



2022 年第一季度口语机经库
1-4 月

学雅思
就上新东方在线」

◆ Topic Pool——Part One (2022.01-04)

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◆ 注：红色为必备话题；蓝色为本季新题；黑色为保留旧题。

Study

1. Do you work or are you a student?

I'm a student at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

I'm a student, and I'm a freshman in Tsinghua University.

I'm a student, a high school student.

2. What subject are you studying?

I'm studying for a Master's degree in Tsinghua University, specializing in the field of Math Studies.

3. Why did you choose that subject?

I chose math because I liked it in high school. I was always strong in math and science, so it seemed like a natural progression. Also, I did some research on career opportunities, and it seemed to be a subject with a promising future.

4. What would you like to do in the future?

I would love to be a teacher. Most of the women in my family are teachers, they have a huge impact on my life. I think it is wonderful to get to change people's lives by what I say or do on the stage. It requires a person to be responsible and caring, and I want to be such a person.

5. What are the most popular subjects in China?

It's hard to say nowadays. You know, due to the globalization, our country is much more developed than ever. Every subject has something to offer to the society.

Students just choose their subjects based on what they are interested in, which then, in turn, can become a trend.

6. Do you think it's important to choose a subject you like?

Definitely! I think interest is the best motivator, if I choose something I'm keen on, I will be willing to sacrifice my leisure time because it is a worthwhile sacrifice to me. In addition, when I face some difficulties, I will do my best to overcome the problems. Quitting in the middle will never be an option. We should consider carefully our choice from the start, rather than carelessly choosing the wrong path, then regretting it.

7. Are you looking forward to working?

I have been wanting to work full time, that's for sure. I can now imagine myself waking up early in the morning, getting my business attire on and sitting behind my office desk. I wonder how it feels to work with other professionals and with the boss always around... It could be stressful but interesting, I guess. The best part I would say would be to finally receive a salary and spend my own money. I would not have to bother my parents then. But, like most things in life, it really depends on what the job is and whether the environment is positive or not.

8. Do you like your subject? (Why? / Why not?)

Honestly, I don't. I am halfway through my college career. But reality struck me when the material we learned in class was much more difficult and the assignments weren't fun. I'm thinking about changing my own major now.

9. Do you prefer to study in the mornings or in the afternoons?

I am not a morning person, I'm afraid. But to be honest, studying in the afternoon is even worse. I get really sleepy from one to four in the afternoon. So, actually, my brain is at its best in the evening. It works better then. I can stay sharp even until very late at night.

10. Is your subject interesting to you?

Absolutely. I find computer science really stimulating. Imagine creating something useful just using codes and numbers. It requires a good level of imagination and quite a good level of number skills, critical thinking and logic skills as well as a keen ability to solve problems.

11. Is there any kind of technology you can use in study?

For studying I use a computer and my phone. I often download research papers and read them on my phone and make notes onto the notes section of my phone too. I use my computer to actually write essays and do other homework tasks.

(1. What work do you do?

I am a teacher at a high school. I started there in Jan 2015 after graduating from

college. I would say it is a pretty challenging job.

2. Why did you choose to do that type of job?

Teaching is my passion. I don't view my career as a "job" per say. I see it more as my calling in life. It is my life's purpose.

3. Do you like your job?

Definitely! I enjoy the variety and special projects where I can take ownership of the final product. My job provides me with both, so yes, it is a good job and I find it very rewarding.

I'm not interested in my job... because it is so mundane and repetitive, two traits I despise and try to stay away from. I hope to find a better job that challenges me to aspire to new heights.

4. Do you miss being a student?

I definitely do! Sometimes I just wonder what would have happened if I had studied harder when I was in university. I just miss the days when I had nothing to worry about but the exams. Now, all the pressure from work and family is difficult to deal with.

5. Is it very interesting?

Most of the time, yes! The daily challenges from new projects provide constant opportunities to learn new things and to some extent re-invent myself. Every day is unique. My colleagues provide me with support but also healthy competition. I find my job most interesting when I am challenged to reach outside of my comfort zone.

6. Is there any kind of technology you use at work?)

I use mainly a laptop computer and my phone at work. Sometimes I also use a photocopier scanner, and a video camera if I'm making short promotional videos with my company. But mainly, I just use a computer.

7. Can you manage your time well when you work?

Yes, I am a project manager in my office, so I am quite good at managing my time and the other people's time on the team. I've worked as an IT manager for several years now.

8. Who helps you most at work?

My team members – I have a great team and they are all hardworking, supportive, smart and attentive to the needs of others and the project goals.

Hometown

1. Has your hometown changed much these years?

Absolutely! Take traffic as an example, the most common transport facility used to be

buses, it could be really crowded sometimes since people didn't have any other options. However, today, BRT and subway systems have made people's lives easier than ever.

2. Is that a big city or a small place?

This city is so huge. I often get lost here. Like the other day, I travelled to a new neighborhood that had this restaurant people were raving about. I made a wrong turn and it took me 20 minutes to figure out where I was.

3. How long have you been living here?

For about half my life, so that is about 10 years. I went to school here, and now I'm working in the same city. In fact, time has gone by really quickly because so there's so much to do here and I've been so active.

4. For you, what benefits are there living in a big city?

Well, first of all, there are a great number of opportunities for both education and job-hunting in big cities, which explains why people from small cities, towns and villages are flooding to big cities nowadays. Plus, the fact that cities offer more modern facilities and conveniences makes them even more attractive to people.

5. Is there anything you dislike about it?

Unfortunately, this city has a huge problem with pollution, especially air pollution. The air is so contaminated that we all have to wear masks every time we go out of the house. This problem has escalated to a serious level that it's been catching the attention of the international community. I hope that the government will be able to save this city before the problem gets worse.

6. What do you like most about your hometown?

What I love the most about it is the mystery. I mean there are so many places inside this city that I have yet to explore. I could spend years checking out every restaurant and attraction Beijing has to offer.

7. Where in your country do you live?

I live in Beijing. However, since the city is so big, it would take hours to even scratch the surface, but to sum it up, Beijing is the political and cultural heart, and one of the major economic centers of the world today.

Accommodation

1. Are the transport facilities in your city very good?

Honestly, I wish they were better. I have to walk 20 minutes to the bus stop, and the subway takes another 30 minutes when I get to work. My dream home is a house located right next to a bus stop or subway terminal.

2. Which room does your family spend most of the time in?

My family loves to stay in the living room as this is the only place in the flat where we can do a lot of things together. We play board games, watch films and TV programs. We play cards sometimes and we spend time working on huge puzzles together.

3. Do you live in a house or a flat?

I live in a flat, and my flat is situated in a quiet little neighborhood on the north side of city. My parents first moved there in 2000 when they wanted to start a new life and raise a family.

4. Do you plan to live here for a long time?

Not really! I want to blaze my own trail and live in a place that forces me to reach out and meet new people. I was thinking about moving to Shanghai for a few days to gain a bit more cultural experience of the world.

5. Do you live alone or with your family?

I'm a student at the moment, and I live with my parents. Actually I quite like it, because my mother is the best cook that I know - it's always wonderful to have a tasty meal after a day of school work. We also talk about our days with each other while we're enjoying dinner, it just feels good.

6. How long have you lived there?

I've lived there for three years and I really love my place. Since it's on the 11th floor, it's well ventilated and there is plenty of sunshine. I love to sink into the soft sofa to watch TV and eat snacks. There's a large shopping centre within 5 minutes' walk so it's very convenient for me to go shopping, watch movies and eat out. I wish it was my apartment.

7. What do you usually do in your house/flat/room?

At weekends, I spend most of my time studying and sleeping in my room. On weekdays, I spend time in the kitchen, baking some cakes or sweet stuff for my mother. Sometimes, we watch films in the living room. On Sundays, we usually clean the house and do some laundry.

8. Which is your favourite room in your home?

I think it must be my bedroom. My bedroom is not that big but quite neat. There are some posters of Kobe Bryant on the wall because he is my favorite basketball player. My room is kind of a private space for me - I usually play some video games, do my homework and play the guitar in it.

9. What's the difference between where you are living now and where you lived in the past? (If you want to say you have not lived elsewhere)

I have not moved home at all. I have lived in the same flat since I was born. I love our small place. I have a lot of good memories here, and I treasure them. I'd happily stay

here for many more years?

10. What can you see when you look out the window of your room?

I can see the whole community from my window. In the morning, people are going to school or work, everyone is in a hurry. However, in the evening, it is not that fast-paced anymore. I can see parents taking a walk after dinner and children playing games in the neighborhood.

11. Would you be willing to live in the countryside in the future?

In the future, probably. There is a peacefulness I enjoy when visiting the countryside. People there are friendly and always willing to start a conversation. I think when I retire, living in the countryside is a nice option to me.

Mirrors

1. Do you like looking at yourself in the mirror?

I am not sure whether I like it or not, but I do it every day before I go out of the house. I need to check my face, my hair and make sure I am looking as presentable as possible before I head out to the office.

2. Have you ever bought mirrors?

Yes, I have often bought little mirrors to take in my handbag, so I can check myself sporadically during the day. Perhaps before a meeting or after lunch, or if I am going from work to a dinner or something like that.

3. Do you usually take a mirror with you?

Yes, I usually take a small mirror with me. However, in more recent years, I don't use it. I tend to use my mobile phone - many people do these days - you know, you put the camera on selfie mode, and then you can look at yourself just as if you are looking in a mirror.

4. Would you use mirrors to decorate your room?

I have never used mirrors to decorate my living space, but I think it's a good idea. If you put mirrors in certain places in your house they can make it look bigger, or lighter or change the space in a positive way. So, yes, I would use mirrors to decorate my room, certainly.

Dreams

1. Do you often remember your dreams?

I sometimes remember my dreams, but not that often. I usually remember my dreams when I'm on holiday and have time to lounge in bed and slowly wake up, rather than on work days when I wake up and have to rush to get ready.

2. Are you interested in others' dreams?

I think dreams are interesting and can be very revealing, so yes, I am always

interested to hear about other people's dreams. I think they can tell us things about the unconscious worries or aspirations people have.

3. Do you want to make your dreams come true?

Well... the good ones, yes! I would like the good dreams to come true of course, but not the nightmares or scary dreams. I think everyone would like their best dreams to come true.

Websites

1. What kinds of websites do you usually use?

I use a number of websites very regularly. These are usually online shopping websites – two in particular. I buy a lot of things online – from clothes and shoes, to kitchen accessories and food and snacks.

2. What is your favorite website?

My favourite website is one I do not use that often. It's a website dedicated to trainers... to sneakers... you know, sporty shoes. I love trainers. So, when I need a new pair I always go to this particular website which has more unique styles and combinations of colours and designs.

3. Are there any changes about the websites you usually use?

Websites have recently become a lot more user-friendly, slicker, smoother, easier to use and more secure in terms of how they protect your personal data.

4. What kinds of websites are popular in your country?

Just like I mentioned, shopping websites. These are most certainly the most popular websites in my country. Everyone buys things online – it's convenient, reliable and you can buy pretty much anything you need from several online companies.

Taking photos

1. Do you like to take photographs?

I love to take photographs. Sometimes I will take up to 30 photos of exactly the same item, but in different modes, angles and settings. The real fun starts when I manipulate, crop, edit and Photoshop them. After many hours, I upload my selected ones to my Wechat moments.

2. Do you ever take photos of yourself?

Well, call me a narcissist but, I'm kind of obsessed with taking selfies. It is just the quickest way to show where I am, who I am with, what I am doing and how I am feeling. It would take a lot more time to describe that in texts.

3. What is your favorite family photo?

My favourite family photo is one with my whole family, my parents, grandparents from both sides, cousins and their neighbours, at my auntie and uncle's house in

Ankang, in the countryside in Shanxi Province. The photo brings back great memories of the Spring Festival that we spent there on my uncle's farm outside the town. It was a fantastic occasion, and the last photo that we took featuring my 98-year-old grandmother before she died.

4. Do you want to improve your picture-taking skills?

I think I already take pretty good photos. I've always been into photos, and care a lot about portraits and getting a photo to look good and balanced. So, I don't think I need or want to improve really – I'm not aiming to be a professional photographer – I think I'm more than good enough for my needs!

Cinema

1. Did you usually go to the cinema when you were a child?

I didn't really no. I went occasionally with my sister, but not very often to be honest.

2. Do you often go to the cinema with your friends?

Nowadays I go to the cinema about once a month – there's a new cinema complex right near my home in a mall. It's a fantastic cinema and they have all the latest movies.

3. Do you still like the same kind of movie which you liked when you were a child?

Pretty much. I've always liked fun, romantic and lighthearted films. I still enjoy a lot of animations and cartoons too.

Art

1. Do you like art?

Yes, I love art. I like many different types of art, actually. I love traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy, but I also really enjoy looking at western art, art from different periods in history, as well as abstract art, sculpture and even performance art. I'm a big fan of all types of culture and so I enjoy visiting museums and art galleries when I go to another country or when I visit another city in China. Art is an important part of life and children who learn about art usually end up being thoughtful, creative and innovative people when they get older.

2. Did you learn drawing when you were a kid?

I learned drawing in school – in art lessons – drawing and painting. I also learned a little bit at home because my father is quite a good artist and enjoys sketching. And my mother does sewing designs, so she often sketches the designs on paper before she starts a new sewing project.

3. Have you ever visited an art gallery?

I've visited lots of art galleries, in my city, Beijing, as well as in other cities. I enjoy modern art galleries the most, but I also like to see painting and artwork from history as well. There are quite a few different art galleries in my city and I sometimes go to

the temporary exhibitions at one gallery in particular that is in the famous art district, 798. I know the manager of that gallery too, so I enjoy going there, chatting to her and perhaps taking a coffee at one of the boutique arty coffee shops nearby.

4. Is there any art work on the wall in your room?

Yes, I have a couple of pictures, they are prints actually, of course they are not originals. One is the famous picture of the Great Wave, by the Japanese artist, Hokusai, and the other is a painting by Salvador Dali, the eccentric Spanish painter who painted quite strange and abstract works. I can't remember the name of the Dali painting, but it's a painting of a stone man looking at his own reflection in the water. It's quite mysterious and evocative. I think art is good to have in the home – it helps us reflect on life as well as creating a certain atmosphere in the house.

Sports

1. Do you like watching sports programs on TV?

I don't really. I am not much of a sporty person. I follow some of the Olympic events, but apart from that I have very little interest in televised sports, to be honest.

2. Do you watch live sports games?

Actually, you know, I've never been to a live sports game in my life. Well... apart from those on sports days in school, and sometimes watching my friends play basketball on campus.

3. Who do you like to watch sports games with?

When I watch sports, I enjoy watching them with a couple of my classmates. They're fun people to watch games with. I find it's a lot more exciting watching sports with other people, especially people are really enthusiastic about the sport. The excitement can be contagious.

4. What kinds of games do you expect to watch in the future?

I really don't know to be honest....perhaps football. I enjoy football, because I followed a lot of English teams when I lived in the UK, and I also enjoy watching football, so I think I will continue to follow a lot of the major football games. Especially the World Cup.

Mobile phone

1. Do you remember your first mobile phone?

I had my first mobile phone in university. I remember it very clearly, it was a Nokia phone and I loved it. It was tough, and lasted many years, and almost never broke. Then, sadly, it got stolen on a bus one day when I was going into town.

2. Do you often use your mobile phone for texting or making phone calls?

I use my phone mainly for texting. I text a lot with friends and use messaging apps to communicate, so I don't make many phone calls really. I don't really have the need to.

3. How has your mobile phone changed your life?

Mobile phones have given me the freedom to be constantly connected to friends and family. They've saved me a lot of time in arranging meet-ups with friends and things like this. Mainly the benefits have been social.

4. Will you buy a new one in the future?

I usually buy a new mobile phone every two or three years. They go out of date quite quickly these days – I mean, they stop performing optimally, and new more advanced models come out needing software that your old phone might not be compatible with.

Street market

1. What do street markets sell?

Well, from my own personal experience, I would say that people sell all sorts of things at street markets – ranging from delicious traditional Chinese cuisine that is affordable, to countless souvenir shops, and of course amazing department stores where you can find the latest fashions.

2. Do you prefer to go shopping in the shopping mall or the street market?

I prefer to shop in street markets, really. But it does depend on what I'm buying and how much time I have. Street markets are more fun for me, but malls and supermarkets can be more convenient, especially if I've got a tight schedule.

3. When was the last time you went to a street market?

Lots of street markets have closed down in my city, which in some ways is a shame... Let me think... it's been a while... perhaps about 2 years ago.

4. Are there many street markets in China?

Yes, there are actually, you know in China in almost every local neighbourhood you can find street markets filled with stalls selling daily produce such as fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and fish and things like that. There's one quite near my home actually. They're really quite popular.

Emails

1. Do you often send emails?

Yes, I send emails all the time. My university assignments are all submitted via email, and I correspond with my family regularly via email still, although a lot of communication today takes place over wechat, our messaging app in China.

2. Is sending emails popular in China?

Yes, sending emails is quite popular, although using more mobile applications for messaging and sending and receiving documents is getting pretty common.

3. Do you think sending emails will be more or less popular in the future?

I think we will send emails less and less as mobile messaging apps are able to send much larger files, and smartphones are much better at dealing with productive work-tasks like writing, editing documents and creating presentations.

Lost and found

1. What will you do if you find something lost by others?

If I find something someone has lost I will likely find a police station and hand it in. Or maybe ask around the local shops and places in the area.

2. Have you ever lost anything?

I rarely lose things. But I did lose my phone once, after a party with friends. I was really stressed about it. I think I left it in the taxi on the way home.

3. Will you post on social media if you lose your items?

It depends what the item is. I will certainly post a note on social media if I was in a certain venue and I think there is a chance that someone else there might have found it. If I lose something randomly in the city, then no I probably won't.

Time management

1. Do you make plans every day?

Sure I do. I use my phone apps to organize my schedule for the upcoming week. You know, I like to set reminders for important events or mark them on my calendar. I also set alarms in case I forget something.

2. Is it easy to manage time?

I find it pretty easy, really. I am a very organized person, in general. I use phone apps to organise myself – the calendar function and notes section. And I just have a good memory and a methodical, pragmatic approach to managing tasks and time.

3. Do you think it's useful to plan your time?

I find planning every half hour increment is essential to maximize my productivity during the workdays. Although I'm very spontaneous on the weekend and I try to relax a little bit and not think about time unless I really have to.

4. Do you like being busy?

I quite enjoy being busy, if I don't have too much to do that it becomes overwhelming. As long as I have enough time to do everything I need to do, and that most of the tasks are not unbearable, then yes, I enjoy being busy.

Memory

1. Why do some people have good memory while others just don't?

I think some people are born with great memories to be honest. Others have more self-discipline, perhaps from their home and school education, or just because of their personality.

2. Why do more people rely on cellphones to memorize things?

Cellphones are really handy. And the organizational features are getting increasingly better – the way the calendars integrate with your notes and stuff like this – and how they give you alerts and advanced warning of events. They are so handy.

3. Are you good at memorizing things?

My family and friends always say that I have a very good memory, a very strong memory and it's true; I can remember things really far back... Even to when I was about 3 or 4 years old.

4. Have you ever forgotten something that was important?

I've forgotten a few things yes. I have a habit of getting into long conversations with friends when we are out at a restaurant or somewhere, then leaving my wallet or cellphone on the table. I've done this a few times – and once even lost it – as I went back and it was gone!

App

1. What apps have you recently used?

An app that I use pretty much all the time is WeChat. It's a social app for messaging. I think everyone in China uses it. Another I've used recently is a navigation app that helps you get around a city – it's integrated with a map function and GPS. I've used this recently because I've been in a new area of the city I'm not familiar with, after my company moved office.

2. What kinds of apps are you interested in?

I don't use that many apps really. I just stick to the basics like Wechat for messaging and map apps if I'm somewhere new or need directions, or... maybe some games and crossword apps sometimes.

3. What was the first app you used?

I can't remember to be perfectly honest. Probably a messaging app. I'm a fairly social person and I like to keep in touch with people, so I am sure it must've been a messaging app.

4. What kinds of apps would you like to use in the future?

I think I'll probably stick with the same apps I use now, really. Unless something exciting and useful turns up. Maybe I'll use more news apps. I've recently taken to reading more world news, so I guess I might end up downloading and reading more apps related to news.

Weather

1. Do you prefer hot or cold weather?

I prefer hot weather as it provides more opportunities to do activities outdoors. Hot

weather also reduces the chances for me to catch a cold.

I enjoy the cold winter weather. I like cuddling up on the couch with blankets and a good book to read as I watch the snow fall outside.

2. Has the weather in your country changed much in the past few years?

Yeah I think there have been some noticeable changes. For example, from memory, winters were a bit harsher when I was a kid, they seem a lot milder now, and I suppose winters are now also wetter than before. So of course now that there's more rain, we sometimes get floods in winter, but there never used to be any flooding when I was a kid. It's kind of a new thing.

3. What is the weather usually like in your country?

The temperature in my country is lower than that in most places. This makes winter very cold, but it helps in summer to keep temperatures mild. We typically get 10cm of snow per year, which is more than average. Last winter was crazy with all the snow we had. I could barely go outside because the snow piled up everywhere so high.

Science

1. When did you start to learn science?

I started learning about science in school in my first year. We had basic science lessons, in which we learned a bit about biology mainly, and some physics.

2. Is there any technology that you think is helpful in daily life?

Sure, computers, smartphones... these are the main types of technology that are most widely used today. In fact, they are indispensable – we couldn't live our daily lives or work without them. They are not just 'helpful', but in many cases they are absolutely necessary to communicate and get work done, and even complete financial transactions and all sorts of stuff. So, there was a time, maybe over ten years ago, when information technology helped us do things, yes, but now, this kind of technology is absolutely essential for us to get almost everything done!

3. Do you think science classes are important?

Science teaches us about our planet, about the basic laws of nature, and science forms the basis of how we construct things, how we build human society, how we understand the natural world, how we develop medicine and medical technology... everything is rooted in science to some extent. So, science is indispensable to human development.

4. What is your favorite subject of science?

My favourite subject is physics now. That's because I'm really interested in space and the universe and I'm particularly good at mathematics. There's a lot of complex math in astrophysics and I find it that really exciting.

Pets and animals

1. Did you have any pets when you were a child?

Yes, my family had a dog and a cat. These are fairly normal domestic animals to keep, really. I do remember once having a small snake in a plastic box that I bought at a street market, but it died within a few weeks.

2. Do you like to see animals in the zoo?

Yes, I've always liked it. When I was a little girl, this was my favourite family activity on the weekends, because you know it greatly satisfied my curiosity about wild animals, like peacocks, tigers, monkeys etc. but now, since I am pretty bogged down with studies and work I don't get much chance to go to the zoo.

3. What's your favorite animal?

I'd probably have to say dogs, it's hard to explain why though. I guess it's because they are really loyal and quite affectionate and playful, much more so than cats who I think tend to be a bit more indifferent and aloof. So yeah I'd say I'm much more of a dog person than a cat person.

4. What is the most popular animal in China?

I'd say a cat or maybe a dog is the most common animal. Today, slightly more obscure animals are gaining in popularity though – for example, my friend has a chinchilla, a very cute animal!

Shoes

1. Do you like shoes or, are you interested in shoes?

I adore them! I have dozens of pairs. For me, shoes are far more than just something to keep the sole of your foot protected. Instead, they are expected to match with the style, color, pattern, and occasion of the rest of the outfits that I like to wear.

