

2022 年 9-12 月雅思口语新题参考答案



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Part 1

Birthday

1 What do you usually do on your birthday?

On my birthday I usually have a dinner with my parents, usually at a nice restaurant in the city. Then I might go out for drinks with my friends, or to the cinema or something like that. That's been the habit, anyway, for the past few years.

2 What did you do on your birthday when you were young?

When I was younger... a child... we would just have a dinner at home, and I would receive some presents. And in school the class would sing a birthday song and I'd have a cake. That's about it really. I found my birthday quite exciting as a child, as most kids do, I think.

3 Do you think it is important for you to celebrate your birthday?

I think it's fairly important. It's a milestone... a turning point in the year, and in life, and it is symbolic of the years passing, us getting older and more mature, so yeah, I think it's important.

Singing

1 Do you like singing?

I love singing. I thoroughly enjoy going to KTVs and singing on my own at home to music, too.

2 Have you ever learnt how to sing?

No, not really. To be honest, I'm not very good at singing – I think I might be tone deaf, even. In school plays and performances I was never chosen to be one of the leading singers, and in KTV with friends, I usually try to keep a low profile and mumble the words – I really can't sing well.

3 If you sing, who would you sing in front of?

I wouldn't want to sing for anyone – I'd be way too embarrassed and self-conscious. As I said, I'm a terrible singer! I would find it uncomfortable, so no, I would not sing for, or in front of anyone, if I could avoid it.

4 Do you think singing can bring happiness to people?

I understand that singing, if you're good enough at it, can make people feel very happy. The person singing as well as those listening. Singing is a great form of musical expression, and there's

nothing more lovely than the human voice. So, yes, it can bring happiness for sure.

Geography

1 Have you ever studied geography at school?

I did study geography, yes. Physical geography, like plate tectonics – volcanoes and things like that, as well as land formation, and farming and the water cycle, and all of that type of stuff. We also studied human geography as well – population, demographics and things like that.

2 Do you like geography?

I do, actually. I find it quite interesting – especially physical geography. I'm interested in things related to the natural environment and the planet. And I am concerned about climate change and environmental issues facing us today, so I find geography relevant as well as interesting.

3 Do you want to travel to a country because of its geographical conditions?

Yes, I think so. At least it is one of the reasons I would choose to travel to a country, yes. For example, I am interested in lakes – I would like to spend some time in Sweden at the lakes – I heard they have a lot of lakes and it's common to spend holidays at the lakes, go in boats and things like that. So, yes, I would choose a country with lots of lakes and water.

Puzzles

1 Did you like doing puzzles when you were a kid?

Yes, when I was a kid there were lots of puzzles we could do – with string, and wood, and jigsaws and all sorts of little stuff like that. Now, there isn't so much – there's a lot of puzzle games, and games involving cryptic thinking on apps on phones and tablets, though. Those are popular today.

2 When do you do puzzles, during trips or when you feel bored?

I usually play such puzzle games on my phone when I'm on the train or on a bus, or something like that. I also fiddle with my phone in bed too, like a lot of people, and yes, sometimes I play games which you could call 'puzzles' I guess.

3 Do you like doing word puzzles or number puzzles?

I prefer number puzzles – I am really good at math, and I like solving little math problems. There are plenty of games which involving solving number puzzles and I enjoy doing these. I get a great sense of satisfaction from getting the answers right.

4 Do you think it is good for old people to do puzzles?

Yes, most certainly. I think old people should do these things to keep their minds active – a lot of

research shows that older people remain mentally sharp for longer if they keep engaging their brains in puzzles and activities that involving thinking and solving things.

Snacks

1 What snacks did you eat when you were young?

When I was a kid I used to love all kinds of street snacks – there were lots of little stalls selling pancakes and all sorts in my road. When I was a little older, fast food joints started to open and become popular, and I loved those, and thought they were a real novelty. There we ate burgers and fried chicken and things like that.

2 Do you often eat snacks now?

I still eat local snacks actually, and there is quite a strong street-snack culture still existing in China, and occasionally I go to fast food outlets with friends – which are more expensive, but more comfortable and convenient.

3 Do you think eating snacks is healthy?

Certain snacks are healthy, yes, indeed. Fried street snacks and fast food are not so healthy though; at least if you eat them often. One has to be careful what one chooses in the way of snacking – a lot of sweets, chocolates, fries and burgers and deep-fried food is definitely not healthy. Everything in moderation, as they say!

Social media

1 Do you like social media?

Yes, I most certainly see and enjoy the benefits of social media. Although I can also see the downsides of it too – there's a lot of gossip, misinformation and nonsense on social media, as well as informative discussion and communication. So, like most things, it's a double-edged sword. But I like it yes – it's predominantly great for communicating with work, friends and family.

2 Do you think your friends spend too much time on social media?

YES! Some are really obsessed with social media – constantly posting on their weibo pictures of their dinner, or parties, or days out. It's a bit excessive to be honest. I think a lot of my friends are a bit over the top about it. I am not so passionate about such things, personally. I use it mainly for practical communication.

3 Do you want to work in a social media company?

No, I don't. Today there are too many rules and regulations governing social media and it's a minefield. I'd prefer to work in a more relaxing field that is not so connected to public

information sharing, gossip and stuff like this. I am not a very public-facing kind of person really!

Names

1 Does your name have a special meaning?

Not really. I am named after my grandfather who was from Gansu, and apparently I have a name that goes back many generations in my family. I also share a character of my Grandmother's name as well. Apart from that, there is no special meaning to my name.

