

Test 6

Reading and Use of English Part 6

You are going to read extracts from articles in which four experts give their views on a proposed new airport for London. For questions 37–40, choose from the experts A–D. The experts may be chosen more than once.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

Proposal to build a new airport for London, possibly on an artificial island in the estuary of the River Thames

A Larry Jones

Air travel is increasing worldwide, and with London's existing airports operating at close to capacity, we face a stark choice: expansion or an additional airport? A significant benefit of a new-build is that the current airports wouldn't then require new runways – which are strenuously opposed by local residents. In addition, new flight paths could avoid contributing to air and noise pollution over London. A new airport is a new opportunity, and should be designed with an eye on current and future developments in aeronautics: it could take planes with a greater capacity even than the biggest used now, which would at least reduce the impact of the expected growth in total passenger numbers. The Thames estuary is home to vast numbers of birds, which would be seriously affected by an airport. However, if it comes to a choice between birds and people, I'm afraid our own species has to come first.

B Karen Macmillan

The more idealistic among us may believe that the world's love affair with air travel is nearing its end, but I'm certainly not one of them. We can't avoid providing for the additional airport capacity likely to be required over the next 30 to 50 years, and for my money, that means a new airport in the Thames estuary. Even if construction goes ahead, however, it will only be a matter of time before expansion of the existing airports will become inevitable. At least an airport in the estuary would save Londoners from the extra pollution resulting from the alternative, as its flight paths could be largely or entirely over water. Admittedly, it is unfortunate that the Thames estuary provides habitats for many species of birds. Ways will have to be found to mitigate the effects, while enabling construction of the airport to go ahead.

C Bernie Dodd

We share this planet with innumerable other species, all of which – including ourselves – are interdependent. Our wanton disregard of our environment is harmful not only to its other inhabitants, but also to ourselves. Constructing an airport in the Thames estuary would be so destructive of wildlife that it shouldn't even be considered. Yes, some argue that it would benefit the existing airports, but better to bite the bullet and expand those we have now than wreak havoc on a hitherto unspoilt part of the country. Besides, the claim that a new airport would reduce noise and improve air quality in London simply doesn't hold water: maybe it wouldn't worsen the current situation, but that's the best we could hope for. At present, there seems to be no prospect of the air travel frenzy dying down, but let's limit the damage to areas that are already damaged.

D Isabel Smith

Is it really the case that London needs an additional airport? Technology is progressing fast, and with wide-bodied aircraft, fewer flights are needed for the same number of passengers. Besides, the advent of quieter planes will mean that runways that are currently closed at night, because of noise, will be able to operate round the clock. The existing airports will be able to handle growth in passenger numbers for years to come, without needing any new runways to be constructed. Perhaps some carriers would transfer their operations to a Thames estuary airport, and that would lead to an improvement in London's air quality, but a new airport would involve destroying the habitats of thousands of wetland birds, with – to my mind – no justification. A new airport should be ruled out.

chimes of freedom

far between sundown's finish
and midnight's broken toll
we ducked inside the doorway
as thunder went crashing
as majestic bells of bolts
struck shadows in the sounds
seeming to be the chimes of freedom flashing
flashing for the warriors
whose strength is not to fight
flashing for the refugees
on the unarmed road of flight
and for each and every underdog
soldier in the night
and we gazed upon
the chimes of freedom flashing

through the city's melted furnace
unexpectedly we watched
with faces hidden
as the walls were tightening
as the echo of the wedding bells
before the blowing rain
dissolved into the bells of the lightening
tolling for the rebel
tolling for the rake
tolling for the luckless
the abandoned and forsaken

tolling for the outcast
burning constantly at stake
and we gazed upon
the chimes of freedom flashing

through the mad mystic hammering
of the wild ripping hail
the sky cracked its poems in
naked wonder
that the clinging of the church bells
blew far into the breeze
leaving only bells of lightening
and its thunder
striking for the gentle
striking for the kind
striking for the guardians
and protectors of the mind
and the poet and the painter
far behind this rightful time
and we gazed upon
the chimes of freedom flashing

Chimes of Freedom (Bob Dylan)

The immediate context of situation of the Bob Dylan text is that of a transcription of an exoteric protest song of the 1960s contained in a compendium. When it was produced it formed part of the fourth album by the popular folk singer and was available on record and could be heard in concerts featuring the young troubadour. The wider context of situation was that of a nation ridden by protest at, for example, the Vietnam War and the lack of progress on the civil rights movement. 'Chimes of freedom' in fact evokes a reaction, albeit poetic, to the catastrophic effects of nuclear war.

The field in this case is thus the creation of a protest song for the record industry, with the song itself describing the horrors of war and how the 'chimes of freedom' offer hope, and the tenor is that of a single singer-songwriter providing a vehicle through which to expound his views to a largely welcoming audience. The mode is poetic written (and sung) text to be listened to.

The main function of the text is persuasive and poetic, the ideational function being precisely that of presenting a cogent argument against the horrors of war. The interpersonal function is thus that of a concerned and intellectually driven individual attempting to convince others, who may be devoted fans or may be unknown, to agree with him or, perhaps more cynically, to buy his record. The use of the first person plural 'we' is designed to create a sense of solidarity 'we ducked', 'we gazed upon', 'we watched'. Textually speaking, the poetic structure makes it difficult to identify themes as the lines of the song do not delineate clause beginnings and endings. There are long spatio-temporal expressions as theme such as 'far between sundown's finish and midnight's broken toll' and a number of minor themes 'as', 'and', 'that'. Non-finite verb form also figure as themes 'flashing', 'tolling'.