2. Do you ever buy shoes online?

No never. I'll happily buy some things online but never shoes. Even though I know my shoe size, different shoes come up differently. For example, I have some shoes that are size (39) and others that are (41). I think different brands and styles come up differently so it's risky buying shoes online because there's a good chance they will be either too big or too small. I know you can return them and get a different size but it's just easier to buy them in a shoe shop and try them on first.

3. Do you prefer comfortable shoes, or good-looking fashionable shoes?

I think it depends on what I'm doing; you know what kind occasion it is. If it's just a normal working (studying) day then I'll opt for something comfortable because I don't have to look that good, whereas if I'm going out for dinner or some kind of social event I'm more likely to pick something more fashionable and trendy.

4. What kind of shoes do you like the most?

I think it's quite important to buy good quality shoes. I don't mean expensive luxury brand shoes, just good quality materials, like good leather, well-made shoes. If you buy cheap shoes they won't last very long and they'll probably be quite uncomfortable. It's worth spending a bit extra on good quality shoes, you'll be able to wear them longer and they won't hurt your feet.

Headphones

1. Do you use headphones?

I use headphones a lot. In fact, I really enjoy the sound of music on headphones. Today the quality is really good, and headphones have improved a lot in recent years and are more comfortable too.

2. When do you use headphones?

I usually wear headphones when I am commuting to work, when I am in bed at night and want to listen to podcast or some of the my favourite music before sleep. I also use headphones when I am chatting on the phone sometimes.

3. What type of headphones do you use?

I use the standard headphones that came with my mobile phone. They're pretty good quality. I know some people buy really special expensive headphones, but mine are a normal brand and I think they're really good.

4. In what occasions will you not use headphones?

I don't use headphones when I'm hanging out with friends, or when I'm at work. I think that's a bit rude. Usually I only use headphones when I'm alone really. Yeah, I tend not to use headphones when I'm in the company of other people I have to, or want to, interact with.

Handwriting

1. Do you prefer to write letters by hand or by computer?

I, of course, prefer to write letters by email on the computer. In recent years I think my handwriting has gone downhill to be honest. I can't write as nicely as I used to because I barely get any practice apart from perhaps making lecture notes or shopping lists or scrawling down my ideas on paper. So, if I have to write a letter then I can write faster, clearer and easier on a computer. Computers are way more convenient for writing letters.

2. Do you think computers might one day replace handwriting?

I think they already basically have, at least in most communications today – from study, to work, to messages, in almost every sphere of life, I think we type on phones and computers and rarely actually write anything by hand. So, yeah, I think it has already happened that computers have replaced handwriting, almost entirely.

3. How can children today improve or practice their handwriting?

Children usually learn to write Chinese characters in school. Still today this is learned initially by hand, so that the children can learn to recognize Chinese – and one of the best ways to imprint the characters in the memory, is through writing. So, we have quite a strict education in terms of learning to write, from a young age. I think this is the main practice that kids get with handwriting today. They have to write a lot in school by hand still, at least in their early years.

Colours

1. What's your favorite colour?

Definitely black. I think it's really posh and stylish. What's more, the color black goes well with almost everything. I mean you can't go wrong wearing black. It's an elegant color, too. It goes pretty much with everything you can wear.

2. Do you prefer dark colours or bright colours?

I prefer bright colors because they are uplifting. They draw the eyes attention but I have to use them sparingly, because people get dizzy looking at them, for example, if I wear neon yellow sneakers, I will pair them with black pants. Or if I carry a pink handbag, I will match it with a white dress.

3. Were colours important to you when you were a child?

Yes, they were. One of my favorite activities growing up was to play with my crayons. I loved drawing Barbie wearing a pink dress, or a spider man wearing his red and blue suit. It was real fun to express my creativity on paper.

4. What colours are the walls of the rooms in your home?

My room is painted in ivory color. When I first painted it, I defaulted to white because I didn't want any strong color in the bedroom. But as it turned out, I found it harder to choose white over other colors since there were 20 shades of white...like cream, pearl, vanilla, snow, ivory...

Spend time with others

1. Do you like talking to people?

Yes, I thoroughly enjoy talking with other people. I'm a really social person, so I like spending time with friends, going out to eat with them, chatting over dinner, walking, shopping, and doing all sorts of everyday things with other people. I like engaging with other people and asking them how they are and telling them about my thoughts about life. I think conversation is important.

2. How do you like spending time with your friends?

I enjoy hanging out really, with good friends. It doesn't matter so much to me what we do, as my friends are interesting and very talkative. But usually we go to a café, shopping mall, or go for walks in the park, and sometimes to a bar or restaurant.

3. Would you prefer to study alone or with others?

I definitely prefer to study alone. Although I'm a very social person, when I'm studying I need to be left 100% on my own. There's no way I can concentrate if I have to listen to others, or follow their pace or their ways of studying. I have my own methods and my own needs in terms of the environment I study in. So, I like to be on my own when studying.

4. Do you remember a time when you need to cooperate with others?

Yes, I've had to co-operate with others many times. Usually on project work in school, where we have a task and need to work as a team. I think such teamwork activities are very beneficial for learning and people can develop together, solve problems together and negotiate in order to make decisions. There's a great sense of achievement in cooperating with others to get a project done. The last project I remember was a presentation about space and the history of space we did in a small group in class.

TV programs

1. Do you like watching TV program?

I enjoy watching certain TV series, yes. I particularly enjoy detective series and crime thrillers, as I enjoy the sense of mystery and trying to solve the crimes and things like this. Sometimes I watch comedy series, because they're light-hearted and cheer me up. I watch them on my phone or tablet at night in bed.

2. What types of TV programs do you like to watch?

Generally, I enjoy documentaries more than anything else. I like nature documentaries and documentaries about mysteries, the supernatural, and history. I also enjoy watching some American thriller dramas, too. Crime and gangster programmes and things like this.

3. Do you stick to one type of program all the time?

Not really, it depends on my mood. I have different moods and phases in which I watch different kinds of programmes. I also like to watch TV series that my friends are watching, so we can talk about them and exchange ideas and opinions about them, the characters, the plots and the atmosphere they create. So, I tend to follow those that some of my friends watch.

4. Do you talk to your friends about the programs you watched by yourself?

Some of them yes. I have a number of friends who are following a series right now, actually. A sort of high-school drama series set in America, and we often talk about what goes on in that, the characters, their romances, their arguments and disputes and the things they get up to. We chat about their lifestyles compared to ours. So, yes, I do chat to friends about TV series quite often.

Special costumes

1. Do you like to wear special costumes?

Well, at fancy dress parties like Halloween parties, or other fun occasions, yes! And

perhaps at our company's annual gala, when people dress up and do performances. I can't really think of any other occasions when anyone wears an actual costume though. These are certainly the only times I wear a costume, anyway.

2. Did you try any special costumes when you were young?

When I was young, yes, we had fairly regular school performances, and at these performances, yes, we had to wear all sorts of different costumes. It's quite common in primary school to take part in performances at the end of a year or at spring festival, so probably every year once or twice I wore some kind of special costume or outfit.

3. When was your last time to wear special costumes?

The last time I wore any kind of special costume was the Halloween party of an American teacher at university. Americans seem to really enjoy the Halloween tradition of dressing up for Halloween, and dressing up in a really fancy way, more than Europeans, I'd say. Americans seem to do everything to the extreme it seems. So, yes, this was about two years ago at that party.

4. Do you ever buy special costumes?

No, I never really buy any kind of special outfit. Well...come to think of it, I did once a couple of years ago, I bought a costume from online, a costume of Batman, actually, for a fun performance that I did with my team at work for the annual gala show. We dressed as super heroes for the performance and I chose batman.

Getting lost

1. Have you ever lost your way?

Yes, I've lost my way lots of times. I have a terrible sense of direction, and if I am in a new place or a new area of the city looking for somewhere, I will easily get lost without help from an app.

2. How can you find your way when you are lost?

I usually go to my navigation app on my phone or ask people in the street for help. Though I am a bit nervous or shy about asking strangers for directions, to be honest.

3. Have you ever helped someone who got lost?

I have helped people yes. I live in an area where there are a number of quite famous tourist sites, so occasionally during the spring or summer I end up being asked by tourists how to find the way to one of those places.

4. Would you use a map when you get lost?

I would certainly use a map, but usually a navigation map app on my phone mainly. This is a common and very user-friendly and efficient means of finding one's way these days.

Concentration

1. Is it difficult for you to stay focused on something?

Yes, I've got a poor concentration span. Well, a lot of the time, anyway. There are times when I can focus really well - when I've had a good night's sleep, or when I am feeling calm and confident. But if I am stressed or nervous, I find it hard to concentrate on things and I am easily distracted.

2. What do you do to help you concentrate?

I put on noise-cancelling headphones - you know, those kind of headphones that play music but do not allow other external sounds to enter your ears! I put on light classical music, and I make sure I shut the door and I tell my friends and family that I need to study in peace.

3. What may distract you when you are trying to stay focused?

When I am trying to stay focused I can get easily distracted by many things. Firstly, my own thoughts start to wander off, and I suddenly realise I am staring out of the window thinking about something completely different and not focusing on my studies. Sometimes if I hear music or my parents or friends talking outside the room I start to lose my concentration. Things like that.

4. When do you need to be focused?

Usually I need to concentrate and be focused when I am doing homework. Some people can study when there is a lot of noise around them, but I can't, I have to be in complete silence. I must be in a place where there is no music, no household noise, no people talking...total silence. Maybe I am not good at concentrating and I get distracted too easily... but that's just the way I am. It's my personality.

Public parks or gardens

1. What do you usually do when you go to a park or garden?

Well as I said I really don't get much of a chance to go to parks, but when I do, I just stroll around, looking at the trees and plants and enjoying the green open spaces. I know a lot of people go to parks to do physical exercise but I'm not really into that.

2. How have parks changed today compared to the time when you were a child?

Yes, I think public parks today are better kept and have wider varieties of flowers and plants and other attractive features, compared to when I was a child. They're tidier and more beautiful.

3. Would you prefer to go to a personal garden or public garden?

Well, it depends on what the garden was like really. But, in general, I'd prefer to spend time in a private garden, most certainly. I like privacy and peace and quiet. Public gardens can be busy and sometimes crowded.

New places

1. Have you been to a new place recently?

Yes, only last week my friend introduced me to a café in a shopping mall not far from where I live. A sort of modern, funky café that sells French pastries and serves bubble tea and coffee.

2. What's the difference between this place and other places of the same kind?

This place is a bit different because it's a very modern and unique design, with all sorts of artwork on the walls. It seems to attract a cross-section of very fashion-conscious young people.

3. Do you feel nervous when you travel to new places?

When I travel to new places... well, yes, I guess so. If they are far away or very different from place in and around where I live, then maybe I will feel a little nervous. It also depends who I am with.

Relax

1. What would you do to relax?

To relax I lie on my bed, I watch TV series, I watch films, I listen to audio books on Himalaya, I sleep! These are the most relaxing activities I do.

2. Do you think doing sports is a good way to relax?

Sports are energetic activities, so I am not sure if they are relaxing as such, but they can be a good way to relieve stress, get fit and get your energy out. I find it relaxing after playing basketball with friends, when we go to a restaurant, have hot pot and chat about the game, afterwards. So, yes, sports can be relaxing in a way.

3. Do you think vacation is a good time for you to relax?

Of course, if you have a relaxing one! I don't find travelling very relaxing... getting on crowded trains or buses or buying tickets and all these things, but holidays themselves can be relaxing if you plan them right.

4. Do you think students need more relaxing time?

I think students are under a lot of pressure and so they do need more relaxation time, yes. I think that they also need to learn better how to manage their time. Usually the more motivated students tend to manage their time better between studying, working and relaxing with friends or alone.

Car trip

1. Do you like to travel by car?

Sometimes, it really depends. If I am going on a trip out of the city I enjoy being in a car out on the open roads. But, in city traffic like Beijing, no, I don't enjoy it at all, the traffic is a nightmare.

2. Where is the farthest place you travelled to by car?

The farthest I've been in a car is probably to Gu Bei water town, which is about 2 or 3

hours outside of Beijing. It's a lovely drive actually, actually, and is especially nice to do that trip in summer.

3. Do you like to sit in the front or back when travelling by car?

I enjoy sitting in the front, in the passenger seat. I like to see the road ahead and you get a better view if you're travelling through a picturesque area where there are mountains or rolling hills.

Barbecue

1. Do Chinese people like barbecue?

Well, in China we have a slightly different kind of barbecue than what I've heard is common in the western world. But, indeed, we do love our barbecue. Ours is often cooked on skewers, like kebabs, over a coal or gas grill. Skewers are often with pieces of meat or vegetables. Meat barbecue is especially common in Xinjiang, but are eaten all over China.

2. What kind of food do you like to eat for barbecue?

I enjoy eating the standard barbecue food of meat on skewers. Often it is spiced with cumin or chili pepper. You can also have barbecued mushrooms, garlic, and even green vegetables too. But mainly I enjoy the grilled meats, especially lamb.

3. Is there any place suitable for barbecue?

There are street markets where barbecued food is common. In recent years they have reduced the amount of street markets because they can be noisy and crowded in outdoor public places, but there are also dedicated barbecue restaurants and eateries too.

Primary school

1. What did you like to do the most when you were in primary school?

I enjoyed playing with my friends and doing art lessons. I am a more creative person so I enjoy more social and artistic activities than more science-based subjects. So, I enjoyed art, drama and playing with friends.

2. How did you go to your primary school?

I went to school on foot. it was just round the corner from where I lived, so it was nearby and when I was very young my grandmother walked to school with me, and as I got older I went with a classmate of mine who lived in the same area.

3. How do you like your primary school?

I quite enjoyed it, I think. I found the pressure a bit intense and some of the classes a bit boring and regimental, but generally speaking I enjoyed it. I enjoyed being with other kids. I am a very social person and always have been.

4. What did you do in your leisure time when you are at primary school?

I usually played football. I was really into football, so in my free time I spent a lot of time outside playing football. I lived in Kunming as a child, and was raised there, so it's warm and you can play outdoors almost all year round.

Holidays

1. Where did you go in your last holiday?

On my last holiday I stayed in my hometown, actually. I know that maybe sounds boring, but actually it wasn't, I had a lot of fun with friends, spent a lot of time reading and playing computer games, and I learned to cook a number of dishes with my mother. It was relaxing and interesting. Sometimes it's nice to not go anywhere!

2. Which public holiday do you like the best?

I think the May holiday is the best, although it's not really long enough. This time of year the weather is getting really nice and warm, and winter is most certainly over. So, for me, it's definitely the best time of year to enjoy a break.

3. What do you usually do in your holidays?

Well, for me, holidays are always an opportunity to travel to new places, to look for adventure. I often travel even on a low budget. I have got to say that for me the whole world is a collection of unique experiences just waiting to be discovered.

Flowers

1. Do you plant flowers?

I never really plant flowers, no. But my grandmother does. She's often buying flower seeds, or bulbs and planting them in pots on the balcony. Or just plants, sometimes she buys plants and then tends to them with great care.

2. When was the last time you bought flowers?

I bought cut flowers on mother's day. Perhaps last year, I ordered them online from a specialist flower delivery service and got them delivered to her.

3. Why do people in your country buy flowers?

People normally buy flowers on special occasions, and today it's popular and common to buy them online and get them sent to people rather than buying them from a flower market.

Sky and stars

1. Do you like to look at the sky?

Yes, I certainly do. I enjoy looking at the night sky in particular. The stars have always fascinated me, and you can get an especially good view of the night sky from my grandmother's home which is out in the countryside.

2. Can you see the moon and stars at night from where you live?

In the big city, no, it's not really a good place to see the moon and stars, but when you

are out of town, and there is no light pollution, then you can see the stars, especially, really clearly in the night sky.

3. Do you prefer the sky in the morning or the sky at night?

I definitely prefer the sky at night. I've always loved reading about astronomy, outer space and things like this, so I find a certain romanticism about the night sky. Especially the stars and planets, and I often follow the cycles of moon on an app on my phone.

4. Is there a good place to look at the sky in the city you live in?

The best places in a city to look at the sky are the rooftops of high buildings. Some hotels and even bars and restaurants have lovely outdoor terraces on the rooftops. From there you can get a good view of the sky day or night.

◆ Topic Pool——Part Two (2022.01-04)

(蓝色为本季新题, 黑色为保留旧题)

◆ People: 4 (12)

Describe a person you follow on social media.

Describe a person you only met once and want to know more about.

Describe someone you really like to spend time with.

Describe a person who makes contribution to the society.

Describe a person who gave a clever solution to a problem.

Describe a person who impressed you most in your primary school.

Describe a successful business person you admire.

Describe a creative person whose work you admire.

Describe an interesting person from a different country who you know.

Describe a famous athlete you know.

Describe a band or singer who you like.

Describe a famous person you are interested in.

◆ Object:

(具体) 6 (9)

Describe something you received for free.

Describe a toy you got in your childhood.

Describe something you cannot live without (not a computer/phone).

Describe a piece of equipment in your home that you broke and then fixed.

Describe a piece of clothing that someone gave to you

Describe a gift you would like to buy for your friend.

Describe an item on which you spent more than expected.

Describe an exciting book that you enjoy reading.

Describe a piece of equipment that is important in your home.

(抽象) 6 (12)

Describe an ambition that you haven't achieved.

Describe a song or piece of music you like.

Describe a rule you would like to change.

Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

Describe something that helped you learn a foreign language.

Describe a difficult skill you have learned from an old person.

Describe a habit that your friend has and you want to develop.

Describe a skill that was difficult for you to learn.

Describe a puzzle (jigsaw) you enjoy doing.

Describe a piece of local news that you think is interesting.

Describe an article about health that you have read in a magazine or on the internet.

Describe an art or craft activity you have done.

◆ **Place: 3 (7)**

Describe a place in the countryside that you visited.

Describe a city that you think is interesting.

Describe an apartment or a home that you would like to have.

Describe a cafe you like to visit.

Describe a place you visited on vacation.

Describe a company that employs a lot of staff in your city.

Describe a street market you have been to.

◆ **Event: 6 (19)**

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone.

Describe an occasion when you had a special cake.

Describe a lesson that impressed you a lot.

Describe a time you visited a new place.

Describe a happy event you organized.

Describe a long walk you have been on.

Describe a time when you waited for something special to happen.

Describe a bicycle/motorcycle/car trip you would like to go.

Describe a good service you received.

Describe a time when you were friendly to someone you didn't like.

Describe a time when you got up early.

Describe an activity you usually do that wastes your time.

Describe a time when you felt proud of a family member.

Describe a time when you moved to a new place/home.

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

Describe an occasion when you were not allowed to use your mobile phone.

Describe a time when you had an argument with a friend.

Describe a time when you saw something interesting on social media.

Describe a time when you gave a piece of advice to another person.

◆ **注：二、三部分具体题卡如下**

◆ Topic Pool——Part Two & Part Three

People:

- ◆ Describe a person you follow on social media.
- ◆ Describe a person you only met once and want to know more about.
- ◆ Describe someone you really like to spend time with.
- ◆ Describe a person who makes contribution to the society.
- ◆ Describe a person who gave a clever solution to a problem.
- ◆ Describe a person who impressed you most in your primary school.
- ◆ Describe a successful business person you admire.
- ◆ Describe a creative person whose work you admire.
- ◆ Describe an interesting person from a different country who you know.
- ◆ Describe a famous athlete you know.
- ◆ Describe a band or singer who you like.
- ◆ Describe a famous person you are interested in.

Describe a person you follow on social media.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

What he/she posts on social media

And explain why you follow him/her on social media

Someone I follow a lot on social media is a blogger who does articles and videos on tick-tock. She does reviews of restaurants and cafes in the city. It's a really interesting blog and she has become incredibly popular in recent years, and I think gets sponsorships and funding from various food and beverage sources in the city. She tends to review about 4 or 5 different places every week, so I imagine it has become her full-time job, really. I found out about her through a friend when we were looking for a place to host a birthday party. After that I started looking at her posts almost every day, and found them really useful. She reviews pretty much anything, from new milk tea shops, ice cream stores, big franchise coffee houses, small cafes and boutique eateries – everything really. So, whenever my friends and I feel like going out on weekends to eat, drink or snack or even have a really nice fancy meal, we look at her latest posts and see what she recommends. She can also be quite critical, too, but I think she is fair and impartial and does not work for or support any particular enterprise, or get any money from the individual places she reviews. So, she has built up a reputation of great trust in the community and many people rely on her opinions to make decisions about where to eat and drink and have fun on weekends.

Part 3

1. Do you think old people and young people use the same kind of social media app?

I think that today most people, regardless of age, communicate using the same social media apps. There are a few that are really popular, today, and everyone seems to be connected to each other through them. They have revolutionized the way we obtain and share information, so I would say that today these social media utilities have crossed generations and are used by all.

2. Do old people spend much time on social media?

I think the majority of older people spend less time on social media than younger people. Although I know quite a few older people who use messaging apps to keep in touch with family and friends, I don't think they tend to be so addicted to social media as most younger people. They don't tend to follow people's 'moments' much or watch videos on tick-tock and things like this. Although some of them do, I would say that they engage in this kind of more multi-media stuff less than the younger generation.

3. What can people do on social media?

People can do all sorts today on social media – from messaging, blogging, vlogging -video blogging- or video calls, conference calls... almost everything can be done on social media today. In many ways social media applications, and smartphones, have basically replaced computers.

4. Are television and newspaper still useful?

Both TV and newspapers still have their value, but they are obviously not as popular as they were before the days of cellphones, apps and social media. There are still people who sit and watch the news on TV, and a lot of newspapers can be read online today, too. So, they are still popular but not quite in the same way as before.

Describe a person you only met once and want to know more about.

You should say:

Who he/she is

When you met him/her

Why you want to know more about him/her

And explain how you feel about him/her

A person that I once met, but only briefly, that I'd like to get to know more about, is a famous writer from South America. While I was in university studying International Relations and Spanish, I was quite a fan of the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I loved his romantic stories, and his sense of humour and the magical twists in his tales. While I was studying in Madrid in about 1999, I had the chance to go to a literature conference, where lots of Spanish-language writers and poets were. Garcia Marquez did a talk there, and I went to get his autograph after the talk. We chatted just for a

minute or so. But, for me, that minute was wonderful. He was just how I'd imagined, soft, wise, kind and with a wry sense of humour. I would like to know more about him, even though he is dead now. At the time I was so involved in my studies I didn't have chance to explore his works more, especially his poetry, and since then I seem to have got busy with life, my career, raising a family and all sorts, and never really got back into that literature period of my life. I'd like to have a relaxing holiday, perhaps preferably alone, where I can get back into his works, the ones I really am already familiar with as well as the ones I have not read. I feel he is an inspirational writer with a deep and positive philosophy on life.

Part 3

1. Is it important to have the same hobbies and interests when making friends?

I think to some degree it is important, yes. I mean, I think that people connect when they share mutual interests, and things they can talk about together or do together. So, yes, I think it's pretty important to share some of the same interests. Also, people tend to have different friends who they share different interests with. For example, I have friends who are really sporty, who I play basketball with, and other friends who do not like sport, with whom I go to restaurants and discuss life and relationships with and TV shows. I believe a lot of people are like this.

