

2023

Describe the sights and sounds of a busy shopping mall

(Singapore–Cambridge ‘O’ Level 1128/01 2021 Q3)

I stood paralysed like an inanimate statue gawking at the colossal glass monolith that towered over me. In front of me was an ornate opening to the glass dome, where countless people flowed in and out of the entrance like ants in disorder. Posing majestically on top of the entrance was a singular word—Jewel. It was the largest shopping mall in Singapore, one showered with the boundless acclaim of many around the entire world.

Taking a step onto the glossy marble floor, I was assaulted by the chilly breeze from the air conditioning of the mall. With a slight shudder from the sudden temperature change, my eyes darted all around the capacious space. A myriad of shops lined humbly to my left and right; each so graceful yet bubbling with effervescence and flamboyance as if screaming for attention with their surfeit of blinding neon lights. Standing outside some of the stores were ebullient people dressed in matching outfits, handing out flyers and inviting passersby to try out samples from their stores. Visitors sauntered leisurely around the open space, chatting merrily with their friends or family. Exuberant children laughing and dashing around the potted plants, like baby bunnies cavorting around their parents.

However, none could compare to the palm-sized landmark that could be descried in the far front. It was the rumoured marvel. I had seen a multitude of awe-striking photographs online, but never in person. Despite the significant distance, my heart palpitated impatiently in exhilaration and excitement. With brisk steps, I made my way forward towards the landmark. As I drew closer and closer, the roar of thousands of gallons of water crashing down grew louder and louder. Then, I reached my destination.

In the centre of the vast room was a sole waterfall. Torrents of crystal clear water came cascading down from the gaping hole in the dome's ceiling. With the rejuvenating feel of tender sunlight beating against my skin through the tessellating window panes of the ceiling, it was an odd yet invigorating blend of surrealness and naturalness. On the massive slant walls that circled around the waterfall, lush flora was littered extravagantly all over—like a jungle where trees competed to emerge over the canopy for sunlight. It was nothing like the pictures. Rooted in place, I stared at the magnificent sight in awe like a child looking through a kaleidoscope for the first time. Around me were many others with similar awe-struck expressions—children pointing at the vortex in fascination; couples holding hands with eyes fixated on the torrent; and elderly gaping at the brilliant scenery with faces saturated with joy, as if they had only realised that there was a myriad of enigmatic wonders awaiting them despite their long lives.

Then, I snapped out of my daze. *I can't spend all day looking at this ethereal architectural masterpiece*, I thought to myself. Swiftly, I turned my head away and began walking to a different section of the mall, albeit reluctantly. I strolled past countless stores, each unique in their own idiosyncratic way—massive figurines posted outside toy shops like sentinels to welcome children and families with their splash of bright, vibrant colours; spotlights fixed onto mannequins dressed in resplendent velvet dresses and pompous aureate suits outside

world-renowned clothing stores, captivating the eyes of all; endless walls of crystal-clear glass that separated the tranquil world of books and magazines that were lined along a sea of racks, and the hustle and bustle of the crowd on the aisle outside. As I walked on, I overheard the conversations of many I passed. However, I could not make out what a number of them were talking about. The unfamiliar words they uttered were like the language of an extraterrestrial civilisation to me. Then, I realised. They were all speaking different languages! It was only then that I remembered that Jewel was a shopping mall near Singapore's airports, which explained the surplus of foreigners that flocked the concourses of the mall with their luggage and interesting outfits.

Then I entered the food section. It was the most dreadful nightmare an indecisive person could ever have—a plethora of diners, each displaying their menus of mouth-watering meals ostentatiously. The cacophony of metal cutlery on porcelain plates and sizzling foods on the grills reverberated off every wall of the hallway. Yet, what wafted through the air was the mixture of tangy aromas of the appetising meals. It sent torrents of dopamine rushing through my brain and whetted my appetite. My stomach growled. My mouth watered. My brain pleaded. It was like taking a walk through a treacherous den of voracious lions, except the lions were now the diners that threatened me for my money with their exquisite meals. I got out of the food section posthaste, afraid I would find myself in a restaurant even after having just had my lunch.

Glancing at my watch, I was appalled when I realised that I had exceeded the time I had allotted myself to explore the wonderful world Jewel encompassed. I trudged out of the mall in dismay. Taking one last look back at the gargantuan building, I swore I would come back to continue my adventure through the labyrinth it cloaked within. And that was the first time I visited my favourite shopping mall, Jewel.

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Date written: 27 September 2023

Word Count: 877

Writer Notes:

I couldn't stay motivated to finish this essay. It took a span of like 3 days to finish this, with many long breaks in between. However, this is by far the highest score I've gotten for an essay, rather proud of the mark. However, I do see the flaws in this writing. This is the edited version after my teacher's feedback and remarks. Hope you enjoy it!

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