Typical cohesive devices are present, such as the repetition of the syntactic forms in typical poetic progression, and the repetition of key concepts 'flashing for...', 'tolling for...', and the constant 'and we gazed upon the chimes of freedom flashing'. Certain words are also repeated – thunder, bells, lightning, etc. as well as the mnemonic 'flashing for', 'tolling for' and 'striking for'.

The semantic field of catastrophe is ever present, particularly represented by reference to adverse weather conditions – thunder, shadows, flight, melted furnace, rain, lightning, burning, hammering. As is the semantic field of hope – strength not to fight, soldier in the night, tolling for the gentle, the kind, the poet and the painter and, of course, the chimes of freedom.

There is much use of (near) synonyms and metonyms such as 'bolts/lightning', 'bells/chimes'.

The text consists mostly of material clauses describing catastrophic events and hopeful signals.

The writer employs a succession of original metaphors in expressions like 'midnight's broken toll', 'majestic bells of bolts', 'the city's melted furnace', 'the walls were tightening' and 'the sky cracked its poems' meaning respectively in congruent language 'a threat at midnight', 'beautiful lightning flashes', 'the heat of the city', 'a sense of encroaching danger' and 'the sky was dark but for the lightning'. There are few standard collocations, given the creative nature of the text, but we find expressions 'wedding bells', 'blowing rain, and 'burning at (the) stake'.

The text consists of approx. 215 words of which 106 are content words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) giving it a lexical density of approx. 50%. This is a not a particularly high score indicating that the text is not informative so much as poetic and contains an equal number of grammatical words to hold the text together.

This is clearly an expressive, but at the same time persuasive text.

Phonological equivalence is everywhere, mostly in the form of rhyme eg. crashing/flashng, fight/flight/night, just in the first verse.

The kind of consonance (ducked/doorway, bells/bolts) and assonance (fight/flight) found in the first verse finds equivalent usage in every verse.

But the most interesting phonological feature is the synaesthetic ambivalence found in the arresting lines 'we gazed upon the chimes of freedom flashing'. Chimes are not visible and thus cannot be gazed upon, nor can they flash. However the imagery created by the idea of the bells glinting in the lightning flashes is powerful. And calling them chimes of freedom completes the esoteric message.

Syntactic equivalence is present in every verse, allied to the phonological. If you read the text aloud the cadence is clear – the lines are balanced and carry effect.

The second part of the verses 'flashing for...', 'tolling for...', 'striking for...' again create a harmonious equilibrium.

And the semantic equivalence is all too clear, as explained above in terms of the semantic field. The people who are 'tolled for' etc. are all of a kind . They are the victims of the mooted catastrophe (refugees, underdog, abandoned, forsaken, outcast, etc.). The weather (thunder, rain, hail, lightning) and religion (bells, mystic, church) figure largely. And of course, the imagery of bells and chimes pervades the entire text.

Bernie Dodd

The immediate context of situation of the Bernie Dodd text is that of a short reading comprehension as part of a Cambridge exam paper. The text might thus be a genuine letter to a newspaper, for example, or invented for the purpose of the exam. Or it may be an original that has been adapted.

At a further remove the context of situation is that of a contribution to the debate over the building of a new airport for London. As such it fits the context of culture in which the question of the environment is a controversial topic, particularly in Britain in this case.

The field in this case is thus the airport debate and the tenor is that of (a) a Cambridge examiner providing an exam question to a large number of candidates all over the world and (b) a concerned contributor trying to persuade an unknown public of his views. The mode is semi-formal written text to be read and considered.

The main function of the text is persuasive, the ideational function is precisely that of presenting a cogent argument against the use of the Thames Estuary as an airport site. The interpersonal function is thus that of a concerned individual with some relevant knowledge attempting to convince others, who may be unknown or may be a devoted readership, to agree with him. The use of the first person plural 'we' is designed to create a sense of solidarity. Textually speaking, the themes of the first two sentences are indeed 'we' and 'Our....', picked up again in the final clause 'let's'. In the rest of the text we see the use of minor clauses 'Yes', 'but', 'Besides', 'maybe', 'but', which add a colloquial, and thus more friendly touch to the writer's plea.

Typical cohesive devices are present, such as the repetition of 'we' and 'ourselves' in the first sentence, picked up again in the second sentence with 'Our' and 'ourselves'. The noun phrase 'Constructing an airport in the Thames estuary' is referred back to anaphorically with 'it' twice. Similarly the whole noun phrase 'the claim that a new airport would reduce noise and improve air quality' is also picked up anaphorically by a simple 'it' in the next clause.

The semantic field of airport construction is represented by a whole string of terms – environment, constructing, airport, noise, air quality, air travel. The use of (near) synonyms can be seen in 'other species', 'other inhabitants' and 'wildlife'; 'harmful', 'destructive' and 'damaged'.

The text consists mostly of material clauses, though the second and third sentences are relational through the use of 'is' and 'would be'.

The writer employs standard metaphors in expressions like 'to bite the bullet', 'doesn't hold water' and 'dying down' meaning respectively in congruent language 'make a potentially unpopular decision', 'is not credible' and 'decreasing'. Standard collocations are also to be found in the expressions 'wanton disregard', 'wreak havoc', 'air quality', 'air travel' and 'limit damage'.

The text consists of approx. 124 words of which 73 are content words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) giving it a lexical density of approx. 60%. This is quite a high score indicating that the text is relatively informative, which is to be expected in a persuasive journalistic text of this type.