2. What qualities make true friends?

True friends are generally people with whom we can share mutual interests as well as being able to trust each other with intimate personal secrets or feelings. Friends are always there when you need a shoulder to cry on or someone to listen to you, or even give you careful, considerate advice.

3. On what occasions do people like to make friends?

People often make friends on their first day of university, or at least during their first week. Perhaps also when they join a new company, they might gradually become friends with some of the people in their company that they 'click' with and find they feel comfortable with. Usually, it's these occasions in which we make friends.

Describe someone you really like to spend time with.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

What you usually do together

And explain why you like to spend time with him/her

I love spending time with my father, actually. Of course, I've known him all my life! When I was a child he was really fun and used to take me out on trips into the countryside a lot, for long walks, to rivers, mountains and things like that. And we still spend time together when I go back to my hometown. He is really into

photography, and always has been for as long as I can remember. So, he often likes to go to places of natural beauty, especially mountains. In the holidays we sometimes go down south to the mountains in Yunnan, and tea plantations in Fujian, and all sorts of places like this. He enjoys taking photos around the karst mountain countryside of Guilin and Yangshuo, and we've been there twice together already. So, we always had, and still have, cool adventures together – we hire local guides, we take camera equipment and we enjoy walking, learning about the local area and taking nature photos. Sometimes we do some sketching as well – he's quite a good artist. I feel I'm lucky to have a father who is so into these kinds of creative pursuits, and lucky to be in a country with such varied examples of natural beauty. I find outings and excursions interesting, inspiring and fun.

Part 3

1. What kinds of people are easy to get along with?

Well, that totally depends on one's personality and interests. Some people connect with one type of person, and others, with another. But, as a generalization, people who are slightly more extrovert, humourous, welcoming and sincere, are people who tend to get along with others better. Shy people – those who are more introvert – either take longer to get to know, or are not so easy to get along with, because they find it harder to open up to others.

2. How do leaders get along with their subordinates?

Leaders come in all sorts of shapes and sizes!!! There are leaders who are warm and encouraging and easy to get along with, and leaders who are cold, more 'old-school' and superior in their attitude – those types of people are harder to get along with as they fit the model of the more traditional boss. They might still be good leaders, but not necessarily people you can get along with or connect with on a more personal level.

3. Do people have extra time for themselves nowadays?

People tend to be very busy these days, but yes, depending on one's job or study pressure, then yes people have free time. Not always a lot of free time, but some free time. I think that with the introduction of better labour laws, people can achieve a slightly better work-life balance than they did a few years ago. But all this depends on their family responsibilities as well, and other factors, like their economic situation and where they live in relation to their work, and things like this.

Describe a person who makes contribution to the society.

You should say:

Who this person is

How you knew him/her

What type of work he/she does

And explain why you think he/she contributes to the society

A person I know about who makes a great contribution to society is someone I've seen on TV. He's a famous singer from Thailand. I forget his name now... well.... to be honest, I just don't know how to pronounce it! Anyway, he's a famous Thai singer... at least he is well-known there. I know about him because one of my friends works in Thailand, and I go almost every year and stay with him each summer holiday. He has introduced me to all sorts of aspects of Thai culture. And this one famous guy sticks in mind very strongly. He is basically a pop singer who shot to fame in the late 1990s, and after becoming incredibly rich and popular, he decided to spend a lot of his free time working with disadvantaged children and poor people, and getting involved in funding all sorts of ecological projects in Asia. He does charity concerts, is on the board of directors of multiple charitable enterprises, and gets involved in a lot of related stuff. He's often on television in Thailand promoting all sorts of good causes. I think he is just motivated to do this kind of thing because he's a kind and empathetic person who genuinely cares for others. Thailand is also quite a poor country in many ways, so I think he feels obliged to help less fortunate people, having had the fortune of becoming very famous and wealthy himself. So, I think that he's just a kind-hearted person with a generous spirit. Some famous people are like this – it's a very encouraging thing and sets a good example for their followers and admirers.

Part 3

1. What kinds of jobs are well-paid?

Well, there's a lot of highly-paid jobs – firstly, specialist doctors, surgeons, lawyers.... these are highly paid jobs. Celebrities end up earning huge salaries as well, because they are so popular. Some famous artists have a lot of money because their art work sells at very high prices.... I can't really think of any other professions really... footballers! Top footballers and sports people – they usually have really high salaries too – again because of their popularity and market forces, I think...

2. What are the changes in working conditions?

Working conditions have changed a lot in the past twenty years in my country. There are much stricter labour laws – regarding how many hours people can work, overtime, maternity leave and things like this – and there is a more coherent and cohesive HR system in most companies, that takes into account ethnic diversity, equal opportunity and things like this. Offices are also much better equipped than before, and usually have more comfortable, modern facilities.

3. Do you think younger people should be less paid than older people?

To some extent, I do, yes. This is because younger people are often less experienced than older people so they deserve lower salaries. But, again, it really depends on the profession, the qualifications and experience of the individual and the position in the company that they hold. But, as a general rule, I'd say that younger people should be lower down the pay scale than older people for the simple reason that they usually have less experience and expertise, although this is not always the case.

Describe a person who gave a clever solution to a problem.

You should say:

Who the person is

When you met this person

What the problem was

And explain why you think it was a clever solution

A person I know that gave a really ingenious solution to a problem was my friend, Eric. I remember the occasion well, actually. I had locked my keys in my flat, and couldn't get in through the door. So, the keys were inside, and we were stuck outside. I was in a real panic about it, because I desperately needed to get in, get my stuff and go to work. Plus, I had something really important to do at work that day. Eric, my friend, lived next door. He was an older guy who worked from home, so he was almost always in. I knocked on his door and explained my situation – my keys were locked in the house and I couldn't get in. He had a think about the situation for a short time, then he came up with a possible solution. He first asked me where my keys were. I said that I knew exactly where they were – they were in my trouser pocket of the trousers that I had taken off last night and left on the bed. He asked if my bedroom window was open. I said yes it was a little bit open, but of course there were bars on the window, so there was no way we could climb in through the window anyway. Plus, it was on the third floor, which made it even more difficult. So, climbing in was an impossibility. Eric said that he obviously knew there were bars on the windows, like all apartment windows in the city. But he had an idea... If he climbed out onto the window bars of the apartment below mine, with a long broom handle he could maybe reach the trousers with the broom handle and hook the jeans, and pull them out... rather like fishing! He then got some heavy-duty tape and taped a hook onto the end of the broom handle. Then, he confidently but carefully climbed out onto the bars of the second-floor window, and stretched his arm in through my window, through the bars, with the broom. After some effort, he managed to hook my jeans from the edge of the bed, and pull them out through the window. He then climbed back to safety. I thought this was a great solution to the problem. Eric was always full of good ideas. I'd met him when I first moved in to that apartment block. Which was quite a few years prior to this occasion. We became closer friends after this incident, and we often sit in the community garden and joke about it. I now always leave my bedroom window just a little bit open, just in case the same thing happens again. But I really hope that a burglar doesn't have the same idea as Eric.

Part 3

1. Do you think children are born with certain degree of cleverness? Or their intelligence can be nurtured?

I think that it's a bit of both. I believe that there is a genetic element to intelligence, and also I believe that intelligence is developed through education and parental

influences. I think that having good parents who listen and teach and encourage critical thinking, as well as having teachers that do the same, can significantly help young people to develop a sense of ingenuity and problem-solving skills.

2. What can schools do to students' intellectual development?

Schools can do a wide range of things to help children develop great intellectual capacities. Firstly, they should encourage collaborative project work centred around solving problems, or discussing issues that are problematic and coming up with solutions. These kinds of tasks really help young people to develop, as they are working with solving issues at the same time as collaborating with others in order to do so.

3. Why do you think some people are really good at something?

I think that different people are good at different things. That's how life is! People usually are good at things that they learned since childhood, or things that they have a naturally affinity with. What I mean is that if you're exposed to certain influences as a child, you're more likely to be good at them as you grow older, especially if those influences are positive and encouraging. Secondly, I think that people are sometimes good at things for genetic reasons – they inherit the genes from their parents. That explains why some people are just instinctively good at math from a young age, and others simply are not.

4. Why do different kinds of intelligence are needed in this modern society?

Any society needs to nurture a range of different skills and abilities. Society needs people who have a wide variety of abilities to contribute to the economy. It needs people to work in engineering, service, creative arts, languages... all sorts. For this reason, education systems need to develop children to advance in the kinds of things they have aptitudes towards.

Describe a person who impressed you most in your primary school.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

Why he/she impressed you most

And explain how you feel about him/her

A person who really impressed me in primary school is my friend, Lola. She's still my friend today, in fact. I met her on our first day at school and we were both very shy, like most of the other pupils. What impressed me about her was her confidence. I remember it vividly although it was such a long time ago. She was confident, but not over-confident or arrogant. She just exuded a sense of balanced outgoing confidence that struck me from the first moment. Yes, like I said, she was initially shy, like all of us, but she didn't feel embarrassed to speak out as soon as the teacher started asking

us questions, and she assured me things would be okay when I felt really nervous. We ended up sitting next to each other and getting to know each other really well. She also had a strong aptitude for most school subjects, and a curiosity for life that I found really fascinating. I was quite influenced by her, actually, and I feel I was lucky to have met her. As we grew older together, we got to know each other better and experienced some of life's changes throughout school, shared good times and hard times, and she was always there offering a listening ear and good advice, especially when I felt confused, frustrated or down. I'm not sure where she got her warm sense of understanding of people from, but she really did make me feel good. Today she lives in the same city as me, and although we do not see each other so often, we meet from time to time, and whenever we get together it always feels like it always was – natural and comfortable. I think it's important to have a friend like this, and in life these kinds of friendships don't come around very often. So, I'm very grateful to have known her so long.

Part 3

1. Why do people always miss their childhood?

Everyone thinks of their childhood fondly, I think. Well, mostly everyone I think. Childhood is a time when we are more carefree. We can have fun and don't have too many worries or responsibilities. In fact, we are basically looked after and all the real burdens are taken on board by our parents. I think that that feeling soon goes away when we go to primary school, though, and start having to seriously learn school subjects, get given lots of homework and deadlines and things like this. It's a bit like a death of innocence that takes place, and we never really get our childhood back after that. So, we always feel we miss our childhood.

2. Are kids happier than adults?

I think in general children are happier than adults. They have less responsibilities and are allowed to have fun and enjoy themselves and are given a lot more liberty to say and do as they please. Children are also just discovering the world, and this means it's an exciting time for them – they are constantly experiencing new things and being exposed to new experiences. All of this makes them happier than adults, who can become a bit jaded with life.

3. Why do people still remember many of their friends from primary school?

I think people remember their school friends because they had a lot of fun with them. Also, because school is a formative time in our lives where we are just learning how to really interact with each other and other people, discovering new things and enjoying life. We share those experiences with our friends, and we grow alongside our friends, which creates a special bond.

4. What kinds of primary school teachers will impress students?

Teachers impress students if they are fun, entertaining, intelligent and patient. I think that teachers that impress students are usually also a little bit firm, and command a

sense of respect too. This combination of qualities leaves a strong impression on students.

Describe a successful business person you admire.

You should say:

Who this person is

What kind of business this person does

Why this person are successful

And explain why you admire this person

A business person I really admire is my auntie, actually. She started a small clothing company in our home city about twenty years ago. She had some connections with designers in France, and imported unique boutique garments and accessories. Initially she sold these items in a very tasteful shop, but as the internet became a popular way of doing business she started an online store. She gradually started to expand the product range that she sold, while maintaining a consistent company image and brand image. She really displayed a great head for business. I think one of the reasons she became quite successful in her small business was her capacity to adapt to the changing times and changing trends, both in the online shopping world, and in terms of the kinds of designs that she chose. She didn't just sell anything she could sell – she chose the items very carefully and established herself as an exclusive boutique outlet. I admire her because I think she combined a good head for business, strategy and management, and a great passion for fashion and design. She wasn't too greedy or attracted to selling anything just to make money. I haven't seen my auntie since I left our home city, and I haven't maintained that much contact with her, so I am not exactly sure what she's doing now, but I guess she's still running the business, both her physical shop in the city and her online store. I should get back in touch with her and see how she's doing, actually!

Part 3

1. What do you think is the retirement age for men and women?

The retirement age for men is currently set at 60 years old and women, I think, at 55 years old. However, I think that this is going to change soon, and they might increase the retirement age by 5 years for men and women. That's because people are generally living longer and the cost of living is increasing, so people need to work longer in order to raise families, pay mortgages and things like this.

2. What kinds of qualities should a successful businessman have?

A successful business person should, to be honest, be quite assertive, quite dominant in some ways, and know how to talk to a variety of people in the right ways. There are moments to be very dogmatic and firm, there are moments to be soft and diplomatic – a good business person should be able to gauge the different situations and adopt the correct attitude to suit what is best for the company. Being decisive is another quality that is important in a business person who wants to succeed and do well. Sometimes

you have to make decisions, the best decisions possible, in a very short time – so being able to think fast, evaluate things quickly and be decisive, is very important.

3. What are important factors in making a company successful?

There are a number of key factors that contribute to making a company successful. Firstly I think the owners, the founders or main managers need to have a sense of vision, a strong self-confidence and an ambitious personality. I also think that a company needs the right kind of employees. The managers need to have a good sense of who and who not to recruit. They also need to treat the employees well, give them fair salaries and other benefits and holidays that will ensure they will be loyal to the company and work as hard as possible.

4. If you had the opportunity to run your own business, what business would it be? Why?

I would run a business related to food. I love cooking and I have mastered all sorts of different dishes over the years. Mainly Chinese cuisine from different regions. I'd start a small restaurant. I'd run it as a fairly expensive restaurant and specialize in dishes that are perhaps less common and less mainstream. I like innovative and inventive cuisine, and I would enjoy the experience of designing menus, designing the restaurant itself, and training the staff. I've always liked this idea. I doubt I'll actually do it, but still, it's nice to think about from time to time.

Describe a creative person whose work you admire.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

What creative things he/she has done

And explain why you think he/she is creative

A creative person whose work I admire is an uncle of mine who is really into nature photography. It's really his hobby, but I think he is pretty professional. He enjoys hiking in different locations around China and takes a camera and quite a bit of equipment with him, and dedicates his time to taking excellent photos of the things he sees – from views and landscapes to close-ups of flowers, and other natural features like interesting rocks, plants, architecture – all sorts. He doesn't use Photoshop or other tools to edit his photos, because he comes from a more traditional background, and likes things to be as natural as possible. I like this, because today a lot of people are really obsessed with a lot of fake filters and other things they layer over photographs to make them look 'magazine perfect'. He doesn't do this, and his photos, as a result, have a very natural feel to them. I've known my uncle all my life, and he has always lived quite near to us, so we see him pretty often. In fact, I have been on a few day trips with him to the fragrant hills and other places outside of the city, and enjoyed his company, and seen how much passion he has for photography. I think he's

creative because he pays particular attention to the light, the shadows and the colours in his shots, and takes great care to get interesting and quite different angles on things. I always feel he should start a small photography gallery to exhibit his photos really, but he's not interested in public recognition really, he just does this to entertain himself.

Part 3

1. Is it good for children to learn art?

Yes, I believe children have a natural inclination towards art, as they are instinctively quite creative and enjoy drawing, painting and sketching. Children should be encouraged to express themselves through visual arts, and I think it's good for them. It also helps in developing their observation skills and hand-eye coordination.

2. What kinds of jobs require people to be creative?

There are quite a few jobs that require creative talents actually. Sometimes these aren't so obvious at first. Take, for example, computer programming – you have to be a fairly creative problem-solver to be a good computer programmer, believe it or not. Also, people involved in design, architectural design, interior design or fashion design, need to have a creative flair to really excel in the field.

3. Do you think leaders need to have creative ability?

Leaders should have a combination of a highly pragmatic and organized approach as well as a degree of creativity. Leaders often need to find creative solutions to solve problems, as well as an empathy and understanding of people, in order to lead them effectively. So, I would argue that leaders need to possess a degree of creative ability yes, especially in terms of people skills.

Describe an interesting person from a different country who you know.

You should say:

Who this person is

How you knew this person

What country this person comes from

Why you think this person is interesting

A really fascinating person from another country I know, is a friend of mine who is studying Chinese at university here. He is from India, actually. A country which is fairly close to China. The reason I think he is interesting is because he is very curious about different customs from all over the world. He has a lot of friends who are from different countries, and he has also made a lot of effort to learn Chinese pretty well. He mixes with everyone and has a very open-minded attitude. I also think he's interesting because he talks about the different customs from his country, which are quite different to ours, and very different to western customs and habits too. He occasionally invites a few of us to his apartment and cooks traditional food from his

country. These evenings are always fun and entertaining. We drink beer, eat curry and rice and sometimes play games, talk about life and generally have a good laugh together. He is also very good at drawing and spends a lot of time sketching portraits. He's built up quite a collection of portraits of all the friends he has had and people he has met. It forms a really interesting portfolio, and sometimes he gets it out and tells us stories about some of the people he has met, how he met them, and things about their life. I enjoy meeting people from different countries, especially if they have an open mind and are cultured, educated and curious about the world.

Part 3

1. Do you think having foreign friends is a good way to know other countries?

Yes, I believe it is. The more friends we have the more we learn about the world, and about different individuals and their personalities – and of course, we get a taste or a flavor of the countries they come from, if we have the right attitude and ask questions and have a curiosity to learn.

2. Do you think it's important to know the culture and language before going to another country?

It's definitely a great benefit most certainly. I would not say it is essential, but it certainly gives you a head start. If you have some idea of the culture, and have some grasp of the language of a place you can more quickly get over cultural barriers and language barriers and this, of course, facilitates communication and, as a result, understanding.

3. What skills do people need to have when working in an international company?

When working in an international company it helps to have soft skills relating to how you deal with other people from different places – I mean, things like diplomacy, flexibility and tolerance are qualities that are important when dealing with people from diverse backgrounds. For example, some cultures are a lot more direct than others, some are a lot more reserved, and if we understand that people have different ways of communicating, we can avoid feeling offended and reach understandings easier.

Describe a famous athlete you know.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew him/her

What he/she has achieved

And explain why he/she is famous

Well, I don't really know much about sports. I'm not a very sporty person or very interested in sports. However, not so long ago I saw a documentary about a famous boxer called Muhammed Ali. He was born in 1942, and I think he died a few years

ago now. Anyway, he became a really famous boxer in the 1960s, and beat some of the very best boxers in the world. He was also a very good speaker, and a charismatic individual, so he also became an actor and featured in numerous films. In the early 1980s, however, he developed Parkinson's disease which many people thought had been triggered by his countless boxing injuries.

The documentary I saw traced his life from childhood to his death, and his story is an interesting one. He's an example of one of those people from a fairly modest background, who rose to fame through a combination of hard work and determination and a certain amount of chance and personality. In the mid 1960s he refused to enter into the US military to take part in the Vietnam War, as he had a moral objection to the war, and this annoyed the authorities somewhat, as it inspired many other fit and able men to also follow him and refuse to go to war as well! Anyway, I find these kind of documentaries very interesting, and a boxer, as far as I know, is regarded as an athlete, so... that's the story of the athlete that I know a little bit about.

Part 3

1. What kinds of exercises do Chinese people like to do?

All sorts. There isn't really one type that all Chinese people enjoy doing. Some people like jogging, some enjoy working out at the gym, some get involved in team sports like basketball, some play football... I know people who engage in a wide range of sporting activities and physical exercise.

2. What characteristics do you think an athlete should have?

I think most good athletes, first and foremost, have a strong determination to succeed and a will to self-improve. You'd got to be ambitious and determined if you want to be an athlete, and that's the most important quality. If you have the drive and confidence, then that's half the hard work done... and you can go from there to develop a talent.

3. Why are there so few top athletes?

Well, it's not something everyone can do, and not something everyone wants to do either. Alongside a strong sense of determination you've also got to have some innate talent as well... perhaps a genetic disposition towards the sport that you get into. And there are not many people who have this disposition as well as the will and determination to become one of the best.

4. What's the best way to become a top athlete?

I think a combination of starting at a young age, having a good coach or trainer, family support and the right context and environment. Also, the right connections are important too. Usually you've got to become a member of a specialist club and be surrounded by competitive people who have similar ambitions as well.

Describe a band or singer who you like.

You should say:

What style of songs they sing / music they play

When you listen to them

Where you listen to them

And explain why you like this band or singer

Right, I am going to talk about my favorite singer. Let me think for a second here...If I had to pick one...I would say Taylor Swift. Taylor is an American pop-star who has a witty attitude, she writes her own songs, and plays her own guitar. Plus, she stands up for herself and says what is on her mind.

Speaking of the reasons I like her, well, first off, she inspires millions of fans through her honest song lyrics. Taylor always writes and sings about love and relationships. To my surprise, her music is pretty relatable. Actually, I'm truly amazed how she can just write down her feelings and all in her songs. Also, the melody is catchy and easy to sing along to.

Other than that, she's so humble! She has won some of the highest awards possible in the music industry and she is always so shocked and totally thankful and appreciative.

Part 3

1. What kind of music do people like at different ages?

People who are older tend to like more relaxing music, perhaps classical music, or more traditional music. As a general rule this is almost always the case. Younger people have more varied taste in modern music, from pop music, to R&B, to rap, to more alternative and electro tunes. I think this is largely because younger people have more energy, a greater thirst for new things, and older people like to use music as a way to relax, rather than expend a lot of energy.

2. What kind of music is popular in China now and what kind will be in the future?

In China pop music is probably the most popular type, to be honest. We also like a lot of K-Pop, which means Korean Pop music and some people are into a lot of American bands too, and local Chinese music is growing in popularity as well. Since I was a teenager there is a more diverse range of music that is popular amongst younger people, I'd say.

3. Do Chinese parents require their children to learn to play musical instruments?

Most of the time, yes. Actually, Chinese parents can sometimes be a bit obsessed with pushing their kids to do all sorts of extra-curricular activities and lessons, and very often they will encourage them, or even force them, to learn at least one instrument. I think this is because society is highly competitive and the peer pressure is great amongst parents and children.

4. Why do some people like to listen to live music while others prefer CDs?

Live music is simply more exciting and you can really get into the atmosphere of watching a gig with a big group of people in the audience, or even a massive audience. There's a whole different feeling being there and seeing musicians play live, than simply listening to an mp3 on your phone or a CD at home. It's a totally different experience and a lot more fun and communal.

Describe a famous person you are interested in.

You should say:

Who he/she is

How you knew about him/her

What he/she was like before he/she became famous

And explain why you are interested in him/her

I have a lot of respect for Andy Lau. Andy Lau is a Hong Kong singer-songwriter, actor and now a film-producer. He has been quite famous since around the mid-1980s, and the media call him one of the Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop, or at least in China we do! He has won many awards for singing and acting, and is admired by older and younger generations. What I also find interesting about Andy Lau is that he wasn't brought up in a rich or successful family. His father worked as a fireman, and as a child his house had no running water, and Andy Lau had to help his family carry water from a communal water fountain or tap, to the home, almost every day. Maybe this is one of motivating reasons why he has established a fairly large charity organization to help the poor and needy. So, it's no surprise that Andy Lau is so popular and well-known – he's incredibly famous in China and overseas. Recently, in fact, well, maybe a few years ago, he was seriously injured when he fell off a horse filming a movie in Thailand, I believe. I think it has taken him a few years to recover. I think that's an interesting fact about his recent acting career anyway!

