GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

For examiner use	Mark
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
Total	

Materials

A black pen.

Instructions

• Answer every question.

• Write in the answer spaces provided.

• Keep your answers inside the page borders.

• Use the additional lined pages if you need more space and identify the question number.

• Cross out rough work you do not want marked.

• Do not use a dictionary.

Information

• This paper carries 80 marks: 40 for reading and 40 for writing.

• Marks are shown beside the questions.

• Write clearly and use accurate English.

Advice

Allow about 15 minutes to read the sources and questions. Plan your writing response and leave time to check your answers.

Source A

An original contemporary article reflects on the achievements and everyday difficulties of railway travel.

The train is on the display board, then it is not. A line of yellow letters changes, and the people on the platform look up together. The service has been cancelled. Nobody has moved, but every journey has altered. A student will miss a connection; someone will be late to open a shop; a parent begins calculating the cost of another bus. A railway timetable appears to describe trains. In practice, it also holds together the arrangements of other people's days.

For the regular passenger, the pleasure of a journey is often simple: it happens as expected. A seat is useful, a clear announcement welcome, a working connection almost luxurious. There is beauty beyond the window, certainly, but it competes with a question on the traveller's phone: will I arrive when I said I would? The modern railway can carry us across a country while leaving us unsure about the last few miles. That uncertainty is a poor travelling companion.

None of this means we should forget the achievement. Steel wheels follow a route through hills, over water and into crowded cities. From a moving carriage, a field becomes a brief green page, a river flashes silver and is gone, and distant houses arrange themselves into a village before slipping behind us. It is still extraordinary that a person can sit almost motionless while a landscape streams past. Familiarity has put a coat over the wonder. It has not removed it.

But wonder cannot be the whole bargain. A passenger may admire the bridge and still need the lift at the station to work. Someone may enjoy the landscape and still need to know whether a ticket will be accepted on the replacement service. These are not small-minded complaints beside a grand achievement. They are the measures by which that achievement becomes available to ordinary people. A remarkable network is useful only when a person can actually use it.

Information matters most when the plan breaks. Silence makes a platform longer. A vague promise of an update leaves passengers building little towers of guesswork: perhaps another train will come, perhaps the connection will wait, perhaps a different ticket is needed. Clear advice cannot undo every delay. It can stop a delay becoming a maze. Telling people what is known, what is not known and when they will hear more treats them as participants in a journey rather than objects stored beside a track.

The workers facing that uncertainty deserve support too. An employee with no reliable information cannot manufacture an answer, however often the question is repeated. Anger directed at the nearest uniform rarely reaches the person who made the decision. A better service would give staff useful information and the means to pass it on. Courtesy is a shared obligation, but courtesy should not be

used as a substitute for the practical tools needed to help people.

What should we ask for, then? Not a promise that machinery will never fail or that weather will always cooperate. We should ask for a service that notices the consequences when things do go wrong. A missed connection, a closed help point or an inaccessible route is experienced by somebody with a destination, not by an abstract passenger total. The quality of the railway is tested in how it carries those people through the interruption as well as through the countryside.

I would like us to keep both kinds of attention: the eye that sees a viaduct and marvels, and the eye that sees a stranded passenger and asks what can be done. Admiration and criticism belong on the same platform. We honour an invention by expecting it to serve the people who depend on it. The most impressive journey is not simply the one that moves fastest. It is the one whose passenger can trust that arriving matters as much as departing.

Source B

In a letter written in 1830, Fanny Kemble describes a trial journey with the railway engineer George Stephenson.

We were introduced to the little engine which was to drag us along the rails. She (for they make these curious little fire-horses all mares) consisted of a boiler, a stove, a small platform, a bench, and behind the bench a barrel containing enough water to prevent her being thirsty for fifteen miles,-the whole machine not bigger than a common fire-engine. She goes upon two wheels, which are her feet, and are moved by bright steel legs called pistons; these are propelled by steam, and in proportion as more steam is applied to the upper extremities (the hip-joints, I suppose) of these pistons, the faster they move the wheels; and when it is desirable to diminish the speed, the steam, which unless suffered to escape would burst the boiler, evaporates through a safety-valve into the air.