2 How do people choose names for their children?

Some people seek the advice of a fortune teller or a wise person! Most people discuss it with their family and think about it for quite a long time, and choose something that means something to them, sounds lucky or is simply nice-sounding.

3 Does anyone in your family have the same name with you?

Yes, several people have the same two characters in their name as mine. I have three characters in my name. One of them is specific to me. The others are related to my grandparents and parents. I think this is pretty much the same for many people I know.

4 Are there any differences between how Chinese name their children now and in the past?

I am not sure to be honest. I think people are a bit less traditional in their choices of names than before, and young people try to think of more original and special character combinations. But, pretty much, in general, I don't think there have been big changes in naming customs and habits.

Weather

1 Do you prefer hot or cold weather?

I much prefer it when the weather is nice and hot. Obviously, I don't like it when it's extremely hot, but I like it pretty hot. Perhaps around 35 is a good temperature for me. However, I prefer it when it's a dry heat and not a really humid heat.

2 Do you prefer dry or wet weather?

I prefer dry weather, but it's nice to have a shower of rain from time to time. It clears the air and is good for the plants – I don't like it when it's months of hot dry weather with no rain. So, ideally, I like pretty hot weather, with a good shower of rain once a week or so.

3 What is the weather like in your hometown?

In my hometown it is hot and very humid for about 6 months of the year. It's unbearable when

it's too hot and humid to be honest – it's hard to breathe and you sweat profusely as soon as you leave the house. Like I mentioned before, hot and dry weather is my favourite, with the occasional rain shower.

4 Do you have the habit of checking the weather forecast?

I check it fairly often actually. For no particular reason really, just because it pops up on my phone every morning when I wake up, so I look at it. Where I live in China the weather is highly predictable all year round, so we don't really need to be checking the weather forecast all the time, like people do in the UK, for example.

Public Transport

1 What kind of public transport do you usually take?

I usually take the subway and a bus on a daily basis, to go to work, and on the weekends I grab a taxi, to go out to meet friends in town – to go to a restaurant or a bar or so. So, I take a few different modes of transport usually – I don't own my own car, so I rely on public transport most of the time unless a friend gives me a lift somewhere.

2 Did you take public transport when you were a kid?

I took public transport with my parents yes. We always used to go on the bus in those days, because there weren't many subway lines in our city, and none near to where we lived. Now, however, there's a lot more public transport.

3 Do most people prefer public transport?

Well... not really. I think most people find public transport in Chinese cities a bit overcrowded. Everyone would prefer to have their own car, in an ideal world. Though, public transport is very cheap, it's not always convenient.

4 When do you usually take public transport?

I usually take public transport each morning and evening on weekdays, to go to the office to work. And, on weekends I take public transport if I need to go somewhere to meet family and friends – I'll take a taxi if it's not convenient to get a bus or subway. Occasionally I take a hire-bike from the street if the distance isn't too far.

Writing

1 Do you write a lot?

I don't write much at all, actually. Now that I've graduated I no longer have to write endless

essays and assignments, like I've been used to for the past three or four years. So, I don't write much – I write job application letters, and emails, but I don't have to write a lot at the moment.

2 What do you like to write?

I don't really like to write much these days. I write emails to my family, and text messages to friends, and that's about it at the moment. Like I said, I'm enjoying having a break from years of having to write assignments.

3 Do you prefer typing or handwriting when you are writing something?

Most definitely typing, I think - to be honest, my handwriting now is awful – I'm just not used to writing by hand anymore.

Technology

1 What technological products do you often use, computers or mobile phones?

I use both - computers, mobile phones, and I have a tablet. I use all of them for both work and social communications. Today, pretty much everyone needs a phone, at least, and most people who work in my field will have a tablet and a computer too.

2 What electronic devices have you bought lately?

I haven't bought any electronic devices this year. Last year I bought a new tablet, because my old one was several years old and the memory was full, which meant it had slowed down to the point where it was no longer efficient to use. But since then, I've not bought anything else electronic.

3 Are there any technological devices you want to buy?

I'd like to buy a really good pair of noise cancelling headphones. I have a small pair of headphones that come with my mobile phone, but they don't block out the noise of people and traffic when I'm commuting to work. So, I want to buy a nice quality pair of headphones that are great for sound, but block out the outside noises really effectively.

4 What benefits does technology bring to us?

Technology brings us a host of benefits. It would take too long to list them all! But, in short, the main things technology offers to society is fast, effective communication which enables us to streamline business and personal interactions and communications and get things done quickly.

Morning Routine

Do you like to get up early in the mornings?

Not really. I'm not a morning person... but I'm not a night person either. I guess you could say I'm an afternoon person? Or more precisely, a person who "loves to sleep" kind of person!? Either way, it's a daily struggle to peel myself out of bed, so I need all the help I can get.

What is your morning routine?

I wake up around 6:00am when my alarm goes off, and snooze for a few minutes. When I finally roll out of bed, I take a shower, quickly put on my makeup, blend my daily smoothies, then I am out of the door. If it's a non-working day, I'll hit the gym, or I'll just chat with my boyfriend for a bit, before taking a shower.

Which one is your favorite morning in the whole week?

My favourite morning is Saturday morning because I don't have to get up for work and I can lie in bed for hours reading or watching TV series. Saturday morning is most certainly my favourite morning and it always has been.

Do you want to change your daily routines in the future?