Part 3

1. Are there any other kinds of famous people in your country?

There are all sorts of famous people. In recent years, famous people that hit the news are usually tech entrepreneurs. Tech is a big thing now in China, and around the world, and so famous wealthy 'heroes' of the technology field have become really popular in the media. We always hear about them, hear them in interviews and speeches and things like this.

2. Do you think celebrities should necessarily be good at their field?

Well, I'd say so yes. Usually they are good in their field, or they would not have become celebrities in the first place. However, there are some that have gained fame through good looks and connections and are not really that talented, so I guess it depends. But as a general rule, yes, they should excel in their field and also have great communication skills.

3. What are the differences between famous people today and those in the past?
I'm not sure there is really that much difference, but like I've said before, I think celebrities today tend to be more focused on technology fields. Well, there are of course TV and film celebrities, and there will always be – I don't think these have changed much to be honest. They're always in the media and people enjoy reading about gossip surrounding their lives, and the gossip is pretty much the same as it has always been: how rich they are, who they are having romantic relationships with or break-ups with. Stuff like this.

4. Do you think media is putting too much attention on famous people?
I think the media tends to be a bit too obsessed with the lives of the rich and famous, yes. Media likes drama and things that attract attention to sell magazines and newspapers and adverts and things like this. So, the media are always hunting for new and interesting stories, and it's easy to get sensational stories about people in the limelight, famous people. So the media focus a lot on famous people, perhaps too much really.

Object: (具体)

- ◆ Describe something you received for free.
- ◆ Describe a toy you got in your childhood.
- ◆ Describe something you cannot live without (not a computer/phone).
- ◆ Describe a piece of equipment in your home that you broke and then fixed.
- ◆ Describe a piece of clothing that someone gave to you
- ◆ Describe a gift you would like to buy for your friend.
- ◆ Describe an item on which you spent more than expected.
- ◆ Describe an exciting book that you enjoy reading.
- ◆ Describe a piece of equipment that is important in your home.

Describe something you received for free.

You should say:

What it was

Who you received it from

Why you received it for free

And explain how you felt about it

I have received a few things for free over the years. But the one thing that really sticks in my mind that I think was especially fantastic was a 2-night stay in Gubei Water Town. I got the free tickets when I entered a competition in a local online magazine. I won second prize – and that prize was two free tickets to the 5 star hotel in Gubei. I was really pleased with that! All I did was answer a few questions in a survey and then invent an amusing caption for a photograph – it was this kind of competition. I received the tickets from the Beijing Tourist Authority, who had sponsored the competition in the magazine.

Not only is Gubei water town a great location, but it's only a few hours by car from Beijing, my hometown. So, it was a brilliant complimentary gift. I felt really good about this, because I went to Gubei water town once with my family, and loved it. And I wanted to go there with my boyfriend and have a sort of romantic stay over there. It was also spring time which is the perfect time to go, and you get fantastic views of the mountains and the great wall from the hotel windows. So, yes, this was something I got for free that I was especially delighted about. And, of course, we both had an amazing weekend there – we ate in lovely restaurants, enjoyed performances and loved the sheer comfort and luxury of the hotel.

Part 3

1. Do you think people should pay for higher education by themselves?

This is a good question – well... I am not sure. I think perhaps it would cost the government far too much money to fund education at a higher level, for everyone who wants to go. But it would be ideal. It's important that the workforce of a country is

highly skilled and one way to ensure this is to make sure as many people as possible get a good higher education – this also means that not only the wealthy families get to give their kids the best further education.

2. What free gifts do companies usually give to their customers?

Companies often give their customers and employees Spring Festival gifts of rice, oil, shopping coupons, and things like this. These are the most common today. In fact, nowadays, with the popularity of online shopping, most companies give a coupon or gift card for a certain amount of money. That means the customer or employee can spend on whatever they want at one or two of the most common online shopping platforms.

3. Why do customers like to receive free gifts from companies?

Free gifts give people a sense of personal worth. Gifts are reminders that we are valued and appreciated and respected, so people in general, not just customers, like to receive gifts. In terms of customers and partners, free gifts also ensure the loyalty of their clients and keep strong relationships alive. This is an important factor. So, if a company reminds its customers they are special, they have been respected, remembered, and appreciated, the customer is bound to feel good and keep buying from the company.

Describe a toy you got in your childhood.

You should say:

What it was

When you got it

How you got it

And explain how you felt about it

One of my favourite toys was a train set. Actually I still have it today. Well... I mean, it is still at my parents' house in my hometown. It's a brand of train set that is called Hornby, which is quite famous. It's not only a toy, actually, some adults also have Hornby train sets and if they have the space in their homes they build an entire landscape of mountains, trees, sometimes small towns and stations, that the train track goes around. It's an electric train set you see, with different engines and carriages. I'm still very fond of it today, although it is in its box in pieces and it isn't set up anywhere.

I got given the train set for my 11th birthday by my mum and dad. I remember feeling really excited when I received it and my dad and I spent hours setting it up in the attic room above the house. I loved playing with it and I still have really happy memories of it to this day.

In fact, I was thinking about it recently, and I decided that if I have a child one day, especially a boy, I might give him the train set to pass this gift down through the

generations.

Part 3

1. Do boys and girls like the same kind of toys?

Boys and girls usually are given different types of toys, at least traditionally. Typically girls are given dolls and things that are associated with beauty, clothes, accessories and so forth. And boys are given more typically masculine toys like trucks, cars and dinosaurs. However, there are still a lot of stereotypes in how girls and boys are brought up, and so sometimes I think these stereotypes are confirmed and asserted too strongly by TV and parents and media.

2. Why do you think some parents buy lots of toys for their kids instead of spending more time with them?

Some parents think that children should be given everything they want, and also if they do not have much time to spend with their children they try to compensate by buying them gifts all the time.

3. What are some of the differences between the toys kids play with nowadays and those they used to play with in the past?

One of the main differences is that children today play a lot with tablets, phones, you know, mobile devices. Whereas in the past they did not really have these forms of entertainment. Kids would read more, play with physical toys more, things like this.

4. Are there any kinds of electronic games or computer games that can have educational benefits for young children?

Yes, there are lots actually. There are some real benefits to playing games on tablets and some games are quite educational, related to learning vocabulary in foreign languages, or even one's own language, number games and all sorts of things like this. Electronic games can be great, but parents must be careful to not allow children to get too attached or even addicted to such devices.

5. What do parents usually buy for their children to make them happy?

Some parents indulge their kids a lot with sweets and toys in order to make them happy. It's often said that many wealthy parents spoil their children by giving them everything they want, and that isn't a way to create a good longer-term bond with children. So, a lot of parents try to get a balance between giving their kids things that make them happy, and ensuring they learn that you can't have everything you want in life, whenever you want it.

Describe something you cannot live without (not a computer/phone).

You should say:

What it is

What you do with it

How it helps you in your life

And explain why you cannot live without it

One thing I cannot live without is my bike. I love cycling, and I am part of a cycling club. Cycling has become a really important part of my life, more than just a hobby or an interest. I took up cycling about five years ago, primarily to keep fit, and then I got quite into it. Then I met some people who became my friends, who were part of a local cycling club. I joined the club, and then my hobby took off! I invested in a couple of really good bikes... one for off-road cycling – a kind of mountain bike – and one for road biking. The road bike I also ride to work, too. So, my little adventure into keeping fit became a serious pastime that is a part of my life. So, I couldn't live without my bike. In my free time I always go cycling, even if it's just a short one-hour ride. And on weekends I often go with the club to the mountains – we follow certain routes, choose different places each time, stay in guest houses and hotels, or mountain villages overnight. It's a fantastic way to spend time, get away from the world of work, get out of the city and enjoy being close to nature, compete with yourself and keep fit and healthy, and enjoy the companionship of fellow cycling enthusiasts all at the same time! So, I would say that this bike does help me with my life – hobbies and interests are important in life, and people who have healthy hobbies and goals tend to be healthier in mind and body, I reckon.

Part 3

1. Why are children attracted to electronic devices?

Children love all sorts of games, and today some of the most exciting games, that are so easy to start playing and set up, are basically on tablets and phones. Children like to play colourful, entertaining games, and electronic devices now have tonnes of apps and games for all different tastes, for all different types of people. Tablets probably have the biggest range of games that we've ever seen in the history of humankind, actually. So, kids and adults love them – and sometimes even get addicted to them.

2. Why do some adults hate to throw away old things, such as clothes?

Some adults are really like this. Especially people from the older generation who lived in times of greater austerity. They think that wasting things is not good, especially if you can repair things yourself or continue to use them. I can see this point of view, because we live in a very wasteful society – with the increase in consumerism and standard of living, some people forget the importance of trying to take care of things, and teach children to respect toys and possessions. So, there are still quite a few adults who believe we should have a greater respect for things we have and not just throw them away frivolously without thinking.

3. What do you think influences people to buy new things?

Adverts and peer pressure. People are highly influenced by what others buy – friends and family – and what adverts tell us to buy. We are surrounded by media today – online media, adverts in elevators, subway stations and on the sides of buses... everywhere. So, they have a strong conscious and unconscious influence on the way we think and the things we want to buy. People where I am from can be said to be ‘fashion victims’ too, and to save face they must follow the latest trends. Some people.

Describe a piece of equipment in your home that you broke and then fixed.

You should say:

What it is

How you broke it

How you fixed it

And explain how you felt about it

A piece of domestic equipment that broke once, that I managed to fix myself, in fact, was... not really a piece of equipment exactly, but I think it counts, anyway... It was a problem with the tiles in my shower. This may sound a bit strange, but I didn't want to call a workman to come out – because they are never on time, they always charge too much, or you have to argue about the price and ... well... I quite like fixing things, actually. I remember my uncle was really good at fixing and mending stuff around the home, so I think I get this tendency from him.

Anyway, my shower tiles had lost a lot of their grouting and some were coming off the walls altogether. I don't really know how they came off – perhaps just through time and not being repaired sooner. In fact, one had already fallen off the wall, but had not entirely broken, just cracked. I went to the local hardware shop, and talked to the man in there, and took his advice and bought a type of grouting. Grouting is like a sort of cement in a little pot that you use to put under and between bathroom tiles – after about 24 hours it dries hard and keeps the tiles in place and seals them from getting water behind them, which then causes them to fall off. I found a video online of someone doing this with their own bathroom tiles, followed their steps and did it myself. I was very pleased with the process and the result. I felt a great sense of satisfaction from repairing something myself, rather than just calling someone up and getting them to come. It took a few hours, and I listened to music while I was doing it. I quite like this kind of thing. I think that more people should learn to fix things themselves, actually. It's good to develop these basic skills.

Part 3

1. Are IT-related jobs valued more by society?

I would say they are valued quite a lot yes. I am not sure if they are valued more than

other jobs – it depends. But, yes, they are highly valued, as technology is the thing of the future, and everything is related to tech developments – at least a lot of things. So, I think that IT is a valued industry that a lot of people are keen to join, and work hard to progress in – it can guarantee a strong career. So, yes, many people value IT professions quite a lot.

2. Is the quality of products worse than before?

I think some products have increased in quality over the years, and other products are worse really in quality. It really depends. I think that, to be honest, since I was a child, the quality of products has increased, due to tighter restrictions on maintaining quality, and a stronger market demand for higher quality products.

3. What kinds of things do people like to repair by themselves?

Most people today do not repair anything themselves. We've become a bit useless in this regard to be honest. But the things that people might repair themselves could be things like ... let me think... my mother often repairs socks – she sews them. And sometimes she repairs clothes if they are slightly ripped. I can't really think of much else really, to be honest. I think we live in a throw-away society today where people chuck things away if they are broken, or they hire a repair person to come to the house to do the jobs for them!

Describe a piece of clothing that someone gave to you.

You should say:

What it is

Who gave it to you

When you got it

And explain why this person gave you this piece of clothing

A piece of clothing that someone gave me that I still have today, which I really love, is a long black coat that my parents gave me for my birthday a few years ago. It's a very elegant coat made from Cashmere. It's a simple coat, of very simple design, but it's a very timeless kind of style. I absolutely love this kind of coat as it looks both elegant and sexy at the same time. It's perfect for wearing with long dresses to events and special occasions, because the coat goes almost down to the ankles. It has buttons on both sides and a fairly wide collar. Cashmere is a lot softer than wool, so it is amazing to the touch, although it is not floppy or easily creased. I think it must have been around my 21st or 22nd birthday when I was given the coat. You see, my birthday falls at the beginning of autumn, just when it starts to get cold in Dongbei, where I am from. So, it was a perfectly timed gift, just before the temperature went down. Also, at this time, I was going to quite a few classical music concerts and elegant venues, so the coat was ideal for wearing with fairly formal clothes to such events. I think that is why my parents gave me the coat – I had just graduated from music college and was attending a lot of music events with my teachers and colleagues, and they felt that I deserved a more mature item of clothing to match the

occasions.

Part 3

1. Why do people dress casually in daily life and dress formally at work?

People usually have to give a more serious impression when they are at work. When you work with other people, have meetings, and possibly meet clients and partners, it's important to be more formal, to look more formal, and to give a more serious impression of yourself. When you're out with friends, relaxing, going to cafes, restaurants or having fun, then you can let go more and it's not so important to look mature and serious and conservative. It's as simple as that really. It's about respecting others, your job, and giving a serious, sensible impression.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of wearing uniform at work and school?

A uniform has the advantage of making all the people at work or school look the same, look equal, and look conservative. This can give a unified, good impression of a company or school, and a sense of strong identity to those working there and the institution itself. The disadvantages, according to some people, might be that a uniform stamps out individual style and personality, and makes everyone look too much the same. And this can be uninspiring, especially if you want to encourage innovation, personal flair and creativity in a workforce or body of students.

3. Why do people from different countries wear different clothes?

Well... throughout history cultures develop and grow for different reasons, and they also develop different styles of clothing for both practical and fashionable reasons. Firstly, clothes are usually made from the materials that a country has immediately to hand, and materials that are best for the climate of that country. Secondly, creative styles and design evolve for multiple reasons, for ethnic or religious reasons, for example. Cultures are quite distinct from each other, and so obviously their clothing styles and fashions also vary considerably.

Describe a gift you would like to buy for your friend.

You should say:

What gift you would like to buy

Who you would like to give it to

Why you want to buy this gift for him/her

And explain why you would like to choose that gift

Part 3

1. When do people send gifts to others?
2. Do people give gifts or red packets on traditional festivals?
3. Is it hard to choose a gift?
4. Will people feel happy when receiving an expensive gift?

Describe an item on which you spent more than expected.

You should say:

What it is

How much you spent on it

Why you bought it

And explain why you think you spent more than expected

Something that I spent a lot more than I expected on was a jumper I bought the other day, actually, from a boutique store in the city centre. I went out looking for a jumper for the late autumn or winter. Something that I could both wear to work and wear casually on weekends. Something that would match a variety of clothes that I have. I looked in a lot of stores, but I kept seeing the same kind of designs and fashions, and I wanted something a little bit different – you know, something that everyone else didn't have. I don't always like to walk around wearing the same clothes as everybody else. People can be real fashion victims in this sense, I find! Anyway, so I came across this smaller store, run by a local designer. The name of the store isn't famous at all, or the brand, but it's really high quality and very unique in terms of designs and patterns and materials. I was instantly attracted to a lot of the garments on sale. I just loved the style – unique and special, but not outrageous or strange or anything like that. And, perfect colours for autumn too. I found this jumper that I really loved. It was amazing, it was striped with flecks of gold sparkles in it – hard to explain. It was made of very soft wool, actually, cashmere I think, and it felt so lovely to the touch. When I tried it on it fit perfectly. So, even though it was 400 yuan, I immediately, without hesitation, bought it. I had only expected to pay one or two hundred for a jumper, but I fell in love with it at first sight, and like I say, I didn't want something that everyone else in the city was wearing. So, yeah, that jumper is what I spent more money on than I expected.

Part 3

1. Do you often pay more than you expected?

No, usually, I am quite conservative and sensible with my spending and I don't spend more than I budget for. I'm one of those people that keep a tight control of my spending and don't like to be too lavish or too extravagant. I'm not into expensive items and fancy clothes brands and stuff like this. Though on the odd occasion I might splash out.

2. What do you think young people spend most of their money on?

Young people today are quite obsessed with fashion, actually. They spend a lot of money on clothes, accessories and trying to stay fashionable and trying to look cool. I think it's partly a social pressure that people feel, especially those who live in big cities. Other popular items are things like smartphones and tablets and electronics and headphones. I see a lot of young people buying fancy brands of electronic goods too.

3. Do you think it is important to save money?

I think it's very important. You never know what is going to happen, especially in China where things change so frequently and new policies and regulations come crashing down in unexpected and completely crazy ways. So, you've got to save money if you're concerned about future stability for yourself and your family.

Describe an exciting book that you enjoy reading.

You should say:

When you read it

What kind of book it is

What it is about

And explain why you think it is exciting

I always like Harry Potter. I like the books, and I like the films. I read almost all of the novels when I was in middle school, and I loved them. It's a famous series of books about the adventures of a young boy who goes to a school of magic to become a wizard. He, along with a few of his classmates, gets involved in all sorts of adventures and ends up solving mysteries. It's a really exciting series of books to read, actually, as it combines light humour with intense and thrilling adventure, with a strong element of mystery and a little bit of horror. Harry Potter came out when I was very young, but I started reading the books when I was about 11 years old. I read them in Chinese first, but now I read them in English and I find it's a great way to expand my vocabulary and increase my knowledge of collocations and more colloquial English language usage. I am personally very drawn to anything related to fantasy, magic and adventure, so I think the Harry Potter books are particularly exciting and they cater well for the interests and feelings of young people. I was very excited when they started to make films from the books, and I really enjoy watching those too. The older Harry gets the darker the stories become, which is something I also find very appealing and interesting. It feels as if I am growing older with him in some ways – JK Rowling has now written about 7 or 8 books in the series. I can't quite remember how many off-hand, but there's quite a few anyway, and I've read all of them as they came out.

Part 3

1. Do you prefer books or movies?

I prefer reading books, personally. I think that some people, like myself, prefer books to films because they enjoy the peace and quiet that reading offers. Reading is a solitary pursuit and for people, like myself, who like spending time alone, reading is a really enjoyable and relaxing hobby. It's also better for personal development, I find. You develop your thinking skills more from reading than sitting and watching films.

2. Do you think it is important to read the book before watching the movie version of it?

I think that it's best to read the book before watching the movie version, most certainly. But, on the other hand sometimes it doesn't really matter. It actually depends on the story we are talking about to be honest. I think if it's a good quality novel... you know, by a respected author, then yes, it's certainly better to read the book before watching the film. However, for some more quick-fix sensational stories it's fine to watch the film first.

3. Do boys and girls like the same kinds of books?

Generally, I think that boys and girls do like different types of books. Though I think that is changing these days as tastes tend to converge more. Traditionally, anyway, girls used to be more inclined to enjoy stories of romance and love and marriage and things like this, and boys were more drawn to tales of adventure, and mischief and stuff like this. However, of course, these tend to be stereotypes.

4. What kinds of books do Chinese people like reading?

I think, like any other nationality, Chinese people have varied tastes. It depends who we are talking about and what kind of personality they have. People like everything from thrillers, to detective novels, to fantasy, science fiction, adventure, romance... the whole range of genres. I find that people are reading less and less today, in terms of novels, and perhaps that's due to the internet or smartphone use. But, I'd say that popular genres are still romance and crime fiction.

Describe a piece of equipment that is important in your home.

You should say:

What it is

How often you use it

Who you use it with

And explain why it is important to your family

A piece of equipment that is really important in my home is the something very simple, actually. It's the air conditioner! The air conditioner is something we tend to take for granted, but in actual fact, it's essential if you live somewhere hot, or somewhere that has really hot summers. You forget how important the air con is until you're breaks! This is why this spring to mind – because last summer, it was stiflingly hot, and the electricity cut out for an entire day in our apartment. That day it was impossible to cope – it was so hot it was unbearable. So, we sat around for hours waiting for the electricity to start working again. During those long hours my family and I realised suddenly just how important air conditioning was, and we talked a bit about how we had taken it for granted, and considered how people cope in hot countries if they're poor and don't have air con, or in the past when it hadn't even been invented. Life must have been really tough then. This is the case with a lot of modern inventions – we now take them for granted and simply don't think about what life would be without them. I think perhaps, our grandmother's generation have a lot

more appreciation for these things, because they grew up through greater hardship, before anyone really had these mod cons and domestic appliances. I think it's good to remember this, and not just hail and admire all the new tech advances, but truly appreciate those inventions that have really saved us from a lot of domestic struggle and suffering! The washing machine is another one! Think about how much labour that has saved people since its invention! Amazing really!

Part 3

1. What kinds of machines are there in people's homes?

In people's homes there are all sorts of machines – washing machines, computers, dishwashers, sometimes... let me think... vacuum cleaners, all sorts of different machines are used today in homes. It's curious to consider really, just how much of our lives are centred around using machines to help us with our daily tasks.

2. What are the differences between the young and the old in their attitudes towards machines?

Older people tend to be less familiar with very modern technology. Today they are quite adept at using washing machines and these kind of household appliances, but when it comes to the new mobile phones, tablets, computers and the latest computer software, then they tend to shy away from it. Not all older folk, to be honest, but the majority, I'd say.

3. What kinds of professions require people to use machines?

Nearly all professions I can think of! The most common machine today is the computer, I think in nearly all jobs people use computers today. Everyone uses a computer, from bank workers, to office workers, to teachers, lawyers, almost every profession. Machines are also used in labour-intensive professions and industries too – factories, haulage, construction, huge engineering projects. Machines are, for good and bad, an integral part of our lives, and an essential part of the world of work.

Object: (抽象)

- ◆ Describe an ambition that you haven't achieved.
- ◆ Describe a song or piece of music you like.
- ◆ Describe a rule you would like to change.
- ◆ Describe a story someone told you and you remember.
- ◆ Describe something that helped you learn a foreign language.
- ◆ Describe a difficult skill you have learned from an old person.
- ◆ Describe a difficult skill you have learned from an old person.
- ◆ Describe a habit that your friend has and you want to develop.
- ◆ Describe a skill that was difficult for you to learn.
- ◆ Describe a puzzle (jigsaw) you enjoy doing.
- ◆ Describe a piece of local news that you think is interesting.
- ◆ Describe an article about health that you have read in a magazine or on the internet.
- ◆ Describe an art or craft activity you have done.

Describe an ambition that you haven't achieved.

You should say:

What it is

Why you haven't achieved it

What you have already done

And explain how you felt about it

An ambition that I'd say I haven't really achieved, is to be able to sing professionally and make a career of it. I think I am quite a good singer. And now I sing part time in a small band. We play jazz music and other styles of music, but the band isn't that popular or successful, and far from being a professional career! As a child, I was always a fan of music, and I loved singing. But I really wanted to take it a step further and become really good at it – so after I finished my studies, while I was looking for work, I spent a bit of money on having weekly singing lessons. I already played the piano, so I had a basis in music theory and practice. But I wanted to learn about how to use my voice more, how to sing in a more jazz and operatic manner – how to cover a larger, more varied vocal range, so that I could sing both pop songs as well as more complicated classical tunes. It's more difficult than it seems, actually, to sing really professionally! Anyway, I had lessons for about two years, and took part in a number of performances with drama and theatre groups, classical music groups and also pop and jazz bands. I got really into it. It became a central hobby for me. And I must admit, it took at least two years for me to reach a level where I can now confidently say that I am a pretty good singer. However, I have not achieved the level of talent, success and connections to be able to be a professional singer and make a true career of it. I can only say that I improved my skills a lot, and became pretty good, and it's a little more than a hobby, yes, but certainly a long way off being a professional singer which I had dreamt of... and aspired towards at some point. So, yes, I'd say I didn't really succeed

in this ambition, but I'm okay with that now. I am happy enough with where I am in life, nevertheless.