The reins, bit, and bridle of this wonderful beast is a small steel handle, which applies or withdraws the steam from its legs or pistons, so that a child might manage it. The coals, which are its oats, were under the bench, and there was a small glass tube affixed to the boiler, with water in it, which indicates by its fullness or emptiness when the creature wants water, which is immediately conveyed to it from its reservoirs. There is a chimney to the stove, but as they burn coke there is none of the dreadful black smoke which accompanies the progress of a steam vessel. This snorting little animal, which I felt rather inclined to pat, was then harnessed to our carriage, and, Mr. Stephenson having taken me on the bench of the engine with him, we started at about ten miles an hour.

The steam-horse being ill adapted for going up and down hill, the road was kept

at a certain level, and appeared sometimes to sink below the surface of the earth, and sometimes to rise above it. Almost at starting it was cut through the solid rock, which formed a wall on either side of it, about sixty feet high. You can't imagine how strange it seemed to be journeying on thus, without any visible cause of progress other than the magical machine, with its flying white breath and rhythmical, unvarying pace, between these rocky walls, which are already clothed with moss and ferns and grasses; and when I reflected that these great masses of stone had been cut asunder to allow our passage thus far below the surface of the earth, I felt as if no fairy tale was ever half so wonderful as what I saw.

Bridges were thrown from side to side across the top of these cliffs, and the people looking down upon us from them seemed like pigmies standing in the sky. I must be more concise, though, or I shall want room. We were to go only fifteen miles, that distance being sufficient to show the speed of the engine, and to take us on to the most beautiful and wonderful object on the road. After proceeding through this rocky defile, we presently found ourselves raised upon embankments ten or twelve feet high; we then came to a moss, or swamp, of considerable extent, on which no human foot could tread without sinking, and yet it bore the road which bore us.

This had been the great stumbling-block in the minds of the committee of the House of Commons; but Mr. Stephenson has succeeded in overcoming it. A foundation of hurdles, or, as he called it, basket-work, was thrown over the morass, and the interstices were filled with moss and other elastic matter. Upon this the clay and soil were laid down, and the road does float, for we passed over it at the rate of five and twenty miles an hour, and saw the stagnant swamp water trembling on the surface of the soil on either side of us. I hope you understand me. The embankment had gradually been rising higher and higher, and in one place, where the soil was not settled enough to form banks, Stephenson had constructed artificial ones of wood-work, over which the mounds of earth were heaped, for he said that though the wood-work would rot, before it did so the banks of earth which covered it would have been sufficiently consolidated to support the road.

Section A: Reading

Answer all questions in this section.

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

0 1 Read again the first part of Source A, from lines 1 to 13.

Choose four statements below which are true.

- Shade the circles inside the boxes beside the statements you think are true.
- Select a maximum of four statements.
- Cross out the whole box if you make a mistake.
- To restore a statement you crossed out, draw a circle around that box.

[4 marks]

A. A cancellation changes passengers' plans. ⬭

B. The writer says the cancelled train is moving faster. ⬭

C. A parent considers the cost of another bus. ⬭

D. The writer thinks passengers never notice the landscape. ⬭

E. Regular passengers may value clear announcements. ⬭

F. The writer says a working connection is unwelcome. ⬭

G. The writer describes uncertainty as a poor companion. ⬭

H. All the passengers are travelling for leisure. ⬭

0 2 You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.

Both sources describe travelling by railway.

What can you infer about the differences between the travellers' experiences of the railway in Source A and Source B?

[8 marks]

0 3 You now need to refer only to Source A, from lines 26 to 32.

How does the writer use language to convey the frustration caused by unclear information?

[12 marks]

0 4 For this question, you need to refer to the whole of Source A together with the whole of Source B.

Compare how the writers convey their different feelings and perspectives about railway travel.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different feelings and perspectives
- comment on the methods the writers use to convey their feelings and perspectives
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

Question 04 continued

Section B: Writing

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

Write in full sentences.

You are reminded of the need to plan your answer.

You should leave enough time to check your work at the end.

0 5 "Reliable public transport would improve everyday life more than almost any other change to our local area."

Write an article for a local news website in which you argue your point of view on this statement.

24 marks for content and organisation; 16 marks for technical accuracy.

[40 marks]

Question 05

Question 05 continued

Exam Stash, Original contemporary opinion article (2026).

Fanny Kemble, Records of a Girlhood (letter of 1830) (1879).