

H

National Qualifications

2024

English

Reading for Understanding,

Analysis and Evaluation

(Text)

Instructions to Candidates

Candidates should enter their surname, forename(s), date of birth, Scottish candidate number and the name and level of the subject at the top of their first answer sheet.

Total marks — 30

Read the passages carefully and then attempt ALL questions, which are printed on a separate sheet.

You must clearly identify the question number you are attempting on your answer sheet.

Marks are shown in square brackets at the end of each question or part question.

An owl in the margin indicates a new question.

[Braille page 2] The following two passages discuss changing attitudes towards car use.

Passage 1

Read the passage below and attempt questions 1 to 8.

In the first passage, John Vidal argued that the age of the car is over.

Back in 1989, a group of city planners from the Chinese government came to Britain on a fact-finding mission. At that time they were widely
5 praised for curbing car use in China: the country of one billion people, after all, had just a few million vehicles. The bicycle was king; its city streets were safe and the air
10 mostly clean. How did China manage to have so few cars? asked their British hosts, grappling as ever with chaotic
14 streets, traffic jams and pollution.
15 'But you don't understand how China is changing,' replied one of the Chinese
18 delegates. 'In twenty years, there will be no bicycles in China.'
19 He was nearly right. China's
20 breakneck development has been led by mass car ownership. It now has
[Braille page 3] 300 million cars — and what was once the kingdom of bikes
25 is now the land of 20-lane motorways, towering
scrap metal yards and more than 100,000 petrol stations. Beijing, Shanghai
and most other Chinese cities are choked with traffic, their air is some of the
30 worst in the world, and
their hospitals are full of children with respiratory diseases. Now China, like
every other country, is having to
33 rethink the car.
34 The worldwide love affair with the car —
35 which promised consumers convenience, status and freedom — is over. A
century ago, the coach and horse were pushed aside by automobiles. In this
century, the car is being steadily
40 evicted from cities by the authorities or by public revulsion. The reality from
Inverness to Istanbul, from Lagos to Lahore is that the car is now a social
and
45 environmental curse. It disconnects people. It erodes public space. It fractures
local economies. Ecologically, the air pollution caused by cars is an
increasing
50 problem, suffocating society remorselessly. Once we savoured the [Braille
page 4] prospect of speed and cheap mobility. Now consumers suffer
personal danger, ill health and the
55 soaring costs caused by the most serious energy crisis in 30
56 years.
57 When the cost of living crisis started to bite, Ireland, Italy and other countries
cut public transport
60 fares by as much as 90%. Spain went a step further, announcing free train
travel on many routes. Global car sales, already stuttering before the
pandemic, are now declining in many

65 major countries. UK new car sales have fallen for five months in a row and the
level of UK car
70 ownership has now fallen for two consecutive years — the first successive
drops in ownership in more than a century. As thousands of street parties
over the years have shown, car-free streets are popular, and the surest and
best way to save money, improve health and make
75 cities more liveable. In this urban century, where nearly 70% of people are
expected to live in built-up areas within 30 years and the global population is
expected to grow by
80 another 3 billion by 2100, the private car makes little economic **[Braille page
5]**
82 or social sense.
83 Thankfully, we may be reaching 'peak car', the point at which the world is
85 so saturated with vehicles — and city leaders and individuals are so
disillusioned or financially stretched by them — that they are banned or
voluntarily given up. From here on,
90 it looks like death by a thousand breakdowns for the private car. Recently, UK
petrol hit a staggering £2 a litre. It cost £100 to fill up a tank. To
95 own a car in the first place involves coughing up thousands of pounds in loans
and taxes. Is it any wonder then that young people especially are rejecting
cars and embracing other forms of
100 transport? The auto-magic that has entranced societies for
102 a century has gone.
103 Major cities may have little choice but to reduce car use. Most
105 European cities are either outlawing cars from their centres on a large scale
or making it prohibitively expensive to drive them. They are pushing at an
open door. Recently
110 50,000 Berliners asked the city to impose the world's largest car ban, **[Braille
page 6]** covering 34 square miles. Car-sharing, e-bikes and scooters are all
hastening the car's demise.
115 City leaders, as well as health, transport and environmental groups, are now
calling for it to be made easy and affordable for people to leave the car at
home or get rid of it —
120 and for cities to be reimagined so that people can access
123 key things like food and health centres on foot or by bike.
124 It is time for cities to start to
125 design themselves not around the car, but around the bicycle and the
pedestrian. And it is time for those who worship the car and aggressively
assert its place in our social and economic hierarchy
130 — and its divine right to road space — to understand that a page has been
turned. The sooner they accept that, the easier the future will be. The car as
we know it is fast becoming
135 extinct; it is a relic of a former age. Sitting in a traffic jam in a ton of metal that
belches pollution and costs a fortune will surely be seen by future
141 generations as not just stupid, but criminal.