Part 3

1. What ambitions do children usually have?

Children have all sorts of adventurous ambitions sometimes. That's the great thing about being a kid – I remember I had classmates who wanted to be astronauts and go into space – others who wanted to be soldiers, and fight for the country... and then others who had more down-to-earth ambitions, like becoming computer programmers. Older children tend to be attracted to more realistic and perhaps money-oriented ambitions.

2. Why are some people very ambitious at work?

Some people are just more driven and ambitious than others, really. That's a question of personality. Some are really concerned about career progression because they want to achieve more and more and gain more expertise and responsibility. Others need more money because of family expectations and economic demands. It depends. There are a few key reasons why some people are just more driven than others.

3. Why do some people not have any dreams?

Some people prefer to have a more relaxing life where everything they want is within reach. I think that's okay, too. I think that today's world is too competitive and that can cause a lot of stress. So, some people don't have high aspirations and big dreams. Though, I believe they do have dreams – they are just more humble and modest dreams, easier to obtain and lower stress.

Describe a song or piece of music you like.

You should say:

What the song or music is

What kind of song or music it is

Where you first heard it

And explain why you like it

A song that I particularly like is "Thank U, Next" by Ariana Grande. I think it's by far her best song. She released it just after a huge relationship drama she had with her boyfriend. As well as being a really powerful song, it's also quite philosophical and reflective. It's almost like a ballad really – it has a grace and resonance to it which certainly touches your heart. There's no doubt about that! I first heard the song when I was at a party with some ex-classmates. It was a kind of reunion party. Normally I don't like those kind of parties, because everyone sits around and shows off about their great achievements in life, but this was different somehow. People spoke their hearts more, talked about their real feelings, and shared their opinions about life and their relationships. It was a meaningful occasion, and at a certain point in the evening

when we had finished dinner and moved on to a KTV, the song came on, and a classmate sung along to it brilliantly. I felt instantly moved with both the melody and the lyrics. So, I like it because I think it's a fantastic song and has a lot of meaning and sentiment, but also for nostalgic reasons: it reminds me of this occasion at my classmates reunion and the great night we all had together.

Part 3

1. Do you think young people and old people enjoy the same kind of music?

Not really no. Most of the time old people enjoy more traditional styles of music, and younger people like more upbeat, perhaps slightly rebellious types of music – or at least music which is faster, perhaps easier to dance to, be active to, or music that stimulates those kind of moods: the mood for dancing, being highly active and doing things quickly or even rashly. I think that this reflects the stage of development and the energy that young people have. Older people, having been through similar stages in their own youth, tend to get a bit more tired with that kind of thing, and want more relaxing and conventional lives. As a general rule, this is the case anyway. Although, I must say, there are some older people who do keep up with times, follow a lot of modern music, and have a genuine interest in different musical styles – those kinds of people are likely to share the musical interests of their kids and the younger generations in general. So, there are older people, too, who are music enthusiasts and do follow current musical trends, but not so many from my experience.

2. Why are many music competitions popular in China?

Music contests are really popular because the Chinese people have always liked stage performances and live entertainment. It's something that brings people together. They like to follow a contestant on their journey, and they also like the strong idea of competition – it's exciting. TV music competitions are also light-hearted in a way, and give everyone a good break from the stresses and strains of daily life.

3. What are the differences between live concerts and online concerts?

Live concerts are lot more exciting than watching concerts on TV or online. If you're in a live concert you also enjoy a better sound quality and a more intimate feeling with the rest of the audience and the performers on stage. The whole experience is more personal. The disadvantage, of course, is that you have to buy tickets and travel to the venue – and that can be a bit of an expense and a hassle.

Describe a rule that you would like to change.

You should say:

What it is

Why you want to change it

How others feel about the rule

And explain whether you have followed the rule

A rule that I would like to change is the rule that you cannot use roller skates or roller blades or skateboards in the university campus. This may sound a bit silly, but I am part of a skating club – and there are plenty of great places on campus to skate or go on rollerblades. But there is this ridiculous rule that we cannot – apparently for safety reasons – but I do not understand the logic of it – we are adults, basically, and our own safety is important to us, and we know more about these sports than the people who make the rules!! It's not a sport which is dangerous to others either... and there should at least be a designated area on campus where people who are into skating can get together, share the latest tricks, practices techniques and show off their moves. It's a brilliant hobby and has become quite fashionable these days. So, to skate or rollerblade, my friends and I have to go to the local skate park, which is a bus-ride away. That's not so convenient. So, all of us feel that this rule is pretty unfair and affects what we believe to be a very healthy and wonderful hobby. A hobby that is also good for our physical and mental health. I really wish they would change this rule. When the rule first came out we didn't pay much attention, but the campus security kept clamping down and scolding us, so we basically had no choice but to follow it. I would certainly petition to have the rule changed if we had that right.

Part 3

1. What kind of rules do schools in China have?

Schools in China have all sorts of rules. Pretty much like schools anywhere I guess. Children cannot wear scruffy or outrageous clothes or fashions, or dangling earrings or dyed hair, and things like this. Those are dress-code rules. There are other rules, too, like you aren't allowed to take mobile phones into the classroom, you can't run or shout in the hallways, and you can't be seen kissing or engaging in romantic activities in public places. I can't think of any more off the top of my head, but there are, indeed, lots of little rules to govern how students behave on the school premises.

2. What rules should children follow at home?

Children, at least in my opinion, should be obedient to their parents, and follow the house rules – if the house rules are fair and realistic! Children should not interrupt adults when they are talking about important things, and they should also learn to tidy up after them when they get toys out or make a mess. Some parents think older children should also help with domestic chores in the home. I think this can be good for them, to a certain extent.

3. Do people often violate the rules in China?

I don't know if people in China violate laws more than any other country to be honest. It's hard to say. On the one hand Chinese people can be very obedient, but on the other hand they can also flaunt rules and ignore regulations if they are not imposed strictly, and if they are not penalized by the authorities for breaking them. In this way I'd say the Chinese are quite childish – they will follow rules if the authorities punish them for not following them. But if they are not threatened with punishments or loss of face, they might just totally ignore them and not even think about the consequences

of their own actions on society. But, having said this, I think a lot of people in the world are like this. I'm not sure it's right to compare.

4. Do you think people sometimes should break laws?

Well. It depends really. Generally speaking they should not because they will likely bring about trouble for themselves, their family or their associates. It's generally a good idea to keep to rules, even if you don't really agree with them. We all have to live in society and even if we don't like certain rules, life is easier if we obey them. However, there are rules that we perhaps should protest against – if we really think certain laws and rules are deeply unfair, people should at least voice their feelings to the rule-makers, but perhaps it's not advisable to break the laws, really.

5. Why do you think children should be taught to obey rules?

Everyone needs to grow up understanding that rules must be obeyed. Society is full of rules and regulations and as we get older we have to conform to them in order to live a comfortable and normal life. Whether it be working rules, driving regulations, rules if you have your own business and all sorts of different laws. Everybody has to learn to follow rules... and so, children should be taught at a young age that rules exist and it's just part of life to have to follow them.

6. What kind of penalty is appropriate for small crimes?

I think it depends on the crimes. I think penalties and punishments could change from a small fine, to community service – which is doing useful work several days or hours a week to help the local community. I don't think people should go to prison for most small crimes, but there should be some level of punishment that will deter them from committing the same or similar crimes in the future.

Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

You should say:

What the story was about

Who told you this story

Why you remember it

And explain how you feel about it

A story I remember is one that my uncle told me when I was a child. It was a magical story about a secret door to another world that was located in the back of an old wardrobe in a huge, old manor house in England. I think it was called The Chronicles of Narnia... and was originally written by C.S. Lewis. My uncle did not have the book, but he remembered most of the story and so he would tell it to me at bedtime every time we stayed in his house.

The story starts with a group of children that move to live with their great uncle in a large country home. They are very much left to their own devices to entertain

themselves in this huge, rambling mansion. They spend the days exploring all the different rooms, playing in the gardens and enjoying the novelty and freedom of being away from the confines of city life. It really is an exciting experience for all of them... One day they are playing hide and seek in the massive house, when one of the girls decides to hide in a big wooden wardrobe in the corner of one of the darkest, dustiest rooms. As she pushes her way through the coats hanging in the wardrobe she realizes that she seems to be going on and on and on, and there is no back to the wardrobe. Suddenly she ends up in a snowy woodland of pine trees... And it is there that the adventure begins. She meets a fawn, a kind of mythical half-man-half-goat, called Mister Tumnus, and she gets involved in an adventure with talking animals, and a snow queen who casts evil magic!

Anyway, my uncle told me this story many times as a child, and then I realized much later in life that they had even made a TV series from the original novel. It's a great story and has always remained fondly in my memory.

Part 3

1. Do young children like the same stories as older children?

Young kids tend to like similar stories to older children, but simpler versions. Because younger children have less life experience they cannot really grasp more complex stories so they tend to be attracted to a lot more basic and simplistic interactions between people. They enjoy animals, colourful images, and simple exchanges. They are also very attracted to things that are bright and cute, and get scared a little by darker stories. Older children are much more sophisticated and can grasp a lot more nuanced aspects of human interactions and darker tales. This is evidenced by how Harry Potter stories have developed. The early Harry Potter stories, for younger kids, are more innocent, and the later Harry Potter stories are much darker and more scary.

2. How has technology changed the way of storytelling?

Technology has basically enabled us to watch more films, listen to more stories through audio books and apps, and access a wider variety of stories online. However, because children have ipads and tablets and lots of electronic devices, parents are less likely to read children bedtime stories at night, and so in a way, technology has reduced the amount of traditional bedtime stories that parents might read to children. So, it really depends on people's attitudes to parenting more than technology itself.

3. Why do children like stories?

Children have very colourful imaginations, and they are in a stage in life where they are more free than adults – they can allow their imaginations to run wild, fantasize and let their thoughts explore magical and adventurous lands. So, they are particularly drawn to stories... to fiction and fantasy.

Describe something that helped you learn a foreign language.

You should say:

What it was

What language you learnt

Why you chose to learn that language

And explain how this thing helped you

The language I learned was English, because it was a core subject in school. But the lessons in school were a bit boring. I chose English simply because that was the only option at the time, so I guess you could say I didn't really choose it! Something that really helped me learn that foreign language was a TV series I watched when I was in school. It was a series called Science Adventures, and it was all in English, with subtitles in English and Chinese. It was hosted by a really entertaining girl, who spoke with a slight American accent, and was really inspiring. I used to watch every episode of it. Each episode they did a different science experiment, with a lot of fun stories related to the topic. It wasn't too heavy on science language and vocabulary, and everything they talked about was related to our everyday life and fun and interesting facts about daily scientific phenomenon – like, why water swirls in a certain direction when you take the plug out of the bath, or why the sun burns you when it's hot in summer, and stuff like this. So, in fact, it was excellent for picking up everyday English language. It was also quite modern, so I learned quite a few new phrases and expressions, which were more useful than the rather dry, old-fashioned stuffy things we learned in school textbooks. So, all round, this TV series exposed me to a wide range of vocabulary and expressions, helped me polish my grammar, and presented everything in a fun and interesting context.

Part 3

1. What difficulties do people face when learning a language?

There's a number of difficulties people encounter when learning another language. Firstly, it's harder at first, and without the right motivation and learning context. Then having the inspiration to study is quite tough. So, first and foremost it's important to be inspired and interested in learning the language. Secondly, having the discipline to learn the boring parts – the rules, the grammar, the things that are not necessarily so interesting at first. Learning all this requires a sense of discipline and regular study.

2. 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.

3. Is studying abroad a good way to learn a foreign language?

Most certainly it is, but it also depends on your attitude when you study and live overseas. If you go overseas and really make an effort to mix with people from that country, spend time with them, develop relationships with them and talk a lot, your confidence and language ability will certainly grow.

Describe a difficult skill you have learned from an old person.

You should say:

What it is

Why the skill was learned from this old person

How you learned it

And explain how you felt after you learned the skill

A skill that I learned from an older person is writing calligraphy. I have already been very attracted to calligraphy since I was very young – and my auntie in Xi'an taught me from around the age of 8 some of the basic strokes and techniques. My auntie was an excellent painter and calligrapher. She learned from her father, who had spent years studying and teaching Chinese traditional art and painting. She was also incredibly passionate about calligraphy, and enjoyed learning new styles and practicing, both at home on paper with ink brushes, and more recently on tablet software she uses – a much less messy way of practicing!

She first taught me the basics, and then gave me a special brush, stone and ink for my birthday. I just picked it up gradually from then on. I never found it boring at all. And I always had a strong sense of self-discipline to practice on my own. So, my learning curve was an enjoyable one. I was happy to practice for hours on end, watching videos online, copying experts and learning different techniques. I think a big part of learning a new skill, is motivation and discipline, and I had both of these qualities – so I was pretty lucky really. So, I felt really good about learning. I think, to be honest, it's all down to my auntie and her wonderful demeanor and her positive and encouraging way of teaching and inspiring me as a child.

Part 3

1. What can children learn from parents? What about grandparents?

Children can learn a lot from parents. Everything from basic education, manners, good personal habits, politeness with strangers and friends and family – pretty much everything to do with everyday life and living, really. Likewise, with grandparents – family members are often those that teach children the fundamentals of daily living, from washing and personal hygiene, to language, to ways of doing things in the home, and all about the world.

2. From whom can children learn more, parents or grandparents?

Children can learn more from whoever is their immediate carer, really, whoever they spend most of their time with, to be honest. If a child is brought up by their parents,

predominantly, they will learn more from their parents. If they are brought up largely by their grandparents, they'll learn more from them! It totally depends on who they are brought up by, and the attitude of those people – how much they care about educating and teaching the child.

3. What kind of help do you think old people need?

Old people need a lot of practical help, really. Help doing basic chores that might be very tiring or difficult. This is basically because as people get older they are tired more easily, suffer problems like bad knees, or more serious health issues, and need more physical care. So, a lot of older people might need help with some of the daily domestic chores, and, depending how healthy they are, other tasks like shopping, for example.

Describe a habit that your friend has and you want to develop.

You should say:

Who your friend is

What habit he/she has

When you noticed this habit

And explain why you want to develop this habit

A habit that a good friend of mine has that I'd like to develop is a good sleeping and eating routine. I know that sounds a bit strange maybe, but I've always had problems with sleep and problems with having a regular diet and good eating habits. I sleep quite badly, and I wake up in the night at random times worrying about things, and this really isn't good. My friend, Liu Chen, has a really disciplined routine which he says really helps him to keep healthy, rest well, and maintain a good appetite. You see, he sustains that his healthy routine is essential and says that once you get into a good routine, it becomes quickly a natural habit. He always goes to sleep before 11pm. He never has a heavy dinner, but eats light and healthy foods in the evening. He always gets up early, about 6am and has a good breakfast of porridge and fruits. He insists that if you keep to this simple but fairly strict routine, then you will end up having a really balanced state of mind and a lot of energy during the day. I would like to develop this habit, but for some reason I just can't discipline myself to start. I enjoy lying awake at night until late, reading or playing on my phone, and the hours go by, and then it's really late, then I sleep too late, and I sleep badly, and then I don't have a good mood, or a good appetite to eat breakfast. In fact, I'm perhaps the opposite of Liu Chen in this sense. I can't seem to change this bad habit of mine. So, I'd like to be stricter with myself and force myself to begin a good, healthy routine like him. I guess I first noticed this good habit of his when we shared a dormitory together in university.

Part 3

1. What habits should children have?

Children should learn to develop the habits of obedience and patience, and the ability to listen to others. I think that it's important that adults help children develop a sense of empathy for others. Understanding others, and their feelings, is an important part of life in my view, and a path to solving a lot of issues between people, so I am a firm believer in teaching children the quality of reflection, empathy and critical thinking.

2. What should parents do to teach their children good habits?

Parents should discipline children to behave well in public, first and foremost. Being polite and respectful to others is very important, and this means children need to learn good manners, and good behavior in different social contexts. It is also good that children learn proper eating habits. Some people also think it's good that children are taught to tidy up after them and not always leave a mess for their parents to clear up.

3. What influences do children with bad habits have on other children?

Children with bad habits can pass those habits on to those around them. Children are very impressionable and are easily affected by their peers. Good and bad habits can be contagious, so it's important that all children are educated to behave well, so that they positively influence other children.

4. Why do some habits change when people get older?

As we become more educated and gain more life experience, our habits change. For example, we learn new habits when we go to school, when we get involved in different social groups, and when we go to university or start to enter the working world. All these experiences in life are learning and development experiences in which we adapt to different types of situations in the real world, causing our habits to adjust and change.

Describe a difficult decision you once made.

You should say:

What the decision was

When you made this decision

How long it took to make the decision

And explain why it was difficult to make the decision

I'd say the most difficult decision I made was when I decided which university overseas I wanted to study at. I actually got really good grades, so I was lucky enough to have a choice. I was also fortunate that my parents could afford to send me overseas to study, so I do feel that my decision was perhaps a luxury in many ways. But still, it was a difficult decision. I did not know whether I should go to Australia or go to the UK, to Scotland to study. I looked in detail at the two universities in question, and they both offered pretty much the same course that I wanted to study, and they both seemed like fairly good universities. I just couldn't decide which place would be better for me, or more interesting for me. I spent quite a bit of time

weighing up the pros and cons of both places, and I couldn't reach a conclusion at all. Some people advised me to read about the social life, the academic life, the environment, and others advised me to go with my gut feeling and choose the place that resonated more with my personality and how I felt. However, I'm quite an indecisive person, and I question myself a lot, so that meant that every day I changed my mind. Each place seemed equally as good, equally as exciting and equally as interesting and geared towards my future career ambitions. There didn't seem to be any one factor that made me choose one place over the other. In the end, I am not sure why, I just decided to go to Edinburgh, because I was sitting at home watching a nature programme with my grandfather and they mentioned the place. I then decided there and then – okay, I'll choose there. And I did. And that was that. I guess sometimes it's best to go with your gut feeling when you've a hard decision to make, or wait for some sign from the universe!

Part 3

1. What decisions do people make every day?

People on a daily basis make a range of decisions, like what to eat for lunch, what clothes to put on in the morning before going to work – how to do their hair. These decisions are largely based on mood and preference. Some days we simply feel in certain moods and not others for no particular reason. Other decisions might involve what kind of music to listen to, when to go to bed early or late, and which friends to meet for dinner or workmates to have lunch with. These are the kind of everyday decisions that most of us make. Then, there are decisions we need to make in our jobs, depending on projects we are working on and timelines and deadlines and the way we prioritise our working day.

2. Which one is easier, making a decision by yourself or making a decision after a group discussion?

It's sometimes easier making a decision by yourself, because you don't have to consider all the different views and opinions that a group of diverse people might present to you. Having said that, difficult decisions are sometimes best made when you have different opinions to consider. So it really depends on the type of decision that needs to be made, and the kind of people in the group.

3. Why are many young people unwilling to follow their parents' advice?

Many young people feel that their parents might give out-dated advice. Times has changed a lot since our parents were younger and sometimes their fixed ideas about things are not so applicable today as they were in their days. So, there are often generational conflicts that arise from this gap.

4. Why would middle-aged people tend to give their decisions a second thought?

I think as people get older they develop a greater capacity to question themselves and reflect on their thought processes and possible decisions. I think as we get older we have more experience and that equips us to reflect more on things, and see other

perspectives. I think that's the main reason why some middle-aged people might be more inclined to give things a second thought.

Describe a skill that was difficult for you to learn.

You should say:

What the skill was

When you learned it

How you learned it

And explain how you felt about learning it

A skill that was hard for me to learn at first was learning how to use Photoshop. I don't usually have to use Photoshop much, but occasionally I need to do presentations with multi-media and graphics, and to make these look really nice then Photoshop is really useful. I once had to do a workshop project with classmates, and I wanted to manipulate a number of images and graphics and make them look nice on the page. To do this I used Photoshop. I learned to use the basic features of the programme by going online and looking at some tutorial videos. These were really helpful actually, as I could stop and start the videos and try out the different features that were explained until I got the desired results, and got to grips with how to use the various tools. I found this method quite effective, though a little tricky at first. Also, I asked a colleague of mine to help me when I couldn't quite grasp something. I didn't want to ask him at first, until I'd tried myself to grasp the basics from the video tutorials. So, I guess I used a combination of my own autonomous learning from the online resources I found, and asking a friend who was more competent than me with the software. This combination of learning to use a new programme is a good way to get to grips with something new I find. I felt a bit slow at first, and I don't think I'm especially quick at learning new things when it comes to technical skills, but I managed in the end and my presentation graphics, images, diagrams and photos looked quite good. With these kinds of software you've got to practice quite a lot to get used to using them, but when you're used to them, you can then develop and learn more things quite quickly.

Part 3

1. What skills do young people need to master?

Young people need to master a whole range of skills, from soft skills, to hard skills, to prepare them for the world of work. When it comes to hard skills, I'd say computer skills are important, and organizational skills and using organizational tools. When it comes to soft skills, I'd say that diplomacy, collaborating and working with others, and tolerance and patience are important.

2. Is it hard for young people to learn skills? What about old people?

I don't think it is that hard for young people to develop new skills, especially if they are taught in the right way, in a way which engages and motivates them. Older people often find it harder to learn new skills compared to younger people. As we get older

we get more 'set in our ways' and used to our own ways of doing things, and become less adaptable to different methods and ways of solving problems. New skills are harder to learn for older people, partly because they lack the motivation and inspiration to change.

3. Is a good teacher important for students to learn?

A good teacher is pretty essential, I'd say. I think that we learn a lot from the ways a teacher presents information to us, and how motivating and inspiring and engaging a teacher is. A teacher who can really show us the value of what we are learning can be highly motivating. But, as well as having a good teacher, students should nurture and develop an attitude of curiosity and willingness to learn. This can be aided by parents and facilitated by good upbringing.

4. Do you think students can learn better at school or at home?

5. I think students can certainly learn better in school, if the school environment is a positive learning environment for them. It totally depends on the school culture and how it's set up and the kinds of teachers the school hires. Children can most certainly learn the basics and a good attitude to learning from home though. I think home and parental upbringing is basically the springboard of sound learning, then a good school is the best thing for developing that learning more professionally. Do you think students can learn better at school or at home?

Describe a puzzle (jigsaw) you enjoy doing.