If there's one thing I could change it would be having a lie-in in the morning. I always wake up really early and get out of bed as soon as I wake up which means I never really have a lie-in. Sometimes I get a bit tired in the afternoon and I think it's because I get up too early. So yeah I'd like to be able to have a lie-in sometimes.

Part 2&3

Describe your favorite childhood friend

You should say:

Who he/she is

Where you met each other

What you often did together

And explain what made you like him/her

A childhood friend who I had a lot of fun with was a guy called Matthew. We met in school in the very first year. He lived in the street nearby, and we used to have great times together. You see, we lived in a small town then, by a really nice woodland – we would both go off and play in the woods almost every day, at least in the holidays. We'd make dens, play hide and seek, climb trees, and play imaginary fantasy games. We were the kind of kids who were not so into sports like football and basketball – we were more excited by riding bikes and having adventures in the countryside. Plus, when you grow up in a small town there are less entertainment options than in cities, so you end up using your imagination more, and bonding with your friends a lot more – because there are less distractions, and a lot of nature around. There was also a river, and Matthew had a small wooden boat his uncle had made him, sort of a raft really – and we used to go down the river on that and try to catch fish. Things like that. I enjoyed his company because he was funny, too. He had a very mischievous sense of humour and loved playing practical jokes – we enjoyed playing pranks on our parents. That was quite funny actually. So, yeah, I liked Matthew a lot, and we still keep in touch, from time to time on social media. He is in Shenzhen studying business in university. Occasionally, at Spring Festival we see each other in our home town, if we both are visiting at the same time.

Describe the home of someone you know well and you often visit

You should say:

Whose home it is

How often you go there

What it is like

And explain how you feel about that home

There is a home that really sticks in mind! It's the home of my friend, James, and his family, who live just in the community next to ours. The reason I find it particularly interesting is because it's in a much older community – and those old residential buildings are, in my opinion, much better, because the rooms are really big, and the ceilings are high, and they all have balconies. The modern residential buildings may look cooler, but they are often small, they don't have balconies and the ceilings are much lower. I visit there often because the family are really welcoming and kind and relaxed. And, also, there's plenty of space, so often we just hang out in the living room – well, one of them – they have two, in fact. I go there about 4 times a week, actually, and even more in the holidays. James' mother cooks really well... in fact, so does his father. They seem to enjoy it, and prepare meals quickly, that are really tasty. Often, I will stay there the whole day and

we play on the Playstation, read books, play football in the community gardens. Stuff like that. The house is decorated in a very curious way – the father has travelled all over the world and filled the house with interesting paintings, and decorations from mainly African countries, and some South American countries. So, yeah, it sticks in mind as I spend a lot of time there.

Describe a photo you took and you are proud of

You should say:

When you took it

Where you took it

What is in this photo

And explain why you are proud of it

A photo I took that I am really proud of is a picture of an ex-girlfriend of mine from university. You see, in my first year at university I had a bit of a photography phase – I got quite into taking photos, and created albums based on a number of different themes. I had a period of taking photos of trees, for example, another period of taking photos of old buildings, another of taking photos of markets – you could say that photography is a form of art, in this sense. Anyway, I had a phase of taking portraits of people, and the whole project was in black and white. People look quite striking in black and white, and I think it's a lovely way to photograph people. Anyway, one of the best, and most meaningful photos I took was of my girlfriend at the time. We took a series of photos around campus – our campus was an old and very attractive place with lots of curious plants, trees and gardens within it. The photo I liked the most, and still like, was perhaps the most natural of them all – she was not posing at all, or trying to look attractive or conscious of the camera – she was bending down to stroke a small dog that an old man was walking. The morning sunlight was just perfect, casting a long shadow across the path – shadows of her, the dog and the man and a tree behind, all extending beautifully and sharply. Her face was a perfect, natural smile of joy and the old man also had a pleasant look of contentment on his face. It's hard to describe art or photography in my own language, let alone in English, but this is the best way I can describe it anyway – it was a perfect configuration of elements, wonderful lighting and lovely genuine expressions on the faces of the old man and my girlfriend. So, I'm very proud of it, and I got it framed, too, and it's on the wall at my parent's house back in Guizhou.

Describe an important thing you learned (not at school or university)

You should say:

What it is

When you learned it

How you learned it

And explain why it was important

An important thing I learned – which was not at school or uni – was from my parents, more specifically my mother. That was the value of being honest. This may sound a bit strange, but it is what comes to mind first, so I chose to talk about it. You see, I was predominantly brought up by my mother, as my father was always away working far from home. She's a kind of sensitive

person, but also a dedicated and committed person – if she decides to do something, for herself or for others, she approaches it with an attitude of honesty, sincerity and commitment, until the task is complete. She talked to me a lot as a child – about a whole range of topics, both everyday things and deeper, more philosophical things – and I listened a lot to the things she had to say. She taught me that it was important, from a moral perspective, to be an honest and kind person. Although, in fact, especially in Asian society, this isn't always the best way of achieving success in career, it is, according to my mother, the best way of being true to yourself and developing and growing self respect. She always believed that this was more valuable and important than career success or money or other more material achievements. I also saw her demonstrate this quality of honesty and sincerity in her daily actions, as well as in her stories and explanations to me. She put 'theory into practice' you might say – she practiced what she preached – she acted in accordance with her beliefs – they weren't just things she talked about, lectured about or taught; she actually lived according to her own principles. I think this is a valuable lesson – in conclusion – that you live sincerely and honestly in accordance with your principles. And that way you can grow to be a whole person, who will always attract good people, and develop strong friendships and relationships. I have seen this come true in my daily life as well. And so, I believe what she taught me is true – even though it isn't always the way to get ahead in the material world of work!

