people you must be friends with. And it's almost the same with your family: there are your close relatives, and your extended circle of family that you must meet once in a while. I think that the atmosphere will be more casual when your close friends and close family visit you. You don't need to worry too much about pleasing your good friends, because you know that they are happy to visit you, and they don't want to bother you. But your work connections or your extended family might expect you to show them how much regard you have for them and how much you respect them. So you need to offer them better food, expensive tea, and better service. Things are complicated in China when it comes to relationships!

3. Why do people enjoy visiting others?

People enjoy visiting their friends and relatives because it is a good chance to get together and talk. You only enjoy visiting the people you get along well with. You expect to share some stories, or some laughs. Visits always bring people closer together. In addition, you might have a drink or some snacks while talking. Being with friends is always enjoyable and relaxing.

4. Have changes in lifestyle made it easier or harder to visit people?

I definitely think that people are much too busy with their jobs nowadays to have enough time to visit each other. I think that people often work overtime, and when they are done with work, they usually have other things to do, like picking up the child, going to the gym, or buying food at the supermarket. People's schedules are simply too tight to visit friends on a regular basis. Usually friends decide to meet a few days ahead. They must plan in advance.

5. Are there any problems people may experience when receiving visitors to their homes?

If the visitors informed you ahead, there shouldn't be any problems; but if they decided to drop by (= visit) unexpectedly, then your house might not be clean, or you might not have any snacks to offer them. You might not be wearing any nice clothes, and most important you might have some other things to do. A good thing is that nowadays, people usually call on your mobile before visiting, so it gives you a chance to avoid these problems. Another slight problem could be that you need to do (=clean) the dishes everyone used after having people over. In China, a lot of people smoke, and you might not want your guests to smoke at home, but, in our culture, it's hard to ask them to step outside for a cigarette. And not every guest has the decency to do so.

6. How important is giving hospitality to friends/strangers in your culture?

It is very important to be hospitable in Chinese culture. We always pay extra attention to making people feel at home when they visit us. We believe that it is a sign of courtesy (= politeness), and we should make sure that people feel as comfortable as possible. In the countryside, it is very common for farmers to offer tea to people who pass by. I visited many old villages in Fujian and Guizhou, and I was always well received by the locals when I asked them for directions. Chinese people are usually very welcoming.

A Controversial Issue in Your Country

Tell me about a controversial issue in China.

You should say: what the issue is and why it is controversial
 what the arguments are on the issue
 what most people think about it
and explain what your opinion on the issue is.

- Death penalty: 2 opposing sides: China is not the only country.
- Injections or simply executed (shot): ultimate punishment for rapists, murderers, drug dealers
- In human? Deprives the criminal of his right to life
- What if the police or the judge made a mistake: innocent victims?
- Can it deter people from committing crime?

I think that the biggest controversy in China has to do with the death penalty. Of course China is not the only country where criminals can be sentenced to death, and a number of criminals are executed annually. This issue has divided public opinion into two opposing camps: those in favor of the capital punishment, and those who oppose it.

In China, criminals can be executed using firearms; that is to say the executioner will fire a bullet into the back of the convict's head. But nowadays, I read that they are killed by a lethal injection. It's supposed to be less violent, although the result is identical. A lot of people in China believe that it is a fair choice to repay these people for the crimes they have committed. The defendants of capital punishment think that mass murderers, drug dealers and corrupt officials don't deserve a second chance.

On the other hand, many civil organizations place a serious emphasis on (the concept of) human rights. Many opponents of the death penalty argue that criminals should be imprisoned for life, because nobody should have the power to decide whether another person should live or die. In addition, they believe that if the criminal stays in prison for a long time, it will give him time to think about his wrongdoings. It gives him a chance to have regrets and to be forgiven: I guess it sounds more humane.

I have heard that in the United States, many people have been the victims of wrongful executions. Thanks to the new DNA testing technology, later investigations have found quite a few people innocent (= they were exonerated) after their sentence. And this is absolutely horrible. I guess it could also happen in my country.

Advocates of the death penalty argue that it deters crime. It is true that convicted murderers or rapists who are killed will not offend again, but I wonder if it really prevents other potential criminals from doing something bad. In contrast, people in favor of the abolition of the death penalty think that capital punishment encourages a culture of violence. I believe everyone should be given a second chance under special conditions.

1. Should every student in China study English?

Yes, definitely! I believe that every young student should have access to English classes because English is the international language and it will most likely be useful for those kids when

they start traveling in the future, or if they end up working in a trade company or doing another job that requires English skills. In addition, I think it wouldn't be fair if some young students didn't learn while others studied from a very young age. I believe that English should be a compulsory subject until the age of 16. When they get to high school, some students could be given the choice to stop studying English because it's either too hard for them, or because they know they won't need it for their future jobs.

2. Should students wear a uniform at school?

Yes, definitely! I think wearing a uniform is very appropriate for children for many reasons. First of all, school uniforms help erase the differences between social classes: everyone looks the same, and brand-name clothes don't matter anymore. In addition, if everyone wears the same clothes, I think it can bring children closer together, and it might be easier for them to socialize. On top of this, a lot of teenage girls might spend too much time getting ready and worrying about what to wear every morning if they were actually given a choice. Students should focus on their studies, not their appearance. Finally, I think that school uniforms help build discipline in the classroom. I'm sure it's easier for teachers to get their students' attention if everyone wears the same uniform. Teachers stand out more easily.