You should say:

What it is like

How easy or difficult it is

How long it takes you to solve

And explain how you feel about it

I have a puzzle I often do on my phone. It's a sort of crossword puzzle, actually. Basically, you get a series of questions and you have to put a word in the boxes, a character or letter in each box until a word is formed, horizontally or vertically. The words should cross where the letters from each answer are the same. It's a bit hard to explain actually! Anyway, it's a sort of fun app, and it's good for the mind, as you really have to think about your answers really carefully. I guess it's the same kind of crossword puzzle as we used to have in physical books when I was a child. But now they're online, and you can compete with other people all over the country who are doing the same puzzles, and compare answers and get points if you get the solutions first. Each crossword puzzle comes out every morning, and so I do it on the way to work. It takes about 20 minutes to do one puzzle, but some are really hard and take me about an hour, and others I simply cannot finish. So it depends. There are different levels from easy to very difficult, so you can choose which level of difficulty you want to try, and this is handy if you don't have much time – in that case you can

choose the easy level. If you've got a good hour spare at lunch, and are in the right mood, you can choose a difficult one. I enjoy doing these kinds of puzzles as I believe they keep the mind active and engaged and they increase my vocabulary.

Part 3

1. Why do parents let their children do puzzles?

Puzzles can be highly educational for young people, and everyone enjoys the motivation and sense of achievement. There are all sorts of different puzzles for children to do, especially on tablets and ipads, which have accompanying sounds and animation, so they can be especially good for maths or language learning.

2. What kind of puzzles improve people's intelligence?

There are lots of puzzles aimed at improving people's intelligence. There are even puzzles that are designed by members of special societies that are really challenging. Often logic puzzles and math puzzles, the kinds of things we might do in school but much harder. I think these kinds of puzzles are more beneficial to people than computer games or app games because they train your mind to think very logically, which is useful if you're into computer programming or any sort of thing that requires very logical thinking.

Describe a piece of local news that you think is interesting.

You should say:

What it is about

When and where you saw/heard the news

Why this piece of news was interesting

And explain how you felt about this news

A piece of news, local news, that I think has interested a lot of people in my city, is the construction of the new art museum and sculpture park on the coast. You see, my city is a famous coastal location, and in recent years there have been a lot of great developments along the coast. The most recent news is the completion of the new art museum, a museum of modern art in fact. I've seen plans for it, and drawings and adverts on TV, and it's been under construction for several years. But the other week I read in the news that it was almost nearing completion and they were preparing for a grand opening event there, with performances, and all the kinds of activities you might expect at the inauguration of a new building, but with a more artistic twist. You see, this museum of modern art will be China's second largest modern art museum. It will have one of the largest collections of modern art from all of the world, across seven huge halls, and fifteen galleries; along with a huge sculpture park along the coast. It's a piece of news that has excited a lot of people in my city, not because we want to spend a lot of time inside looking at modern art, to be honest, but because the whole project has meant that this particular area by the sea will become a very picturesque area of gardens, paths, boardwalks and viewing points, where there will

be lots of restaurants, shops, and even a specialist seaside market. They say that there will be a marina there too, where people can take boat rides out into the sea, small cruise boats, speed boats and hovercrafts to some of the islands. So this is much more than a piece of news about a new museum – it's an entire development project that will make the city so much more exciting for all the family.

Part 3

1. Why do some people care more about local news rather than international news?
Well, international news is really complicated actually, and recently it's a bit depressing, and I never know really what to believe. So, I think a lot of people feel the same as me and prefer to read about local events, new things happening in their town or region, things that have gone on in the area, and plans for the future – like new developments, new enterprises that are opening up, like restaurants, leisure centres, new malls. I think local news tends to be a bit more uplifting and positive and easier to understand and relate to.

2. Why do some people enjoy getting involved in community activities?
I think getting involved in community activities gives people a sense of belonging. They feel part of something, and can also get to know other people who live in the local area. It's always a good thing for people to work on goal-oriented projects with other people. Teamwork is good for the soul, and certainly good for building a stronger sense of community. So, all in all, I think people gain a lot from community activities and projects, and they demonstrate to people how working on something together can give a great sense of achievement.

Describe an article about health that you have read in a magazine or on the internet

You should say:

What it was about

Where you read it

Why you read it

And explain how you felt about it

I read an article about health fairly recently actually. It was all about going to the gym. I paid particular attention to it because I am thinking of starting to go to the gym. The article was all about different types of training that you can do in the gym, to develop different muscles in the body as well as get good cardiovascular exercise for the heart and blood system. I was sort of interested in what it had to say because I don't really know what to do in a gym, or what the best exercise regimen is to suit my needs. I don't really want to develop very strong muscles or anything like that, but I do want to get more fit, more healthy, and develop some strength in my arms and legs. Anyway, I talked about the article I read with a friend of mine, whose English name is Troy. He worked for many years in a gym as a personal trainer, and he said that if you

are serious about getting fit and healthy it's a good idea to get a personal trainer. He also explained that a personal trainer is also a motivator – he or she can help you keep to your routine, push you harder when you need to be motivated, and advise you how best to use the different machines and equipment in the gym so that you don't injure yourself but exercise your body in the best, most effective way possible. So, I thought that the article was fairly useful, but frankly I think that I got better and more useful advice from my friend Troy. Perhaps I could say that the article gave me a good reason to talk to Troy...it inspired me to talk to Troy... So that was the real benefit of my having read this article, actually.

Part 3

1. What type of exercise do people in your country often do?

It depends what types of people you're talking about. People exercise in different ways. Older people often go to the park, do some dancing or use these simple exercise machines in their communities. Young people do all sorts – they go to the gym, they play basketball, football or other competitive sports... other people like to go jogging, or cycling or ... there are lots of popular activities that people do here – pretty much the same as anywhere in the world.

2. Do you think children should receive education in school about keeping fit and healthy and eating healthily?

Well, to some extent yes, I think that they should definitely have physical education classes in school, and as a part of those classes they should also be taught the basics of maintaining a good and healthy diet – and learn about where food comes from and how it's important to avoid eating too many sweets and things like this.

3. What kind of things can the government do to improve health education, awareness and improve the health of the nation in general?

The government should ensure that people have at least a basic education about keeping fit and healthy. Also, they should make sure that factories that make food, as well as farms and places that produce food, adhere very strictly to food safety and hygiene regulations. Frankly, they have been far too relaxed and perhaps a bit corrupt about this in the past, and I am happy to say that this, I think, is changing – but there is still a lot of work to be done and the government should make sure that standards are set and enforced more strictly. The same goes for the standards of air quality. They need to be more strict about this because cities today are too polluted and the long-term effects of this are not good for people.

4. What kind of exercise or physical education do students do in school?

In school kids learn to do some basic gym exercises, they play some football and ball games and they do running. That's pretty much it, really. They don't tend to do a lot of interesting or challenging physical activities in schools where I am from to be honest.

Describe an art or craft activity you have done.

You should say:

When this happened

What you did in the activity

Who you did it with

And explain how you felt about this activity

An art activity that I did that I think is particularly interesting, is pottery. I had never done pottery before, until about a year ago, maybe actually just last summer, my friend Adam, who was a young Swedish student studying at Xi'an Normal University, said that he had found a craft workshop not far from the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, on a street of tea and art shops. I went along with him, thinking it was a bit of a strange idea, but kind of interesting and fun. The workshop was full of potter's wheels, and had a few instructors there. A potter's wheel is basically a kind of seat, attached to a fairly big metal bucket with a metal disc wheel. There is a pipe of running water which you can control to some extent, and you get a huge lump of clay on the wheel. You use your feet to push the pedals which then make the wheel spin around. As the wheel spins around, and you are seated on the little seat in front of it, you can mould the lump of clay into a round shape. That's how you make a vase or a pot or any round vessel. It's pretty hard to explain! Anyway, myself and Adam did this for about an hour or so, with the instructor giving us advice about how to mould the clay, how fast to make the wheel go round and things like this. After we had made a round ball, which was almost perfect in form, he taught us how to use our fingers to create a hole in the middle, and then taught us how to use these small metal tools to shape the designs and patterns into the clay. It was pretty difficult to be honest, and the end result was... let's say... a bit amateur. After that, we painted the pots with a clear glaze and they then went into a big oven called a kiln. The kiln cooks and dries the pots until they are completely dry and hard. This takes a couple of days on a slow heat, so we had to go back later in the week to check our pots. I felt that this was really fun and I'd like to do it again and develop a bit more skill and try to get better results.

Part 3

1. What kinds of handicrafts are popular in China?

Handicrafts are especially popular at craft markets and at tourist sights. Depending on which region of the country or which town you might be in, you'll see different arts and crafts famous in that area. But ones that are common all over the country are calligraphy works, jade jewelry and figurines, traditional paintings, ink drawings, paper cuts, and shadow puppets made of leather... painted... and... well, a lot of different things really. These kind of things, today, are mainly of interest to tourists, as souvenirs, but there are also a growing number of Chinese people who are looking back to the traditional arts with interest, and collecting ancient and traditional crafts and antiques.

2. Do many people make handicrafts in China?

I think there are still a lot of people in China that make crafts, yes. I'd say there were two types of craftsmen: those that make lesser quality crafts for souvenir and tourist markets, and those that make high quality traditional crafts for discerning Chinese people who are collectors or enthusiasts. An example of the latter would be the people who make the Cha zhou teapots, purple clay teapots. There is a fine art to making a perfectly crafted Chinese clay teapot, and the people that make them pass down this skill from generation to generation. People who genuinely love and understand Chinese tea will see the value of a good teapot, not just as an aesthetically beautiful item, but a functional one, and part of the beauty of preparing and making Chinese tea in the proper fashion.

3. Why do many people send handicrafts as gifts?

To be honest, I don't think many people do send handicrafts to people as gifts these days. At least barely anyone I know. People I know tend to send people more modern things that they've bought online, technology stuff, fashion accessories, things like this. I guess some people might send jewellery or things like this, perhaps items that have been given to them by other family members. I'm unsure, but most people, unless especially into these kinds of crafts, don't really send them to others as gifts.

Place:

- ◆ Describe a place in the countryside that you visited.
- ◆ Describe a city that you think is interesting
- ◆ Describe an apartment or a house that you would like to have.
- ◆ Describe a cafe you like to visit.
- ◆ Describe a place you visited on vacation.
- ◆ Describe a company that employs a lot of staff in your city.
- ◆ Describe a street market you have been to.

Describe a place in the countryside that you visited.

You should say:

Where it is

When you visited this place

What you did there

And explain how you feel about this place

A place in the countryside I visited was an old castle when I was on holiday in Germany. I can't remember the name of the castle right now, but it's pretty famous. It is located on a hill in south east Germany on the edge of a vast, dense forest. I visited the place two summers ago with my friends from work – it was a company trip where the company subsidise a group trip. Four of us went together and stayed in that area and went to various places sightseeing. This castle was really impressive. A huge stone structure with pointed towers and battlements. Inside it was made to look exactly like it would have done in its time. Large rooms with impressive old wooden furniture, rugs and tapestries and suits of armour and swords on the walls. It was magnificent. it reminded me of fantasy novels and films about princesses and knights that I had seen when I was a kid. It was really amazingly decorated inside, too, and there were all sorts of fun family activities that visitors could get involved in – like candle-making, dressing up in traditional medieval costumes and having your photo taken – things like this. Oh, and I forgot to mention: there were incredible views of the hills, fields and forest from the top floors of the castle. So, it was a wonderful trip to the countryside that I'll never forget.

Part 3

1. Is there anything special about the countryside in China?

Yes, the Chinese countryside is quite unique in that it's so large and offers so much variation. There are mountains, plains, grasslands, sunny beaches, tropical zones... pretty much everything nature has to offer can be found in the different regions of China. I'd say this is quite special, as it means that for domestic tourism people have a huge range of options to choose from if they like to enjoy nature.

2. What do people usually do when going to the countryside?

Again, it really depends on people's personalities and interests. Because there is such variety, there's something to cater for every taste. Steep mountains to climb for hikers, beaches for those that like the seaside, tea plantations and even tropical jungle-like areas. So, imagine the range of activities you can do: relaxing, exercising, taking photographs, getting involved in different sports. All sorts.

3. Do you think more people will live in the countryside in the future?

I think that as cities expand and perhaps become more overcrowded, and as facilities improve and develop in the countryside, more and more people will move to the country towns. Although, at the moment, most people prefer to live in cities. I think this is partially because of the stigma that the countryside is poorer, and partially because there are so few job opportunities in country towns. Cities, therefore are currently the most attractive places to live. But I think this might change as country towns grow and develop more.

Describe a city that you think is interesting.

You should say:

Where it is

What the city is famous for

Why it is interesting

And explain how you feel about it

The city I think that is really interesting is Paris. Paris is in Europe and is the capital of France. Paris has a reputation for being a very romantic city and features in many films and songs. It's remarkably famous for its architecture, including the famous cathedral of Notre Dame, which sadly suffered a great fire in April 2019. I visited Paris a few years ago in Summer with a few friends from my university. We stayed in the north of the city, which is a little less touristy than the central areas, but still very interesting – near the area of Montmartre. Paris is most famous for the Eiffel Tower, built in 1889 from iron. It's an iconic structure dominating the city skyline, and you can even go to the top via thousands of steps, or in an elevator. There is also a restaurant not far from the top offering stunning views of the city. I, however, really like the area of San Michel, in the centre of the city. It is the historic quarter and is often called the Latin Quarter of the city. It's a rather fascinating district of cobbled streets and fantastic architecture, including the famous fountain – whose name I forget! There are all sorts of museums in Paris and art galleries. I think my favourite art gallery is the centre Pompidou, a gallery of modern art. I love Paris, and I enjoy the culture and history which constantly surrounds you when you wander the streets. It makes me feel excited and inspired.

Part 3

1. What advantages can tourism bring to a city?

Tourism brings jobs, money and development to cities. As cities attract more visitors,

consumerism increases, and more money can be generated to make cities more attractive and more appealing. In this regard, the house prices increase, the area becomes more affluent, and people ultimately can live better and with better infrastructure.

2. Why do some young people like to live in cities?

Most young people prefer to live in cities than in country towns. This is mainly because cities are where all the good jobs are, all the career opportunities, and offer a lot more in terms of entertainment and leisure. Cities also become centres of finance and centres of culture.

3. Do most elderly people live in the city or in the countryside?

I'm not sure to be honest. I think there are a lot of elderly people both in the countryside and in cities. It really depends on where they grew up. There are, indeed, a lot of older people in the countryside, because in recent generations younger people in my country have migrated to the cities, leaving a substantial amount of older people in their original country towns.

4. Do you think well-developed tourism will have negative effects on local people?

Tourism can indeed have negative impacts on an area as well as positive ones. The impact of a heavy flow of tourists to an area can mean that local culture is destroyed or commercialised in favour of fancy developments. Locals can find they are living in a much more expensive area, with much higher costs. And for those that do not want to sell their houses, they find themselves with a higher cost of living, in a place that is much busier and more crowded than before.

Describe an apartment or a house that you would like to have.

You should say:

What it is like

Where it would be

Why you would like to have such kind of place

And explain how you feel about the place

I'm going to talk about my dream house which would be a one-level home close to the seashore. When you sit outside on the back porch you can hear the ocean waves and the seagulls. It would be very relaxing.

Speaking of the reasons I think the building would be perfect, well, the exterior of the house would be made of light-colored reddish brick with some beautiful stonework around the entry. The garage would be large enough for two cars and also have enough space to have a workbench for projects that are too messy to be done in the house. Also, the garage would have a large sink so we could wash things in it that are too messy for the house sinks.

Other than that, the house would have three bedrooms so we could have overnight guests. The kitchen would be large with plenty of work area. The flooring would be made from wood stained with a light color. The color of the flooring would be dark enough so as not to show every hair or crumb that falls on the ground though. I would like this kind of house because it would be relaxing to live there and easy to maintain.

Part 3

1. Is it expensive to buy an apartment in China?

Yes, it is increasingly expensive to buy an apartment in China. In fact, it's absolutely ridiculous. For the poor quality and size of the homes, it's crazy. The real estate market is hugely in debt because it has been taken advantage of by top officials to make themselves very wealthy by selling off land to developers, who then make themselves wealthy by selling over-priced apartments to people.

2. Do people usually rent or buy an apartment in China? Why?

Most people want to buy an apartment because that means they have something to pass on to their children after they pass away. Also people want to buy apartments because it is seen as a way of investing for the future.

3. What are the differences between the houses that young people and old people like?

It depends on the town or city really. There isn't that much difference in cities, really. I think older and younger people pretty much like the same kinds of places. We like modern apartments because they are usually more reliable, or at least people think they are likely to be.

4. What kinds of factors will influence people to buy an apartment?

The key factors that influence people's purchasing decisions are usually price, location, budget and the quality of the apartment, the facilities in the local area and community, and whether there are good shopping malls, markets or decent schools in the area. These are the main factors that govern people's decisions about where to buy a place.

Describe a cafe you like to visit.

You should say:

Where it is

What kind of food and drinks they serve there

What you do there

And explain why you like to visit this place

A café I'd like to visit is a small, family-owned café in Beijing, not far from the Lama Temple, down a street called Wudaoying. This street is well-known for its more

alternative boutique shops, bars, cafes and restaurants. It's a traditional hutong street in the old part of the city. Anyway, there are quite a few small cafes there and each has an individual and personal style, unlike the big chains and franchises you commonly see all over the city. The particular café I am talking about is run by an artist friend of my friend who is a big lover of cats. Yes, he actually keeps loads of rescue cats and they pretty much live in the café and the back courtyard. The seats in the café are cosy armchairs and comfortable sofas. There are wooden tables, small lampshades and interesting paintings on the walls, and bookshelves tucked in corners and between the seating. It's a bit like a really cosy living room in an old person's house in Europe, I imagine, with, of course, a unique and interesting Chinese flavour – calligraphy books on the shelves and antique Chinese ornaments on display. In terms of the menu, the café provides a wide variety of different fruit teas, coffee, and a few simple, interesting cocktails. There isn't really much food, but the snacks they offer are tasty and well-considered. There are small Japanese-style barbecue snacks, western sandwiches and some light salads. I often go to this cafe with my friend, Joyce, when we feel like being away from the corporate feel of the CBD where we work, away from huge avenues of thundering traffic, and the high-rise buildings of central Beijing. It's a nice kind of escape from all of that. We sit and chat about life, our relationships, our family, our aspirations and our worries. And somehow the atmosphere in that café, and all the cats roaming around freely, always makes us feel more positive about the future.

Part 3

1. What kind of people like to go to a cafe?

All sorts of people nowadays go to cafes. They are hugely popular in China today. Generally, though, I'd say that younger people prefer café culture than older people. And cafes are usually more common in very busy central areas of the city. There has been a boom in recent years in big franchises of cafes, and they are popular with office-workers and commuters, as they provide a place to grab a quick take-away coffee and snacks, or a place to take a break from work without having to go far from the office.

2. Why do young people like studying in a cafe instead of at home?

Cafes can be conducive to studying, at least for some people. I don't think everyone prefers to study in a café, to be honest, but certainly it's popular with a significant amount of young people. I think they like the fact that you can relax in a comfortable environment and watch the world go by, watch other people go about their business, intermittently while studying, taking notes, or reading.

3. Do old people like to drink coffee?

Old people usually stick to their habit of drinking tea. Coffee is most certainly something that only really became popular in China around the early 2000s, and even then, usually with the younger generation. However, I think more and more older people, especially those exposed to a more international lifestyle, are getting into

drinking coffee occasionally, especially if they are out with their families in the city and want to take a rest, but don't want to go to a restaurant.

4. Do Chinese people like to drink coffee?

I think, like I said, a lot of young people like to drink coffee. I think we are quite open-minded and enjoy trying new things, and because coffee in general is fairly new – I mean, it's not really a traditional Chinese thing like tea – we enjoy the novelty, as well as the environment of the cafes. However, not so many people would choose to drink coffee in the home really. It's more of a social thing, or something we might buy to take to the office or before class.

Describe a place you visited on vacation.

You should say:

Where it is

When you went there

What you did there

And explain why you went there

A place that I went to on holiday that left a very lasting impression on me was a trip I made with three friends of mine to a hotel resort in the mountains in south China, not far from the border of Thailand. It was a lovely boutique resort hotel situated near a waterfall in the hills. We went during the summer vacation, and it was incredibly hot, I must say. But that didn't matter so much because we didn't plan on doing any particularly energetic activities or much sightseeing. We went for the relaxing atmosphere, the hotel, the pool and the surrounding countryside. We did a bit of slow hiking in the tropical hills, at a leisurely pace, and the rest of the time we relaxed, enjoyed the spa, had lovely meals and spent time playing card games, chatting and enjoying the luxurious hotel facilities. We had all had a very tiring semester, you see, and finished our final exams, so it was a kind of reward to ourselves for all our hard work, and we didn't want to do anything too tiring. We wanted a bit of self-indulgence and luxury really, in a tropical and exotic setting, without actually going abroad. There were four of us, all good friends, so it was a really nice novelty to spend time together in a place which was distinctly different from the campus we had spent years studying at together. That, in itself, was a great change and made it all the more exciting. I really would like to go to this place again. Despite being so wonderful it was not a very busy place and still maintained a rather boutique and personal feel. I like places like that.

Part 3

1. What are some popular attractions that people like to visit in your country?

China is a huge country and so there is an incredible variety of different places to go and things to see. From golden sandy beaches on Hainan island, to tea plantations in Guangxi, to the more tropical scenery of Yunnan, to the desserts and steppes of

Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. There is almost infinite variety in China, if you have the patience to travel long distances to get from one place to another.

2. Do old people and young people choose different places to go for vacation?

Yes, older people tend to prefer more relaxing places, and younger people are more drawn to places with more life, more vibrance and more activity. At least in general this is the case. Cities are more appealing to young people, who may have more patience and energy for traffic, public transport and the general mayhem of crowded city life. But, recently, there are more and more young people into hiking and going to mountains and exploring areas of natural beauty, too. So, it really depends on personality more than age, to be honest.

3. Do old people and young people have different considerations regarding their travel plans?

Older people tend to want to plan holidays in a less spontaneous and more simple manner, because they don't want the hassle that travel can bring. China is a busy place with a dense population and this means in major transport hubs you often encounter a lot of crowds and noise. Older people are more likely to want to plan holidays that involve going to less busy or noisy places and enjoy doing things at a more calm and leisurely pace.

Describe a company that employs a lot of staff in your city.

You should say:

What it does

How many people it employs

What kind of people work there

And explain how you feel about it

In my city there's a lot of companies that employ a lot of staff, but one that stands out in my mind is Tencent. I think of Tencent because their offices are fairly close to where I work, and if I go into MacDonalds in the mornings I often see lots of Tencent employees queuing up there for a quick breakfast. You see, Tencent made some kind of deal with Macdonalds, that their employees, if they show their badge to the staff, can get some kind of special breakfast deal, or a free breakfast – probably paid for in advance by the company. For this reason there are a number of occasions I've got chatting to Tencent employees in the queue, and learned a bit about the company. The company is huge, and has expanded enormously over the past few years, so I think it must employ tens of thousands of people, as I'm sure you've heard. it employs, as far as I know, all sorts of different types of people, from programmers and tech guys, to marketing people, designers, admin staff, analysts, all sorts. Pretty much like most big technology companies really. I have heard that their staff have to work really long hours, but are treated really well, and have really nice offices and a very comfortable working environment and all sorts of other peripheral benefits (like the MacDonald's

breakfast maybe). I think I would like to work in the company because it's a growing company, it's a company with a future, it's working in a field which is ever-changing and evolving and developing, and I think that's exciting, and also because I am quite into working with ambitious young people, on exciting modern projects.