Describe an experience of online shopping

You should say:

When it happened

What you bought

What problems you had while shopping online

And explain how you felt about it

I've had many experiences with online shopping, but the one I recall the most clearly is the time that I bought an item and had such trouble getting a refund from the seller. I can't remember the name of the store now, but anyway, I bought a thick coat for winter – it was quite expensive actually – and when it arrived, it had a rip in the back and the zip was faulty. I contacted the company through the online chat and they said they were happy to refund it, and I should just send it back. I arranged with a delivery service to send the package back and it went smoothly. They confirmed they had received it okay. Everything seemed to be fine. Then there was total silence for weeks.... Yes, weeks! I contacted the seller, nothing. I checked my bank account and shopping platform order and returns messages, nothing. I messaged them countless times, and they simply did not reply. I had no idea what they were playing at but I was pretty angry. I contacted the online platform and they said they would put in a case against the seller. I didn't really want it to get to this stage because that kind of process takes a long time sometimes, and is quite annoying. Anyway, they put in a case against the seller, and after all sorts of calls, steps, hurdles and disputes, I eventually got my refund. To be perfectly honest it kind of put me off online buying, at least online clothes buying. I like to just go to shops, try an item on, buy it or not buy and that's that. That, to be honest, is the simpler and more enjoyable way of shopping. I think this whole online shopping thing is massively overrated to be honest.

Describe a person who is fashionable

You should say:

Who he/she is

What he/she does

What kind of clothes he/she wears

And explain why you think this person is fashionable

A person I know who is really fashionable is my friend, James. Actually, I'd say he was a fashion victim. Although he's a good friend of mine, I must say that we don't always see eye to eye about everything. And the one thing that I don't really like that much about him is his obsession with following the latest trends and fashion brands. He's a student, actually. He studies physics in my university. He mainly wears sporty clothes – and recently there are loads of new styles in the 'sports genre' that keep coming out. He seems to always be buying new sneakers, new tops, new hoodies, new plastic-rubber slip-on sporty sandals... you name it! He also buys bags, bracelets or wrist bands, water bottles and all the kinds of accessories they sell in these stores or online. It's as if he's a huge victim of their advertising campaigns. I mean, it does make him one of the most fashionable people I know – there's no doubt about that – but, personally I think it's quite over the top and I don't see the attraction at all. I've never really worried too much about following fashions; I like to wear what I think looks nice and is comfortable, and I think I have good eye for coordinating clothes, but when it comes to following fashion trends or buying the latest stuff, I'm not that bothered. Anyway, my friend is a cool guy and a nice kind person.. so, hey, I guess we all have different interests.

Describe a time when you received money on your birthday

You should say:

When it happened

Who gave you money

Why he/she gave you money

And explain how you felt about it

The time that stands out the most when I received money on my birthday was last year, in fact. You see last year was my first ever birthday away from home! Yes, honestly it was. You see I'm in my first year of university in Beijing, and all my other birthdays I was in my hometown with my family, with the exception of this last one in June. So, this last birthday I felt a little bit down to be honest. I have some good new university friends, admittedly, but I felt a little bit awkward celebrating my birthday with them. Anyway, I went out for a meal with them, and paid for a really nice Thai restaurant near to campus – I thought it would be a nice change to have a Thai meal, and recently I've been thinking a lot about tropical places and beaches and these kind of "holiday dreams", so I decided to invite my new group of friends to a Thai meal. It was lovely, and they even had a small traditional band that played music on a little stage as we ate. Anyway, during the meal I received a flurry of text messages on WeChat, from my mother, my auntie, my uncle

and some cousins in my hometown, and each one sent me a 'red packet' of money and a really nice greeting for my birthday. I was so pleased because the meal was really expensive, for me anyway, and also it meant I could be a bit more generous and order some more wine, some interesting desserts, and take my friends out for drinks in a cool bar after the meal – as well, of course, as investing in some clothes and other useful things for my university life. So, I felt very touched by the generosity of my family and it really did help me, and enabled me to offer my new friends a special night out. It's nice to be in a position to be generous like that. I felt really good on several levels, although I did miss my family, and it was my first birthday without them.

Describe a movie you watched recently and would like to watch again.

You should say:

What it was about

Where you watched it

Why you like it

And explain why you would like to watch it again

I watched the movie *Prey*, which is the latest movie in the series of *Predator* movies – based on the idea of a strong and predatory evil alien coming from another planet and landing on earth, in the jungle or wilderness. It's kind of scary, though I wouldn't call it a horror film, as such. It's more of an intense action thriller, really. Basically, in *Prey* there is a north American Indian girl, who is out in the woodlands hunting rabbits and she suddenly sees this strange phenomenon in the sky – strange lights like an alien space craft above the clouds – something like this. Then, a few days later she sees huge footprints in the woodlands, and strange things start to happen. Eventually she actually sees the alien fighting with a bear and realizing that there is this awful creature out there... the creature notices her and chases her. She manages to hide but eventually it finds her, and the rest of the film is about how she tricks the alien and eventually kills it. It's a movie that really keeps you on the edge of your seat... it's thrilling, and the scenery is impressive too. I would like to watch it again because I was watching it online on my computer, and frankly, this kind of movie is much better on the big screen, so I'd like to see it in the cinema.

Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently

You should say:

What the activity is

Who invited you to participate in it

Whether you asked for help during the activity

And explain what change you had in the activity

An outdoor activity I did in a new place recently was on a company excursion in the countryside. It was really exciting – we learned a number of bush craft skills. I'm not sure if you know what those are! It's like a sort of survival thing – I mean, it's learning sets of skills that might be useful for survival in the wild – but it's made into a fun activity that both adults and young people can do on company excursions or school trips and so on. Bush craft skills are things like learning to

cook on an open wood fire you build yourself in the woods, making simple animal traps, learning how to climb trees, make dens and learning which types of plants or wild mushrooms you can eat, and which you cannot. It can be a lot of fun actually – and when we did this with our company, we had a morning learning basic skills from a qualified instructor, then we were divided into teams in the afternoon, and had a series of tasks to complete in a given time. We were then scored points by the instructor on how well we did the task. At the very end there was a fairly humorous quiz, then a sort of assault course in the woods. It was a mixture of serious bush craft learning, and basically some fun teambuilding games, rolled into one. I thought it was brilliant, and I had never been to this place in the countryside before (it was a hilly location just outside Chengdu, in a woodland). I asked for help, of course, we had to all ask for help because we worked in teams, and it was part of the team spirit to be open and honest and help each other, and ask for help if we needed to. So, yes, I asked for help. However, during the actual contests in the afternoon, we could not ask for help from the instructor – but we could ask for help from our team members. I learned a lot from it, and felt that it changed my attitude towards team work, and towards nature in general. It was fun and an educational experience.

Describe a popular place for doing sports (e.g. stadium)

You should say:

Where it is

When you went there

What you did there

And explain how you feel about this place

A popular place for doing sports, is actually a modern gym near my office in Haidian. It's a really cool gym and sports centre. In fact, it's really a lot more than that because it also has modern, slick working areas you can even go to and have team meetings or work alone with laptops; it has a café and healthy snack bar, it has a spa and massage center, as well as all the usual things a gym has – exercise machines, sports areas and personal trainers. There's also a swimming pool. It's described as a "360 degree leisure and health center" and I can see why! The membership is pretty expensive if you want access to everything, but you can also just join selected things if you wish. I do a dance class there – modern hip hop dancing with a professional instructor, and my friend just subscribes to the gym and swimming pool. Another friend has a membership to the spa and massage center and goes there only once a month. So, as you can see there is some flexibility – and there's a host of combined membership plans and "menus" you can choose from. The last time I went there I went for my dance class, but actually I also signed up for the swimming pool too – I bought a three month trial membership. You see, I am not totally sure yet if I have the time or dedication to go swimming as well as do the other activities I'm involved in, so the special discount trial offers are really handy – you can have a go for 3 months and if it suits you, you can sign up for the year. I feel great about this place, because usually I don't like gyms and sports centres, but this place really feels great and is decorated really minimally and tastefully, and has friendly staff and a very professional approach to everything to do with leisure, health and exercise.

Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.

You should say:

When and where you had the lesson

Who gave you the lesson

What the lesson was about

And explain why you enjoyed the lesson

A time I enjoyed an impressive English lesson was when I went to a summer school in a town just outside London when I was a teenager. The summer school was set in a wonderful countryside location in a really old “harry potter” style school, rented out for the summer by the organization that ran the international summer camp. There were students from all over the world there. Anyway, the lesson that I enjoyed the most was from a Scottish teacher called Charlotte. She was in her early 30s, and had a wonderful way of making learning fun. She was quite firm and strict, but at the same time, she encouraged everyone to fully engage in the lessons. She told interesting stories of her travels, explained words and vocabulary on the board at the same time, asked a lot of questions about our opinions and views, modelled answers, corrected our answers, came up with language games, detective-like puzzle games that got us talking and using the language... I don't know how to describe it but she was the best teacher I've ever had. The lesson I liked the most was a detective game where we had to solve a mystery by reading the plot, the clues and then interviewing all the suspects – we had target language to incorporate into our interactions of course, and she corrected us sporadically throughout the game, but it was so much fun. It was designed really well... and was just as exciting as a really thrilling detective novel – except we were the characters in it! It was great and made me really enjoy learning. In fact, I think I remember more language from that lesson than any other in my life of lessons learning English!

Describe a time when you needed to search for some information

You should say:

What information it was

When you searched for it

How you searched for it

And explain why you needed to search for the information

I have to search for information a lot. I am currently working on my dissertation for my master's degree so I seem to spend most of my life searching for information online, through university archives and academic journals and books! The most recent time was only yesterday. I needed to find a number of research papers to support a theory that I am writing about as part of my dissertation. Basically, I logged on to the university archives – they are all online now – and I spent several hours putting in different keywords and locating different research papers in peer-reviewed journals about the topic. I briefly skim-read them and selected the ones that were most relevant to what I want to write. It's a fairly long and arduous process, but also quite interesting and inspiring. Actually, when you get used to it, it is enjoyable and quite easy, as you learn to “join the dots” between different scholar's ideas and concepts and how they support their arguments. This is all part of the process of searching and analyzing information for master's

degree studies. I usually use the computer in the library or access the archives from my laptop at home. It's something I enjoy doing and I'm happy I left plenty of time to do it, so I won't have to panic, and I am sure I will finish my dissertation well before the deadline, then have time to polish and perfect it in a relaxed manner.