3. How do you feel about gambling?

Well, gambling is illegal in my country. I think it's dangerous to play games for large amounts of money on bets. My parents always told me that money doesn't grow on trees, and that I shouldn't waste it, especially on silly games or bets. I know that places like Macau and Las Vegas are very popular among people who actually make lots of money. I guess some people find it exhilarating (= stimulating = thrilling) to bet, but I would never do it, because I would be too afraid to lose. For me, the fear of losing everything would be greater than the thrill of doubling my money. '

4. Should university students get a part-time job?

I don't see why university students couldn't do two things at once: study and make pocket-money at the same time. College students usually have a very easy schedule, and although they have a lot of homework and readings to complete, they can manage their time to study hard, and gain practical experience that could be beneficial for their future by holding a part-time job at the same time. Students shouldn't forget that studying is of course a priority, but having a part-time job will also teach them how to handle responsibilities. ,

5. Should students be encouraged to evaluate their teachers?

Well, I think that college students should definitely evaluate their teachers because they should be mature enough to know what is good for them. It would be an effective means of motivating the professors, and it would also provide a great source of feedback for teachers on their lectures. In addition, students would gain a sense of responsibility, and it would teach them how to become more open-minded and critical. However, I am sure that some students would not judge their teachers responsibly. A lot of young people would judge them according to their personalities rather than on their teaching skills and results.

6. Should people be entitled to download music and films for free on the Internet?

It's now your turn to answer! Relax and speak your mind.

A Product Your Country or Region Is Famous for

Tell me about a product that your region or country is well-known for.

You should say:

- what the product is
- how it is made
- whether it is exported

and explain why it is well-known.

- Local tea: popular?
- Tea plantations = scenic
- Flavor + harvest
- It represents local traditional culture +healthy
- Important on special occasions

I will introduce a very famous kind of tea produced here in Fujian Province. It is called Tie Guan fin and it is considered as premium tea in China.

It is cultivated in southern Fujian, around the county of Anxi near Quanzhou (not far from Xiamen). If you ever go there, you will see spectacular tea plantations on the hills. There are tea bushes everywhere up the mountains and it's really picturesque. Tourists like to go there to taste the local specialties and take pictures of the stunning scenery.

It is an oolong-style tea which is very close to green tea. The flavor is not so strong. We describe the taste as flowery, very delicate. When people drink it, they always say it is sweet and refreshing. There are many different varieties of Tie Guan Yin and they are harvested at different times. The tea leaves have different colors according to the variety and the aroma (= smell) each one produces is slightly different. The price also varies according to the category.

In China, tea is a very important aspect of the culture. We drink tea on a daily basis. We think it cools people down or helps them digest after a big meal. It is probably the healthiest drink. It's supposed to be good for your heart and blood circulation.

We often offer tea as a gift for festivals or big occasions. It is always appreciated and people like to invite their friends over to enjoy a cup of Tie Guan fin.

1. What traditional crafts are still found in your country?

Well, there are many different kinds of crafts in China, especially in the countryside. The first one that comes to mind is wood and stone carving. Near my university, there is a street where many sculptors work on tree trunks. They have a small chainsaw, and they manage to shape some warriors or a Buddha out of the wood. In addition, every year, around Spring Festival, it is common for

families to buy some paper-cuts that represent the Chinese animal of the year, according to our Chinese horoscope. Of course the art of calligraphy is probably the most well-known. For the New Year, our tradition is to stick some scrolls on either side of the doors and windows. A lot of people frame some beautiful works of Chinese calligraphy to hang on the wall, just like a painting. In the street, you might occasionally see an old man write Chinese characters on tiles with a wet brush. Usually it attracts people's attention because we are all fascinated by beautiful writing styles. It is part of everyone's education at school. Finally, many old people, especially the ethnic minorities, decorate their clothes with stunning works of embroidery. Their embroidery skills are remarkable, and they symbolize both their creativity and cultural identity.

2. Do you think that handmade items will be widely available in the future?

No, definitely not. I am afraid that some of the skills might slowly disappear if the younger generations don't learn from their grandparents. Very few young people I know spend time learning artistic skills. Nowadays, everything we buy is machine-made. The only handmade thing I own is a wool scarf that my grandmother made for me, as well as some embroidered soles for the inside of shoes... but I don't wear them, because I think they are too beautiful to be placed in my (smelly) shoes!

3. Which crafts or creative arts are taught in schools in your country?

Well, everyone must take an art class at school. We usually learn how to draw and paint a little. We also have a music class, and in some schools students learn how to play an instrument. The problem is that, very often, these classes are a little boring because teachers follow old-fashioned methods. As a result, very few students develop a passion for art. Most people who really want to learn a special skill, like carpentry, or stone carving, will learn at home because one of their relatives can teach them and most students who learn an instrument have private teachers.

4. Do you think that schools should teach these creative activities?

Yes, I think so. A lot of my classmates are not very good at chemistry or physics. I am sure that some of them would find it more interesting to learn a craft skill. I know that in America, schools often offer classes such as ceramics, or carpentry, or computer design. I think that it is very cool to actually have the choice, especially because these classes would be a great chance for some students to learn something practical while enjoying themselves. I think that students' schedules should be improved to give them a chance to try new things rather than spending their whole days reciting things and doing homework.

5. Have you ever bought handicrafts before?

Yes, I have. Usually whenever I go traveling, I buy some souvenirs, especially when I come across shops run by members of ethnic minority groups. For example, last year, I went to Hunan Province, and I spend a few days in a village of the Miao Minority. I bought some clothes with beautiful embroidery on them, and a lot of bracelets and earrings that were handmade by an old man in the village. My mother also purchased some chopsticks that were carved by a local craftsman.