[Braille page 7] Passage 2

Read the passage below and attempt question 9. While reading, you may wish to make notes on the main ideas and/or highlight key points in the passage.

In the second passage, George Monbiot reflects on the impact of the car on our lives.

It's the last straw. Parked outside the hospital doors is a minibus with its engine running. The driver is playing on his mobile
5 phone. The fumes are blowing into the entrance. I step up to his window and ask him to turn the engine off. He does so, grumpily. I walk into the hospital's huge waiting room,
10 wondering how many of the people sitting here are ill as a result of air pollution. I think of people in other departments: children with asthma attacks, patients being treated for road injuries. And I'm
15 struck by the amazing variety of ways in which cars have ruined our lives. Let's abandon this disastrous experiment, recognise that this 19th-century technology is now
20 doing more harm than good, and plan our way out of it. Let's set a target to cut the use of cars by 90% over the next decade. Yes, the car is still useful – for a few people
25 it's essential. It would make a good servant. But it has become our master, and it spoils everything it touches. It now presents us with a series of emergencies that demand an
30 emergency response. Burning fossil fuels, according to a recent paper, is now 'the world's most significant threat to children's health'. In other sectors,
35 greenhouse gas emissions have fallen sharply. But transport emissions in the UK have declined by only 2% since 1990. The government's legally binding target is an 80%
40 cut by 2050, though even this, the science now tells us, is hopelessly inadequate. Transport, mostly because of our obsession with the private car, is now the major factor driving
45 us towards climate breakdown, in this and many other nations. There are also subtler and more widespread effects. Traffic diminishes communities, as the
50 noise, danger and pollution in busy **[Braille page 9]** streets drive people indoors. The places in which children could play and adults could sit and talk are reserved instead for parking. Engine noise, a great but
55 scarcely acknowledged cause of stress and illness, fills our lives. As we jostle to secure our road space, as we swear and shake our fists at other drivers, pedestrians and
60 cyclists, as we grumble about speed limits and traffic calming measures, cars change us, enhancing our sense of threat and competition, cutting us off from each other.

65 A switch to electric cars addresses only some of these issues. Already,
beautiful places are being wrecked by an electric vehicle resource rush.
Lithium mining, for
70 example, is now poisoning rivers and depleting groundwater from Tibet to
Bolivia. Electric cars still require a vast expenditure of energy and space.
They still need tyres,
75 whose manufacture and disposal is a massive environmental blight.
We are told that cars are about freedom of choice. But every aspect of this
assault on our lives is
80 assisted by state planning and **[Braille page 10]** government funding. Roads
are built to accommodate projected traffic, which then grows to fill the new
capacity. Streets
85 are modelled to maximise the flow of cars. Pedestrians and cyclists are
squeezed by planners into narrow and often dangerous spaces — the
afterthoughts of urban design. The
90 chaos on our roads is a planned chaos.
Transport should be planned, but with entirely different aims: to maximise its
social benefits,
95 while minimising harm. This means a wholesale switch towards electric mass
transit, safe and separate bike lanes and broad pavements, accompanied by
tighter restrictions
100 to prevent cars rampaging through our lives. In some places, and for some
purposes, using cars is unavoidable. But for the great majority of journeys
they can easily
105 be substituted, as you can see in Amsterdam and Copenhagen. We could
almost eliminate them from our cities.
In this age of multiple emergencies — climate chaos,
110 pollution, social alienation — we **[Braille page 11]** should remember that
technologies exist to serve us, not to dominate us. It is time to drive the car
out of our lives.

[END OF TEXT]