Describe a person you know who is from a different culture

You should say:

Who he/she is

Where he/she is from

How you knew him/her

And explain how you feel about this person

The person I'd like to talk about who is from a different culture is a co-worker of mine called Jez. Jez is from America. We have a lot of exposure to Americans and the key symbols of American culture, from the world of music, cinema and popular culture. One could argue that American world domination has come in the form of commercialism, big business, and a drive for free markets and entrepreneurship. Whatever we may think of America and Americans, of the good things and the bad things – the point is: Jez really is from a different culture to me, and the more we work together the more I realise what some of these differences are. I'll talk here very concisely about a couple of positive and negative aspects of his culture, the way I see it. Americans seem to be quite open, direct, and generally motivated and positive on the surface. They aren't very reserved really – at least not about superficial things, and at least not in public. They exude a certain confidence, and that can be inspiring and welcoming, too, because they can also be quite positive about others. I've had a lot of encouragement from him at work, for example. On the other hand, I can't help thinking that sometimes he's a bit simple-minded. At times, it seems that they are too open and outspoken and put on too much of a 'positive face' with everything, and at the same time are too critical of other people's cultures, and don't make that much effort to really deeply understand them. So, with Jez, I have experienced both positive and not-so-positive aspects of American culture. I feel good about him, though, he's a colleague and friend and after all. We have to accept people have different ways in the global world we live in today.

Describe an object that you think is beautiful

You should say:

What it is

Where you saw it

What it looks like

And explain why you think it is beautiful

An object that instantly comes to mind that strikes me as really beautiful is a painting my friend Jayne has in her house on the staircase wall. It's a painting of a field of tulips – I think it's in Holland. It's a huge field of pink and red tulips stretching out into the distance, with a cobalt blue

sky above it. It's a particularly beautiful painting because of the way the painter has captured the light. I think that he must have been painting the field in the morning, as the morning sunlight, cast its light across the field and onto the flowers – the light casts shadows and brings out the brightness of the flowers. Almost as if they are moving or about to move in an incredibly light breeze. I think the painting is especially beautiful for two reasons – firstly because, as I've described above, it's a fantastic painting by an excellent oil painter, and secondly because I am especially drawn to nature and paintings of the natural world. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and this is very much true in my opinion – I am never attracted to abstract or even impressionist works of art, I find immense beauty in the simple natural, still lives and pictures of landscapes, mountains, fields, lakes and trees. So, it is true that beauty, and the perception of beauty, really is decided by personal opinion and personality. I think that paintings are more beautiful than photographs, because we know they have been created with the care, dedication and talent of a skilled painter, who has patience, calm and diligence. I think this also adds to the beauty of art – thinking about how much talent and effort went into creating the piece.

Describe a story or a novel that you have read and you found interesting

You should say:

When you read it

What the story or novel was about

Who wrote it

And explain why you found it interesting

I story I found really interesting that I read to my little sister yesterday, was a kid's story called "My Secret Unicorn". It's a book about a girl called Lauren who lives on a farm with her parents and brother. She has a horse called Twilight. One day Lauren visits an old bookshop in town, run by an old lady called Mrs. Fontana. Mrs. Fontana gives Lauren a beautiful book about unicorns, and hints to Lauren that unicorns are, indeed, real and live in the world amongst us, if we look carefully enough and open our minds. Lauren goes home and gradually begins to realise that her pony, Twilight, might be a unicorn. She finds a spell in the back of the book and one night when her parents are asleep she casts the spell, and Twilight changes into a unicorn! Lauren is amazed, but she must keep this secret – if anyone finds out, she could be putting Twilight in danger. The rest of the story spans over 3 volumes, and is a series of adventures that Lauren and Twilight have together. They save people from danger, solve all sorts of problems, flying around at night – always at night – and keeping their secret closely guarded. I won't spoil the story by going into any more details – but it's really a fantastic story, especially for young girls – and has some powerful and positive messages for children too. It's written by a woman called Linda 'something'. To be honest I forget her full name. It slips my mind right now. She isn't especially famous, as far as I know, and neither is the story, but I think it's a fantastic story and often myself or my mother read the stories from these three volumes to my little sister before bed.

Describe a time when you made a decision to wait for something

You should say:

When it happened

What you waited for

Why you made the decision

And explain how you felt about the decision

There is one time that comes to mind very strongly, when I made a decision to wait for something. That was a time when I was absolutely desperate to go on holiday, and had it all planned with a friend of mine, and then she told me she had to delay it... I was actually really annoyed. I had a decision to make: do I go on holiday on my own? Do I invite another friend to join me? Or do I exercise a bit of personal patience and wait? Well, let me explain the situation in a bit more detail, first: We had planned and bought refundable tickets to go to an island in Thailand together in the Spring Festival holidays. I had never been to south east asia before and I was especially excited about going to this island with my friend – it was famous for white sandy beaches, and moon parties and all sorts of other exciting stuff in a wonderful exotic setting – and it was not even that expensive! Anyway, A couple of weeks before the holiday she announced that her grandmother had insisted that the family get together for Spring Festival and had convinced her not to miss it. She had basically been persuaded to cancel her trip with me, delay it till the Summer holidays, to go see her family for Spring festival. Whilst I can understand this, I was obviously upset – it was going to be a big adventure for us, and most certainly a lot of fun. Anyway... another friend of mine said she would come with me and was quite enthusiastic about it.... But.. in the end, as much as I wanted to go, I decided that I would delay the trip and wait until the summer to go with the friend who had cancelled. It was a difficult decision because I really wanted to go and I was really geared up for it, but I felt a sense of loyalty to my friend, even though I was a bit annoyed she had cancelled on me. And, I was happy that I decided to delay the trip in the end. Sometimes you have to make decisions that you don't want to make, and sometimes they end up being good decisions, after all. We are now closer friends than before, and are actually planning to go on that trip in August, just a couple of months from now!