Part 3

1. Should big companies punished more seriously if they break the law?

I believe so yes, because the impact of a large company breaking the law is much stronger on society than that of a smaller company. Secondly, they can afford to pay the fines, and a huge fine or similar punishment will surely force them into compliance – and not only force the main headquarters, but also force any of the other divisions or branches into compliance too. Some people say that it's especially important to control the activities of huge companies, so that they do not abuse their power and take advantage of people or break laws and get away with it because they're powerful and well-off.

2. Should big companies donate more to charities?

I believe so yes, I think that it's the responsibility of every company, big or small, to donate a certain percentage of their profits to charity or corporate social responsibility initiatives. I think it should be a percentage, really. I don't think it should be a fixed law or obligation, but I think it should be the choice of the company whether to donate, how much to donate and which charities to donate to. However, I think there should be some suggested guidelines as to how much companies should donate. It's a good way for charities to raise funds as well as raising awareness of important causes in the community.

3. What are the advantages of working for big companies?

Working for a big company is much better. It's usually more secure. There are more chances of career development, there is more chance that you'll get to diversify in your work and tasks, and there are more opportunities like going on business trips, travelling with the company, and enjoying extra benefits that smaller companies don't usually offer you.

Describe a street market you have been to.

You should say:

Where it is

When you went there

Why you went there

And explain how you felt about this experience

A street market that I have been to that I really loved was an indoor street market in Chengdu. Though it was indoors, the reason I call it a street market is because it was built to look like an old Sichuan town street. It was amazing actually, and featured all sorts of stalls selling local produce, souvenirs, snacks and there were also eateries too.

The whole indoor ‘market area’ was divided into different sections, you see: a vegetable market, a meat market, a fish market, then a crafts market, a small antique market section, then a street lined with restaurants that specialized in local snacks and famous Sichuan dishes. There was also an area where there were small performances – people dressed in local costumes and playing instruments and performing skits. It was fantastic really, and it isn’t just a tourist site, it’s a great market that the locals also use, at least the locals that live in that central area of that part of the city. I enjoy the fact that in my city the local governments have spent time and money to design and create these kinds of cultural spaces, which also have a very practical function. Usually street markets are a lot more rough and dirty and not very organized, so this one in Chengdu was especially nice, and I felt I had experienced the real flavor of what old time Chengdu might have been like.

Part 3

1. Do you think small markets will disappear in the future?
I don’t think so. Larger markets, and more dirty and unclean markets have indeed been closed down by the government in recent years, as part of hygiene and urban planning initiatives. However, now we still see a lot of smaller, much nicer and much more organized markets springing up in designated areas of cities. So, I think that better and well-managed markets will continue to grow, and some of the sprawling rougher markets will continue to get closed down.
2. What factors do people consider before they decide to buy something?
Before buying something there are a number of key things a person might consider. Firstly, whether they really need the item they are looking at, or whether it’s just a whim. Secondly, they might consider which brand is the better quality, compared to their personal budget, how much they are prepared to pay. And thirdly, the design and look of the item, whether it suits them. For example, if it’s a clothing accessory, they’d consider if it matches the kinds of colours and clothes they usually wear. These kinds of things.
3. Why do some people prefer to buy things online?
Online purchasing is the most popular way of buying things where I’m from. Everyone does it. It’s quicker, it’s easier, you can choose the things you want in the comfort of your own home, on your phone. They get delivered to you sometimes the same day or within a few days, and it’s just all-round more convenient.

Event:

- ◆ Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone.
- ◆ Describe an occasion when you had a special cake.
- ◆ Describe a lesson that impressed you a lot.
- ◆ Describe a time you visited a new place.
- ◆ Describe a happy event you organized.
- ◆ Describe a long walk you have been on.
- ◆ Describe a time when you waited for something special to happen.
- ◆ Describe a bicycle/motorcycle/car trip you would like to go.
- ◆ Describe a good service you received.
- ◆ Describe a time when you were friendly to someone you didn't like.
- ◆ Describe a time when you got up early.
- ◆ Describe an activity you usually do that wastes your time.
- ◆ Describe a time when you felt proud of a family member.
- ◆ Describe a time when you moved to a new place/home.
- ◆ Describe a time when you tried something difficult and had a positive result.
- ◆ Describe an occasion when you were not allowed to use your mobile phone.
- ◆ Describe a time when you had an argument with a friend.
- ◆ Describe a time when you saw something interesting on social media.
- ◆ Describe a time when you gave a piece of advice to another person.

Describe an interesting conversation you had with someone.

You should say:

When it was

Who you had it with

What you talked about

And explain why you think it was interesting

An interesting conversation that really sticks in my mind is one I had with a student in Beijing Language and Culture University last year. It was with a Tunisian student who was studying Chinese there. We met in the Muslim cafeteria on campus while waiting in the queue for food. We started chatting, because we were waiting quite a long time for them to finish baking some naan bread, and I was complaining a little bit. He told me it was good to be a bit more patient, and then we started to talk about the similarities and differences between Muslim food in China and in other Islamic countries like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Lebanon, and Turkey too. He had travelled quite a lot in the Muslim world as well as in the West and Asia. So, he had some really interesting perspectives on how different nationalities think and feel about things – not just food, but cultural and political issues as well. We talked for a long time and ended up eating together. Most of the time I listened to the interesting experiences he had had, and asked him questions about Tunisia, the family there, the role of religion in society, and the education system. He came from a family of

diplomats and alongside Chinese language studies he was studying International Relations, which is one of the reasons why I think he had such a knowledge and interest in cultures, societies and political systems from different countries. We became friends shortly after this and have been quite good friends ever since.

Part 3

1. When do children normally begin to form their own views?

I think children start to have their own views and opinions and ideas around the age of 3 or 4 years old. Toddlers absorb a lot more than we think they do, and learn very fast, and by the age of 5 years old they have really quite strong ideas about things they like or dislike, things they want to do and things they hate doing.

2. What do young people usually talk about?

Young people talk about all sorts of things. It totally depends on the kind of young people we're talking about, their social backgrounds, their educational backgrounds, their personalities and their family backgrounds – even the place they come from. If you come from a small town you find people talk more about local gossip and small circles of family friends; if you come from a big city you are perhaps more likely to have been exposed to more international ways of thinking and you might talk about wider issues beyond just very local gossip. So, it really depends. Beyond this, popular topics are things like celebrities, the latest movies, family issues, studies and the pressure of finding a decent career, or love and relationships and the struggles of trying to get along with their romantic partners. Things like this are pretty universal really amongst the youth

3. In what industries do you think communication is a necessary skill?

In most industries a level of communication is essential. However, jobs that require more advanced levels of communication might be those related to law, education, diplomacy and international relations... and perhaps to some extent HR and marketing... Jobs that consist of working a lot with a range of different people and negotiating sometimes subtle and complex issues.

Describe an occasion when you had a special cake.

You should say:

When this happened

Where this happened

Who gave you the cake

And explain why it was a special cake

Well, there's a few occasions I've had a special cake – almost every birthday over the past ten or fifteen years. You see, we have a strong tradition of giving people cakes on their birthdays, and in more recent years there's a lot of fantastic and quite amazing cake companies in China. The last time I had a fantastic cake was my last birthday. I

had a dinner with my girl friends in a Japanese restaurant, and after the dinner they presented a huge box with ribbons tied around it. I opened it and inside was this amazing, tall, peach-coloured cake. The cake was decorated with the most incredible flowers and designs all made from different coloured icing and cream. It was probably the most fancy cake I've ever seen, actually. It's hard to explain or describe, but it must have been done by a real expert in cake design, as it was almost a work of art! The cake came with candles, which we put in it, and I lit them, made a wish – of course, they turned the lights off for my wish – and the whole restaurant joined in as we sang happy birthday. I enjoy this birthday tradition, and I like the fact that everyone seems to follow it each year. Though it becomes a little difficult because when it's your friend's birthday you have to try to find an equally nice cake, or even better cake to surprise them with! So, it can get quite hard to keep up!

Part 3

1. What's the difference between special food in China and foreign countries?

Well, that's quite a difficult question to answer, really. Special food is different in all countries. And China is a huge country, with many different types of cuisine, which all differ from each other, and all have their more or less 'special' dishes. So, it's not really easy to say, in short, what the main differences are between special food in China and in other countries. Most Chinese people think their food is the best in the world – so – maybe they would say the difference is that Chinese food is simply all way more special than food anywhere else! I'm not sure.

2. Do Chinese people usually cook special food in traditional festivals?

Yes, I would say that every family has a number of dishes that they make for traditional festivals, those are special for those occasions. It's not that they do not eat them at other times of year, but that they make all their favourite special dishes on festivals.

3. Do Chinese families like to eat together during traditional holidays?

Yes, absolutely. It's our main occasion during the Spring Festival really. Chinese love to dine together and have a lot of different dishes to share. And most people invite a lot of family members to the house for festivals, so there's always a huge meal, lots of snacks, wine and conversation. The dinner is in some ways the focal point of the festival.

4. Why do people spend more on special food on special occasions?

People like to be generous and celebrate their lives on special occasions, and so they always buy all the best foods and wines and fruits. It's quite normal, I think everywhere in the world, that festivals are special and therefore feature all the best things that a family can afford. It marks the occasion and sets it apart from normal everyday life.

Describe a lesson that impressed you a lot.

You should say:

What the lesson was about

Where you took the lesson

What you did in the lesson

And explain why it impressed you a lot

A lesson that I remember well that impressed me a lot was when a visiting art teacher came into school to teach us about silk screen printing. I found this really fascinating. It's quite a traditional style of textile printing that consists of transferring your pattern on screens of fine silk mesh, one screen for each separate colour, and then placing the screens down one by one onto paper and rubbing paint across the silk screen. The paint goes onto the paper in the shape of the design you've put into it, and it produces quite a unique result. It's quite hard to explain actually... Anyway, the teacher was an eccentric woman in her fifties with a very engaging and inspiring manner. She was very good at taking us through the initial steps of setting up our screens and preparing for printing. She made even the fiddliest and potentially boring aspects of the process seem really interesting. She began by showing us a PowerPoint featuring some famous paintings and works of art that have been made with the screen-printing method. And she showed us some examples of her own work – pictures of landscapes, buildings and abstract designs. Then she took us through all the steps, in pairs, of how to prepare our own screens, designs, and start printing. The lesson was a long one.... basically, almost a whole day, and was several hours broken down over several classes really. By the end of the day we had all learned a lot, and most of us had produced some really impressive pieces of artwork that we would never have imagined we were capable of. I felt really good about this lesson... this workshop... and was proud to be in a school where they arranged such lessons by visiting artists.

Part 3

1. Which can help you remember things better, words or photos?

Oh, it depends on the person, to be honest. Some people need visual cues to remember things, and other people have a great memory for words. Our minds all work differently. I, for example, always remember people's words, and have a poor memory for photos and images, whereas I think that a lot of people are the opposite, and remember photos and visual imagery a lot more clearly than words.

2. Why do some people have better memory?

Some people have an amazing ability to remember even the smallest of details, and others forget things very easily. I am not sure why. I think in part this can be genetic – some people are simply born with a better memory than others. In part I also think it is one's mental disposition – some people are more easily distracted and do not concentrate as well as others, and they are more likely to forget things, as they've not been paying as much attention.

3. Can technology help people remember things better? How?

Technology, of course, does a lot of work for us. We have calendars on our phones, with alerts, we have all sorts of apps that help us organise things, plan things, write things down, recall things. There's a host of features on computers and phones today that help us do things by remembering things for us, basically. Technology helps remember things for us, while we can focus on the truly creative and innovative side of things. That's one way to look at it, anyway.

Describe a time you visited a new place.

You should say:

Where it is

When you went there

Why you went there

And explain how you feel about the place

A new place that I remember quite clearly that I visited was a small cinema in the centre of Sanlitun, a commercial area in Beijing. It's located on the top floor of a shopping centre. It's called Cinker Pictures, and it's a very unique place! It is designed in the style of an old New York art Deco cinema, with a cocktail bar and a restaurant, with deep red walls, and tasteful decorations. I went there with a friend of mine one Saturday night, for dinner and to see an old film – Roman Holiday. My friend actually invited me – well, to be honest it was a kind of romantic date. It was truly fantastic actually, I absolutely loved the experience. We had cocktails on arrival, a light meal, and then were ushered at the appointed time, into the small cinema that he had booked. It was a cinema designed for intimacy with dark red sofas, and a screen just for us! I did not think a cinema like that existed. It was probably the best cinema experience I have ever had. It was very personal, and quite a sophisticated environment to be watching an old film in. I would certainly like to go there again if I had the chance, even though it's a little expensive.

Part 3

1. Which one do you prefer, living in a city or only visiting it as a tourist?

I would ideally prefer to live in a city, but a small city. Cities are more exciting places to live in than country locations, and there's a lot more in terms of entertainment and leisure options, as well, of course, as career opportunities. I would much prefer to live in a city, but I am not really keen on huge cities or capitals – I would much prefer to live in a slightly smaller city. The countryside in my country is too remote and there simply isn't enough going on in most country towns to keep me inspired – or enable me to develop a career.

2. How do children react when they go to a new school for the first time?

Children are often quite nervous when they go to school for the first time. They are understandably shy, reserved about meeting their new classmates and teachers, and sometimes intimidated by being in a place with so many people they do not know. Most of the time kids get used to these experiences and make friends quite quickly though, especially if the environment is quite positive and welcoming.

3. How do young and old people react differently to new things?

Young people are usually more energetic and excited about new things than older people. Older people are not so excited about fresh, new things, possibly because they have experienced many new things in their lives and do not welcome new experiences as much. Older people might prefer to be in situations they are more familiar with, and comfortable. Whereas younger people still have a thirst for life and discovery.

4. Why do some people want to go to college that are far away from home?

Most of the time people want to go to college in a place which has a lot of opportunities, both academically and in terms of entertainment and social life. Cities are often the places where most good universities in my country are located, and so the majority of younger people will choose to live in a city, and go to university there. There are not many universities in towns in China. In addition, it is usually the case, unless you live in a capital city, that most young people want to go to one of the universities in the capital. So they will leave home at that time. China is quite big, so everywhere is quite far away!

Describe a happy event you organized.

You should say:

What the event was

When you had it

Who helped you to organize it

And explain how you feel about it

A really happy event that I organized was a birthday celebration for my friend and classmate, Jean. It was going to be a surprise party, but that was too hard to arrange, as she shared a dorm with us and she would catch on while we were planning it and buying things for it. So, we discussed the birthday idea with her, and told her we would plan it... She seemed quite touched with that. Also, we all wanted a good excuse to have some fun. We didn't just have a party – we made a whole day of it. We arranged to go to a theme park, Happy Valley, outside the city, for about 5 hours. Then we had a dinner in a fantastic hot pot restaurant in the city, then we went to a cocktail bar, and then we all went to KTV! So, we had a really action-packed day. At the dinner we presented her with a great birthday cake that we had bought online from a specialist cake-making company. We also gave her gifts at the dinner. At the cocktail bar we got the bartender to prepare special drinks for her and give us all a group deal. And at KTV we made sure that we selected all the songs she liked. It was a very tiring

day, and took some organization and planning, but all turned out well in the end. We had a fantastic time. I and my friend Mary were the main organisers, but everyone helped a little bit, and another friend, Mike, organized the minibus from place to place throughout the day, so we could all travel together. It was a truly amazing day and I think the best birthday jean has had in a long time.

Part 3

1. How can parents help children to become organized?

Parents can start teaching kids to be organized at quite a young age. They can get them to clear their toys away in an orderly fashion, fold their clothes after taking them off... and teach them where things go in the house and how to put things back properly after use. These are the first things you might try to start teaching a toddler. And as the children grow up, they should teach them more about time-keeping and scheduling tasks.

2. On what occasions do people to be organized?

People need to be organized with work, with studies, with household tasks and with responsibilities and things that need to get done for the family. In terms of occasions, people need to be especially organized when they are arranging meetings, planning things like weddings and events, or organizing trips and holidays. These are some examples that spring to mind of when organizational skills are essential.

3. Do people need others' help when organizing things?

Sometimes it's easier to organise something yourself, rather than involve other people. But with other things, it's best to get help from others. It totally depends on the type of things that you need to arrange. You usually need help from others if you are organizing something like an event – a wedding for example, which involves multiple different types of tasks in order for the whole event to go well. If different people are allocated with different tasks in an orderly and clear manner, then this will make the planning and the event itself go smoothly.

Describe a long walk you have been on.

You should say:

When this happened

Where you walked

Who you were with

And explain how you felt about this long walk

A long walk that I once went on was with a friend of mine and his uncle and auntie, outside Dali, in Yunnan province. It was a fantastic walk, and took us through country villages, fields, plantations, hills, and over rivers and through woodlands. It was a truly amazing walk. We followed a map that was in a guidebook that I borrowed from the guest house we were staying at in town. We went on this trip because my friend's

uncle and auntie are huge photography fans, and they often go on holiday to picturesque places of natural and historic interest in China, and spend their time taking photographs. They're members of a photography club in Shanghai – they're a very arty, creative family with lots of cultural interests. Anyway, my friend had invited me along on this trip with them, and from beginning to end it was absolutely fascinating. And the long walk we went on was probably the most interesting part, to me. It was the best part because I felt that I saw so many different things, and in the villages we passed by we met quite a few locals who were incredibly welcoming, introduced us to their homes and families, offered us food and snacks, and gave us directions. The warmth of the country folk in Yunnan is really amazing and rather touching. So, all in all, this is the one long walk that really stands out in my memory very strongly.

Part 3

1. Do women have more leisure time than men do?

It totally depends. That's a bit of a generalization! Some women do, others don't. Some women do all the house work, while their men go off to work all day. Very rich women may have a lot more leisure time, perhaps. I really can't say to be honest – it depends on a lot of things: family background, income, how much wealth or property they have, which country they are from and what the social customs may be... all sorts of factors are involved in such things.

2. Is leisure time important to everyone?

Leisure time is very important to everyone, as it gives us all a chance to relax, charge our batteries, give mind and body a good rest, and save energy for the tasks, duties and responsibilities, or get exercise, engage in sports, social activities – and forget about the world of work and study! Some people need more rest or leisure time than others. Some people need more social time or physical activities than others. Everyone has a different idea of what 'leisure' really is, and varying needs.

3. What are the differences between the outdoor activities children did in the past and now?

In the past children were less afraid to get dirty, and play outdoors – and their parents were less worried about these things too! Today, it appears that children are coddled much more than in the past, and outdoor activities are a lot more controlled, take place in more modern sports centres, and involve a lot more equipment and, in my opinion, unnecessary fashion accessories. In my childhood, kids would have fun kicking a ball around in the mud in raining winter weather, but today it seems a lot of children are given specialist sport lessons, play basketball on professional courts, and must wear the latest brand sports clothes! That's my impression anyway!

Describe a time when you waited for something special to happen.

You should say:

What you waited for

Where you waited

87/107 Why it was special

And explain how you felt while you were waiting

A time I remember waiting, actually for quite a long time, for something special to happen, was when my friends and I arranged a surprise birthday party for another friend. It's really fun arranging a surprise party. We actually rented a room in a bar-restaurant, and decorated it with balloons and happy birthday signs and things like this, and organised with the bar owner to lay on a menu of drinks and snacks. Anyway, because it was a surprise party, we obviously didn't tell him that we had arranged all this. One of us simply sent him a message and asked if he'd like to meet for a drink in that bar, on Saturday night. He replied yes. And they arranged to meet there at 8pm on that Saturday. In reality, all of us were waiting there – about 15 of us in total – all with birthday gifts and streamers and so on. So, Saturday night came and we all waited there... and we waited... and we waited... 8 o'clock came and went... and he still hadn't arrived.... We started to get worried. That one friend who had arranged to meet him, texted him, but no reply.... And we continued to wait.... And then it became 9 o'clock... and still he hadn't replied or turned up. We began to get incredibly concerned. It was very out of character for this friend to be late, let alone ignore a text message. It was very strange. In the end, we found that he had had an accident and had to go to hospital. It was not a serious accident, but that's what had delayed him. And in the accident his mobile phone battery had died and he couldn't receive messages. And that's why we had to wait!

Part 3

1. On what occasions do people usually need to wait?

People usually need to wait when they want to take public transport like buses, trains, and especially taxis. More recently taxis are booked online through apps and sometimes it takes a really long time for drivers to pick up. Another situation in which people routinely wait is when they have a doctor's appointment – they can wait a long time in queues for such appointments, especially in really busy places.

2. Who behave better when waiting, children or adults?

Adults are usually better at waiting. We learn, as we get older, to be more patient about things in life and not expect instant gratification. Kids are much less patient largely because they don't understand the need to wait for things, and want things to happen immediately when they expect something. Patience is a quality which is sometimes very hard to nurture in children, as they have very emotional reactions to circumstances.

3. Do you think waiting is harder now?

It depends. In cities in China, yes, population is dense and there are lots of crowds. It seems that in recent years, I think mainly because of the traffic in my city, I seem to

wait longer and longer for everything. I reckon this is becoming common for pretty much everyone, and instead of getting more patient, I think many people are becoming increasingly less patient the more that they are frustrated by long queues, taxi waits, and all sorts of measures and protocols that are involved in going to different places these days.

Describe a bicycle/motorcycle/car trip you would like to go on.

You should say:

Who you would like to go with

Where you would like to go

When you would like to go

And explain why you would like to go by bicycle/motorcycle/car

I'd like to do a car trip across the USA actually. I've seen in plenty of films that the country is really geared towards road trips and has a history of bike and car road trips actually. I think I'm attracted to this idea for two main reasons: firstly because I speak quite good English and so I think I would be able to talk to people along the way, ask for directions and help if necessary, and chat to the locals at different places we might stop off at along the way; and secondly, because I just love the idea of going on a road trip in a foreign country. Somehow, it's a little more exciting, because you've got that sense of newness, of discovery and adventure when you're abroad. I'd like to go with my best friend, Yaxar, because he's confident, speaks great English, and he's also quite tough and strong, so if we got into trouble, I think he'd be able to deal with pretty much any situation. Also, we share some of the same interests and he's a good conversationalist. I think he'd make a great travelling companion and he'd be reliable and probably a good navigator too. Also, he can drive so we could take it in turns to drive the car. I'd choose to go towards the end of the summer when it's not too hot there but not cold either, so that we could stop in different places, perhaps go hiking or sightseeing and feel quite comfortable. I think going by car with a friend is much better than going to just one place by plane and then staying there. You get to control the trip more, and decide when you want to rest and see a variety of places along the way, as well as change your plans and route if you feel like it. I like the sense of freedom that I think a road trip would offer.

Part 3

1. Which form of vehicle is the most popular in your country? Bikes, cars or motorcycles?

I'd say that cars are the most popular today. At least those are the means of transport that most people would like and aspire to have. A car is really important if you have a family and want to go shopping, or want to get around the city easily. Also, if you want to get out of the city and go on day trips and things like this, a car is more practical than taking a bus or hiring a taxi. So, I'd say they're the most popular.

2. Do you think air pollution comes mostly from mobile vehicles?

Air pollution comes from a few different sources. Motor vehicles contribute to air pollution, most certainly, but actually most of the air pollution we experience comes from factories and coal-powered power stations. These are often located outside cities, but when the weather conditions are not optimal, the smog stays in the air over the cities and towns and causes the air quality to decline considerably. So, motor vehicles are only one contributor to the air problems we experience.