Describe a person you know who loves to grow plants (e.g. vegetables/fruits/flowers etc.)

You should say:

Who this person is

What he/she grows

Where he/she grows them

And explain why he/she enjoys this activity

A person I know who loves to grow plants is a lady I met in Scotland when I was in university. In fact she was my neighbour. I was living in a shared house in Bruford Road in Edinburgh, and next door lived a fairly old, but very energetic lady, called Nan. Nan was always changing her hair style, always wore long flowing dresses, and was quite moody, but a lovely lady, nevertheless. She had a small front garden and a quite long back garden. In the front garden she had wonderful flower

beds of brightly coloured flowers, and a small lawn with a stone bird bath on it. And in the back garden she had bushes and a vegetable patch and some more leafy plants. I don't remember the names of all these plants in English, to be honest! Anyway, she spent quite a bit of time in her garden carefully looking after her plants, tilling the soil around the vegetables, watering them during the dry summer months and pruning the rose bushes. Because that summer I stayed there and spent a lot of time reading in the garden I would talk to her over the low fence which divided our gardens and we became quite good friends. She told me a lot about her love for plants and flowers and it seemed like this was a hobby that really kept her positive and happy in life. She wasn't so into people, or doing social things, but she did enjoy her garden. We chatted a lot that summer, and I think I learned a thing or two from her about how to appreciate nature and the simpler things in life. I think tending to her garden was really good for her mental and physical health, actually.

Describe a program you would like to watch

You should say:

What it is

What it is about

Who you watch it with

And explain why you like to watch it

A program that I'd like to watch that I've heard about but not yet seen, as a TV series actually. I guess that counts as a program! The TV series is called *The Sandman* and is based on a cartoon character, who is the Lord of Dreams. It's obviously fantasy – but from what I've heard it's also quite philosophical and meaningful in the way it is done. It touches upon all sorts of aspects of our thoughts and lives – life, death, suffering, human ambitions, and so on. I would like to watch this with my friend Michael – he's really into these kind of TV series, and he loves to talk about them afterwards, too. I enjoy watching films and series and then having someone to discuss them with after – I think this is really interesting and makes them all the more exciting. The reason *The Sandman* is so interesting to me is because I'm really into fantasy stuff, but also I like things which involve meaningful reflections on life, have philosophical messages or insights into people and society and things that make you feel you've learned something afterwards, not simply watched something for fun. So, that's why I'd choose *The Sandman* – though, as I said, I've not seen it, I've read reviews about it online, and I've a few friends which have recommended it to me.

Describe a time when you forgot/missed an appointment

You should say:

What the appointment was for

Who you made it with

Why you forgot it

And explain how you felt about the experience

There are a few times I can recall when I missed an important appointment, believe it or not!

However, the time that really sticks in mind is when I was scheduled to go for an interview to get into University! Yes, that's right – it was an interview to a really good university that I'd applied to study at. I actually completely missed the interview, and the reason was because I had written the day down wrongly in my online calendar on my phone. So, I got an 'alert' reminder about the interview 3 days after the interview itself – and, believe me, it gets worse than that! I actually had a train ticket booked to Beijing- I went to Beijing, checked into my hotel... yes.... And got changed, prepared, and went to the university, only to find that I was 3 days late. The interview day had passed. But, you know, I was incredibly lucky, because they did actually re-schedule and give me another chance. However, as you might imagine, I did not perform well in the interview and I didn't get a place. I think they only agreed to interview me because the secretary of the department felt sorry for me when I arrived 3 days later and only then realized that I completely got the day wrong. Anyway, so, that's it really. I felt completely stupid, angry with myself and really annoyed in general. I felt guilty as well, and I had to explain to my family, who, to be honest, were not very sympathetic. So, yeah, you can imagine, this isn't one of my fondest of memories!

Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach etc.)

You should say:

Where you saw the plastic waste

When you saw the plastic waste

What you did

And explain how you felt about this experience

A time when I saw a lot of plastic waste was... well, I wonder if this counts or not... I think it does... it was actually at a presentation I went to see in a large bookshop in my city. Let me explain. There's a big international bookstore in my city, which also has a café, restaurant area, and an area where they host exhibitions and other events. There was a presentation – a sort of talk really – by an environmental organization, about recycling and the importance of individual contributions to the world recycling efforts. The focus of a big part of the presentation was on the use of plastics. They explained how so much plastic does not actually get recycled, but ends up filling the land and often also ends up in the oceans. What really stick in mind was this photograph of the "doldrums" – an area of the ocean where loads of plastic ends up coming together in one big island – yes, it's almost like a huge island of plastic. I am not sure why it all gathers together in that one place, the size of a country, but it does – it's something related to ocean currents and so on. Anyway, the series of images, the photos, in the presentation, of this huge amount of plastic just tangled up and floating like a giant island, really made me feel quite depressed. Especially when I learned, and saw pictures of the harm this does to sea animals and birds. So, yes, I felt depressed about this experience, but it did make me think more carefully about our daily plastic use and the environment.

Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.

You should say:

When and where you had the lesson

Who gave the lesson

What the lesson was about

And explain why you enjoyed the lesson

A time I enjoyed an impressive English lesson was when I went to a summer school in a town just outside London when I was a teenager. The summer school was set in a wonderful countryside location in a really old “harry potter” style school, rented out for the summer by the organization that ran the international summer camp. There were students from all over the world there. Anyway, the lesson that I enjoyed the most was from a Scottish teacher called Charlotte. She was in her early 30s, and had a wonderful way of making learning fun. She was quite firm and strict, but at the same time, she encouraged everyone to fully engage in the lessons. She told interesting stories of her travels, explained words and vocabulary on the board at the same time, asked a lot of questions about our opinions and views, modelled answers, corrected our answers, came up with language games, detective-like puzzle games that got us talking and using the language... I don't know how to describe it but she was the best teacher I've ever had. The lesson I liked the most was a detective game where we had to solve a mystery by reading the plot, the clues and then interviewing all the suspects – we had target language to incorporate into our interactions of course, and she corrected us sporadically throughout the game, but it was so much fun. It was designed really well... and was just as exciting as a really thrilling detective novel – except we were the characters in it! It was great and made me really enjoy learning. In fact, I think I remember more language from that lesson than any other in my life of lessons learning English!

Part 3

Is it interesting to be a foreign language teacher?

It really depends on the institution you're teaching at I imagine – what your bosses are like, what the curriculum is like, and what your language learning goals are. If you are just teaching IELTS or TOEFL it must be very boring, but if you are teaching a more creative and inspiring syllabus, perhaps in an international school, then it must be quite inspiring – you know, creative writing, English literature, and perhaps conversational English in a multicultural classroom. That would be interesting.

What makes a good foreign language teacher?

I think the most important qualities of a good foreign language teacher are empathy, cultural awareness, the understanding of another culture's learning styles and habits, and the ability to explain things clearly and concisely and give great instructions that everyone understands. And, of course, making it a bit entertaining and inspiring too – to motivate the less intrinsically motivated students in the class.

Do you think language learning is important?

I think it is to some extent, but it largely depends on what field you wish to go into in the future. If you want to work in a local company, in a local capacity, then no, learning another language is not always helpful or useful. If you want to work in a more international context, then learning another language is essential – in business, in education or in international relations. So, it really depends on which direction in life you wish to go in and what you aspire to do in the future.

Do you think grammar is important when learning foreign language?

Grammar is indeed important yes, if your aim is to pass exams and reach a high level for academic study. If your learning goals are to achieve a level of basic spoken conversational competency then maybe grammar isn't as important. But if you need to pass exams, or move on to study in university overseas, then a strong grasp of grammar and a wide vocabulary are both essential.

Describe a time when you tried something difficult and had a positive result.

You should say:

When it happened

What it was

How you achieved a positive result

And how you felt about it

Part 3

What kinds of things do children find very hard to do?

Children find it very hard to do things that they are initially not that good at, I think. Often children feel demotivated easily if they try something and don't do really well, or see others performing better than them. Especially if they don't get positive encouragement. I think it depends on the child and his or her talents, as to what this might be. Some children, like myself, find sporting activities really hard. Others find maths hard, others, languages. It depends. But, the common factor is that when children are not initially good at something they will find it hard to get into and excel at because they quickly can lose motivation.

How can parents encourage children to do something difficult?

Parents can offer positive reinforcement rather than criticism. Parents should attempt to strike a balance between praising children too much, and being too critical and too pushy. If a parent can be positively encouraging, but also fairly firm and attempt to instill discipline and perseverance into a child, then this can be the best way to encourage children. It's not always easy to get this balance though.

What kinds of jobs can help people become confident?

I think jobs in which people have a good, caring and encouraging boss, can help people become

more confident. Whatever jobs they may be, the important factor is the boss and the team mates. I really believe that the people we work with are the most important factor in performing well and confidently in a job. Any kind of job can make people feel confident if they feel they are learning something, and they feel encouraged and supported by their managers.

What's your definition of success?

I think success is basically being able to try at something and struggle, and go through some hardship, and eventually succeed in doing it. I think that is the best, most succinct definition of success. I'd say that some people define success as getting lucky, or having a lot of money or support from family to do whatever you want, but personally, I think real success involves personal effort, struggle and a sense of determination.

Describe a place in your country that you would like to recommend to travelers

You should say:

Where it is

What it is

What people can do there

And explain why you would like to recommend it to travelers

There's a place in Fujian province called Xiamen – I'm sure you've heard of it. This is where I'd recommend to travelers to China. It's a great place, by the coast, with a fantastic climate and lovely, warm, friendly people, great food, and interesting cultural things to do and see. And, if you're into Chinese tea, there's a lot of really good Chinese tea shops that are still family-run, friendly, and interesting. The tourist sights I would recommend are the Gulangyu island of pianos – this is really interesting – it's an island, a small island, just a boat ride away, where there are literally pianos in every house, and a piano museum. It's fantastic and quite unique. Also, the island trip makes a nice little day out, and there are friendly restaurants and eateries on the island too, and great views out to sea. Secondly, I'd go to the see Hakka people's round houses just outside Xiamen in the countryside. They are called the Fujian Hakka Tulou, and they are quite large circular buildings, with a central courtyard and hundreds of living quarters inside. They date back centuries and were a traditional way to live in the days when you had to protect yourself from invaders – these roundhouses look fantastic and are incredibly interesting, and people still live in them today. It's a fascinating and unique aspect of the culture in that area of China. So, yes, these are the main places around Xiamen that I'd recommend – and make sure you go when it's a nice time of a year, not too hot – in summer it gets really hot and humid. I'd go around, or just before, spring to be honest.