3. Do you think people need to change the way of transportation fundamentally to protect the environment?

Well, in an ideal world yes, but this isn't so simple. People need to get from A to B to go to work and do other things in the city. So, it really depends on the transportation infrastructure that a city has. People can indeed choose public transportation more and more if the options to do so exist. I do think people should be encouraged to take public transport more, though.

4. How are the transportation systems in urban areas and rural areas different?

Urban areas today have quite extensive networks of subways and bus lines and pretty good taxi services. Although there is a lot of traffic in cities, there are also a lot of transport options. However, rural areas are a lot more limited in this regard. Often the buses are older, smaller and run less frequently between towns and villages, and taxi services are scarce.

Describe a good service you received.

You should say:

What the service was

When you received it

Who you were with

And explain how you felt about it

A good service that I received was when I went to an electronics store to repair a tablet that I had purchased some time beforehand. In fact, I'd had the tablet a couple of years so I thought it would already have fallen out of guarantee, but when I visited the store I discovered that I was still entitled to a free service and repair. I was treated with great respect by the service staff, who were attentive to me, listened to my issue with the tablet, and said that they would send it off to their engineering unit to analyse the problem, then get back to me. Within a couple of days, they sent me an email to say that they had repaired the item and it was already in the store for me to collect. I went back to the store, and once again I experienced incredible customer service. One guy even chatted to me and offered me tea while I waited for them to go upstairs to fetch my item. They got it out and demonstrated how it was working again, and I had to sign a couple of papers and that was it. I wasn't charged any money at all for the repair. All in all, I felt really happy with the process, the treatment from the staff and

the result. I would most certainly recommend this brand to anyone, because the after sales service is probably the best I've ever received.

Part 3

1. What do you think of the relationship between companies and customers?

Companies need to maintain a good relationship with customers, especially companies that offer services or are strongly customer-facing. It's always important to maintain trust and foster a good relationship with customers so that your company reputation in the market remains positive. I think that over the years the customer service industry in my country has improved a lot because of better training and better relationships between support staff and customers and clients.

2. As a customer, what kinds of services would you expect to receive from a company?

I would expect to receive good, personable and polite help and advice from the customer service staff. I also expect that they know about the products that they are selling and can give me honest and sound advice about them. I also expect that they take complaints seriously and respond to them in a timely manner.

3. Why should companies react quickly when customers have difficulties?

Companies need to respond to customer problems quickly because otherwise customers will become disillusioned and perhaps even stop dealing with the company and move over to a rival company. It's important in business to treat customers with respect and respond in a timely manner to their issues so that customer retention is maintained.

4. What kinds of jobs involve coping with the public?

There are a whole host of jobs that involve dealing with the public. From hotel receptionists, waiting staff, online help and customer support – there are hundreds of examples – especially as our country has moved more in the direction of developing a stronger service industry.

Describe a time when you were friendly to someone you didn't like.

You should say:

When and where it happened

Who he/she was

Why you didn't like this person

And explain why you were friendly to him/her on that occasion

There're a few times I've had to be friendly to people I don't really like. It's a part of everyday life, really. We have to be diplomatic and friendly with all sorts of different people. However, the time that really sticks in my mind was the time when I was assigned to working on a promotional stall for a student fair in the university hall. I was representing the university sports club and helping try to recruit new members. I

had to be friendly with everyone who approached and asked me questions and try to give a good impression to the new students and their parents. Well, there was one boy and his mother who were incredibly snobby. It's hard to explain, but they were just really rude, superior in attitude, and condescending to me. I felt quite offended by the way they spoke to me. They never used any polite forms when speaking and asked me questions in a demanding way as if I was their slave or servant or something. I remembered what my teachers had said about customer service and being polite and helpful even to people who are rude and standoffish, so I controlled myself and kept my real feelings inside, and responded to this woman and her son with a calm polite attitude. I felt better, afterwards, actually. Sometimes it's better to maintain calm and remain polite and civil, even with very rude people. You know, take the moral high ground. That way you avoid any conflict and you tend to feel better about yourself afterwards, as well as giving a better impression of yourself to other people who might be around looking or listening to the interaction. All in all, I learned that controlling one's emotions and feelings in these kinds of interactions is really important.

Part 3

1. Why do people sometimes have to be friendly with the person they don't like?

People need to learn to be diplomatic in order to work with people and interact with people in public. It's a part of living in a civilized society – we don't achieve much by voicing our real feelings or saying what we think whenever we want. In order that social interactions in public and with people we need to co-operate with at work, to go smoothly, we must be friendly with people we sometimes don't really like or get along with.

2. What are the differences between being friendly and being polite?

Well, being polite is perhaps a bit more formal than being friendly. I'd say that is the main difference. We can be polite without necessarily being particularly friendly or unfriendly. Being friendly means expressing more warmth to someone else. I think that's the main difference, although of course the definitions can overlap.

3. What do you think of people who are always straightforward?

There are times and places to be direct and straightforward. I think that people who are always straightforward may sometimes cause offense to other people. I think it's a good quality to some extent, but also, it's important in life to be able to know when it's best not to be so direct and straightforward.

4. What kinds of people are usually friendly?

Well... all sorts of different people are friendly. But I'd say that people who are more extrovert and confident as well as empathetic tend to be most friendly. That's because they are good at communication and recognizing and relating to other people's feelings. That means they find it easier to reach out to other people and do and say things that make others feel welcome and comfortable.

Describe a time when you got up early.

You should say:

When it was

What you did

Why you got up early

And explain how you felt about it

Oh, there's lots of times when I have had to get up early, but the last time I remember very clearly was when I was on holiday on the Yangtze River on a sort of boat cruise with my school. It was a really cool trip actually, and each day we travelled down the river on the boat, and stopped off at different places along the way. For sightseeing in China, you usually have to get up really early, you see, so every morning they woke us up just after dawn, which was around 5am. I wasn't very happy about this, to be honest, because I hate waking up early, and also because we all sat up late in the bunk beds drinking beer and playing cards, which made it even more difficult to get up early in the morning and go around the villages and temples and places. So, each and every morning on this Yangtze cruise we had to get up at the crack of dawn, and it was quite awful in many ways. However, I must say that once we were up and had had breakfast and got going it wasn't so bad, and there were less tourists at the destinations, because we were often the first to be there! So, all in all, it was probably a good idea that we were made to get up so early, even though we didn't really enjoy it at first. I'm not much of an early bird to be honest, so always find it difficult to get up at 7am, let alone at 5am like on this trip! But, hey, that's often what you have to do on these kind of trips if you want to miss the crowds.

Part 3

1. Do you know anyone who likes to get up early?

I know a lot of people who enjoy getting up early. They're usually older people, actually. My grandparents get up really early, and they go to bed really early too. Also, my friend, John, always gets up early – he's quite young – and he has the habit of sleeping only a short time, but strangely he seems to always be full of energy every morning. So, I suppose some people are just like this!

2. Why do people get up early?

Some people get up early because they enjoy making the most of the day and getting out of bed in the morning. Others have to go to work, so they must get up early – most people, actually. And almost all school children have to get up early, obviously because they have to get dressed and ready for school, then get to school. So, there are a number of fairly typical reasons why people might get up early.

3. What kinds of occasions need people to arrive early?

Well, a lot of important things in life start in the mornings. Like school, work and things like this. There are other occasions when people must arrive early in the morning – like if they have an appointment, an interview, or an important examination. Most of these things are often scheduled in the mornings so that people can go to work afterwards.

4. Why do some people like to stay up late?

Some people enjoy the nights. Nighttime, especially if you live in a big city, is the only time when life seems to calm down, traffic dies down, and the city becomes quieter. I have a number of friends who really enjoy staying up late because they feel this is the only really peaceful time of day in the city – where they can lie and read a book, listen to music, and just feel relaxed and away from the hustle and bustle of daytime life. I can understand this, actually, although I'm not much of a night owl myself. I can see why some people choose night time, and staying up late, to spend time alone at peace.

Describe an activity you usually do that wastes your time.

You should say:

What it is

When you usually do it

Why you do it

And explain why you think it wastes your time

Haha, there is one thing I do a lot that I'm ashamed to say, but it's really a waste of time, if I'm honest. I spend way too much time in bed at night looking through my mobile phone at my WeChat contacts, their moments and photos and chatting with friends on the messages. I have to say that sometimes I wish I did not go to bed with my phone, as I waste a lot of time on this kind of idle activity. Before mobile phones I used to read novels and really enjoyed them. However, now I hardly read at all, and I've become so easily distracted with random conversations with my friends online. I really wish I could control myself more, put my phone away at night, and just turn on the bedside lamp and read a proper book, rather than picking up my phone. I'd say it was a sort of addiction really – I think a lot of people suffer from this these days, too, not just me.

I think that phones were in some ways a quite bad invention because we constantly feel that we are able to contact people at any time of day or night. It's as if we are not totally on our own or free to do other things – like I said, like reading a novel – because we are keen to keep looking at our phones to see if someone has messaged us, or pick up on random silly chats, or catch-up on gossip between friends that we have missed. I think I am going to make a concerted effort to plug my phone in and charge it in another room from now on, so that I can discipline myself to read or do productive and wholesome activities before bed, instead of just sitting and playing around whimsically with my phone.

Part 3

1. How do you balance life and work?

I am pretty good at maintaining a decent work-life balance, actually. Generally, I am a fairly organized person and I'm able to divide working tasks and study tasks from leisure activities by simply structuring my time well. I think that a lot of people manage their time quite poorly, to be honest, perhaps because they are not disciplined enough with themselves and they don't divide up the tasks and duties they have to do, from the free time they have. It's really a case of being organized and strict at the same time, really.

2. Will you continue doing something when you aware that it's a waste of time?

I generally think that yes, I continue doing things even though I'm aware they might be a waste of time – like playing with my mobile phone too much before bed. I think a lot of people are like this, actually. However, I must say that because I'm pretty organized, I never let this habit affect my work, or essential tasks I need to get done. I always get my work done and studies done. It's just that I think that wasting free time isn't a good thing either, and I'd like to spend my free time a little more productively and read more, rather than play about with phone on social apps.

3. What kinds of things make people feel pressured?

People feel pressured in life by all sorts of things. The main things that cause people pressure are work, money and relationships. We have all sorts of expectations of ourselves as well as needs. Also, when in a relationship, the other person also has expectations of us as well, so this increases the pressure we feel, and in today's society this can be quite overwhelming, especially as life is more competitive than before, as well as more expensive – we tend to have higher expectations of ourselves and expectations of others.

4. Why do some people refuse to abide by rules?

Some people are just more unruly than others. This is down to personality really – some people tend to be more conformist, and other people more non-conformist. Some people think that rules are to be followed by the letter, and are almost scared to kick against the established rules, whereas other people are a bit more independent and free-thinking, and feel a bit above abiding by rules. Creative people can be a bit more daring in this sense, I think. People who like to think for themselves more seem to be more attracted to bucking the trend and not conforming.

Describe a time when you felt proud of a family member.

You should say:

When it happened

Who the person is

What the person did

And explain why you felt proud of him/her

A time when I felt really proud of a member of my family was when my elder brother completed a 28 mile marathon around the city. This was a huge achievement, as a marathon is a pretty long run. He gathered a lot of sponsorship from people, and the money went to an animal rescue charity. He trained for months to run the marathon. He didn't just want to walk the distance like some people – he wanted to actually do the best he could and run the whole 28 miles. He's not really much of a sporty person, so I was surprised that he wanted to do this, and put so much effort into the training. I'm also really surprised how well he did. He was in the top 30 people to cross the finish line first – there were hundreds of contestants in the race.

I'm proud of his achievement because I think it's really admirable when a person decides to take on a challenge which comes difficult to them at first. Like I said, he isn't really much of a sporty guy, so it was more challenging for him than some guys who love sports. This is what I admire the most – it's not easy to take on something that doesn't come so easily to you, and I am not sure what motivated him, but he seemed really inspired to run this marathon and to put all his energy and effort into it. So, I admire him for this, and I think this kind of determination is a very good quality in a person. My family and I watched him from various places along the route, and cheered him on as he passed. It inspired me to want to do something similar when I get the chance. I think I will take part in a marathon next time my city hosts one, or a triathlon or something like this. I think people can get very motivated by seeing and supporting the achievements of others. My brother really motivated me both with his attitude and his success in entering and running this marathon.

Part 3

1. When would parents feel proud of their children?

Parents usually feel proud of their children when they make an effort to do something and they perform well in it. Some parents are concerned only with the end result and the achievements – like getting good grades and so on. But other parents are inspired and proud when they see their kids actually put an effort into something. I think we should reward effort more, and encourage children based on their level of effort and diligence more than the results they actually achieve.

2. Should parents reward children? Why and how?

Parents should certainly reward children for effort, yes. But I think they should be careful about how they reward them. I don't think financial rewards or material rewards are always good for children, because this can encourage them to aim for things for materialist reasons. I believe that parents should be careful how they motivate children, and also ensure that they give praise in a way which is encouraging. I think that rewarding children with trips out with the family to interesting places is better than rewarding children with money or physical gifts.

3. Is it good to reward children too often?

Parents and teachers should be moderate in how they reward children. If you reward

children too often, they will take it for granted and stop realizing why they are being rewarded. So, I believe that parents should reward children when they see they have made a real effort, a sacrifice, or struggled to do something which is difficult, and really achieved it. Rewarding kids too often for too many small things can make children turn out too spoilt and they might end up taking things for granted or expecting rewards for the slightest little minor achievement, rather than something they've really put their heart into.

4. On what occasions would adults be proud of themselves?

Adults have plenty of occasions in which they should be proud of themselves. Adult life can be tough, and full of all number of challenges. I think adults should feel good about themselves when they get a new job, perhaps after passing a difficult interview. Adults also should be proud of themselves for social reasons – handling a difficult situation well, for example – solving a dispute between friends or co-workers or solving a family issue through diplomacy and negotiation. These are the kind of things I believe adults should be proud of themselves for.

Describe a time when you moved to a new place/home.

You should say:

When you moved

Where you moved to

Why you moved

And how you felt about it

The time I moved to a new place that I remember really well, and that I didn't like at all, actually, was when I moved to university for the first time, in a new city, Xiamen. Although I loved the city and the university campus was wonderful, I missed home a lot and I couldn't get used to the new environment, and sharing a dorm with other people. At first, I was not only incredibly shy, but simply couldn't cope with the idea of sleeping in a room with other people. Also, the other girls were quite noisy and very messy, and I found this radically different to my life at home. In addition, I couldn't get used to washing clothes myself with the fairly poor facilities there, and doing all these kinds of little chores. And, like I said, the other girls were highly disorganized and didn't seem to care much about these things, so that made domestic life quite unpleasant. I recall spending quite a bit of time on the phone talking to my family and asking them for assurance, especially in the first few weeks. Those first weeks were horrible for me actually. I felt almost at the point of some kind of mental crisis, actually. But, strangely, I made a new friend, a girl I met in the refectory. And the closer I got to my new friend, and the more we shared ideas, the more I began to feel better about my new life, and the more I learned ways to cope with my new living situation, and I started to adapt to life in the dorm, find ways to get along with the other girls, and after a few months, I actually ended up liking my new life quite a lot.

Part 3

1. Why do people need to move to a new home?

People usually need to move to another home when they have a family, and need more space. Another reason is that they may start earning more money and want to move to a more modern or nicer place which is closer to their ideal home. Another reason might be that they get a new job and move to another city, or another area of the same city and want to be close to their workplace.

2. What problems will people face after moving to a new place? How do people solve these problems?

Moving is notoriously stressful. It really is one of the most stressful things people can do, so they say! The kind of problems you might encounter are all the red tape you must go through if you are buying and selling or even renting. Another major hassle is the packing of all your stuff, transporting it and then unpacking it again. Then, of course, there's all the furniture you might need and decorating. There's a lot of different variables to consider when moving house. It's quite stress-inducing.

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in the same place?

The advantages of living in the same place are that you don't get the hassle of moving house! Also, an advantage is that you develop a sense of history and attachment with the place that you live in. This is important and valuable to some people. A key disadvantage might be that you end up getting a bit bored of being in the same place all the time. Variety can be good for people, and give them new motivation and inspiration, so a change sometimes provides a good boost, and a new learning experience. So, if you stay in the same place you might miss out on this aspect.

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

A time when I tried something difficult and the result ended up being really positive, was when I first took part in a public speaking competition in university. I had joined this club – a public speaking club – which was pretty cool actually. We met once a week on a Friday evening in one of the school halls, and listened to famous speeches, talked about them, then each of us gave a speech of our own using techniques we learned from famous speakers. Then there would be a question and answers and review session after the speech. It was a great thing to do, actually, and at first most people were not very confident, but we all saw each other progress in public speaking skills really quickly. This was really motivating, as speaking in public isn't as easy as it looks. There are all sorts of techniques to performing well in public, and crafting

and delivering a powerful speech that engages, captivates and entertains the audience. Anyway, at the end of the first semester there was a public speaking competition. Each person in the club got to prepare a speech in their free time, rehearse it with friends or other club members, then present it before an objective panel of judges made up of some of the senior students and teachers. I spent a long time preparing my speech -about the environment- and I was incredibly nervous on the big day. To be honest, I was so nervous before giving the speech that I thought I would mess it up; but when I eventually got on stage and began, I found that my nerves disappeared... I became controlled, composed and really confident. I didn't speak too quickly, or too slowly – my delivery was perfect actually. Even if I say so myself! And in the end, I got first prize! Yes, I actually came first. I couldn't believe it! So, that was my experience of a time that I tried hard at something and got a really positive result that I still feel quite proud of.

Part 3

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

Describe an occasion when you were not allowed to use your mobile phone.

You should say:

When it was

Where it was

99W1107 you were not allowed to use your mobile phone

And explain how you felt about it

Haha, I remember quite a few occasions in which I was not permitted to use a mobile phone, but the last time was in hospital a few weeks ago. I had to have my elbow X-rayed because I had fallen over on an incredibly slippery floor tile outside after it had snowed one morning. Initially, I didn't think I'd done much harm – it hurt a little bit, and after 24 hours a dark bruise appeared, but I didn't think it was anything too serious, so I didn't go to the doctors or the hospital. Although the bruise had gone away after a few days, the aching feeling in the arm continued, as well as a swelling under the skin at the point of the elbow. So, that's the reason I decided, eventually, perhaps a bit too late, that I should go to the local hospital for a proper check. The doctor said it seemed possible I had fractured the elbow, and ordered me to take an X-ray. Well, when you go into the X-ray room you are not allowed to carry your mobile phone for safety reasons - something related to the radiation that comes from the X-ray machine. You have to leave your phone outside of the room. I was in there for about 30 minutes. So, during that time I was not allowed to carry my phone. I didn't really mind not having my phone with me to be honest – it's quite nice to be relieved from it - relieved from feeling obliged to read and respond to messages from friends and colleagues.

Another recent occasion was when I did my speaking examination. Like the one I'm doing now! It was about a month ago. All the candidates had to leave their phones with the IELTS supervisor and security personnel before going into the waiting room and signing in to the test centre. This is for security reasons - to make sure candidates don't take audio recordings of the speaking tests, or so that their phones don't go off and disturb the test. So, most reasons we are not allowed to use our phones are in situations when there is a security or safety concern.

Part3

1. How do young and old people use mobile phones differently?

Young people today seem addicted to staring at their phones, frankly. I think this is a key difference. Although, I must say that older people are increasingly doing this too, nowadays. Though I think young people play more games, voice-chat more, and get involved in more conversations with friends on their mobile phones than older people. Generally though, as time goes on, I think that young people are older people are developing similar mobile phone habits. Everything today is done via your mobile phone and connected to your phone number, so old people and young people are equally slaves to their phones in my society today.

2. In what occasions are people not allowed to speak loudly?

There are a number of situations in which people are not allowed to speak loudly. The main one that comes to mind is in an examination. In China education is pretty serious and we cannot make a sound during examinations in the examination room, and there

are invigilators, people who walk around the room and make sure that we are not making a noise or cheating or doing anything apart from focusing on the examination we are doing. We have to raise our hand to attract the attention of the invigilator to ask if we want to use the bathroom, or want more paper or a new pen or something like this.

3. Do you think it is necessary to have a law or regulation for using mobile phones? I'm not sure about this or what you mean by this but... In certain places, of course you cannot use your mobile phone. Like on aeroplanes, and in certain areas of hospitals, government buildings, and of course in examinations. But apart from these regulations I do not think there needs to be any laws about how and when we use mobile phones or what we look at on our mobile phones.

4. What would be the most appropriate age for people to own a mobile phone? I think that children shouldn't have mobile phones actually. I think that maybe age 15 or 16 is an acceptable age. Mid-teen years. I think that phones can be a massive distraction and already many adults are too addicted to playing with their phones and paying constant attention to their phones. I don't think this is good, and I think it's actually quite rude. So, I think that young people should be discouraged from having a mobile phone until they are well into their teenage years.

Describe a time when you had an argument with a friend.

You should say:

When it happened

Why you argued

How you resolved this argument

And explain how you felt about this experience

I remember a time last year when I had a bit row with a friend. I still feel a bit bad about it actually. It was actually a really silly disagreement. We had decided to study together at a specific time on the weekend, in the library. He didn't turn up, and I waited for him for ages. Then I went looking for him on campus and saw him playing basketball with some friends. He made a really lame excuse about his phone not being charged up and how he had forgotten the time. I was really angry because, firstly, he is always late for things, secondly, he always seems to get distracted with other interests and social activities when we have an important arrangement, and thirdly, I felt offended that he would give such a terrible excuse for this. I felt insulted to be honest. So, after he had finished his game I found him again and confronted him directly about these three reasons why he upset and annoyed me. He was really defensive about it and instead of apologizing, he came out with another stream of very unbelievable excuses. I felt that he should have simply admitted his faults and told me the truth and apologized and suggested he try better next time to be more reliable. So, the argument went on for a few days, because I would not forgive him. Eventually,

after about a week of not speaking to each other, we had a dinner together, in fact, he invited me, and he made a real effort to apologise and said that he was trying to change this terrible habit of his. I felt better then and forgave him. I learned from this that it's important to be honest and self-critical at times, and this helps to build bridges, especially after falling out with somebody badly.

Part 3

1. On what occasions do people have disagreement?

People often have disagreements because of different expectations or different ideas about what is polite or impolite. I think it's rooted in how we are brought up, what we are used to, and how tolerant we are. It's important in life to be more tolerant of other people, especially as we are all so different in the things we get upset about and are sensitive about.

2. Are people more likely to argue with their friends or family members?

People are most certainly more likely to argue with family members, because of two reasons. Firstly, because we often live with them, and that means there are higher tensions between people. And secondly, because we argue more often with people we are very familiar with. There is an old English saying "familiarity breeds contempt" and I think this is very true, the more familiar you are with people, the more likely it is that you will disagree and voice your disagreements with each other.

3. Do siblings argue with each other?

Yes, siblings often get into all sorts of petty arguments with each other, especially as children. As adults, people also tend to have disagreements with their brothers and sisters as well. Sometimes about serious personal family issues, and other times about normal everyday things. It really depends, but yes, siblings often have different personalities and can often clash about all number of things.

Describe a time when you saw something interesting on social media.

You should say:

When it was

Where you saw it

What you saw

And explain why you think it was interesting

Something I saw in the social media which I thought was interesting recently was a blog about animals that some guy posted. He was a student from Chengdu, I believe, and he had a real passion for wild animals, and knew all about them. He was a member of a society that goes bird watching on the weekends, and he posted a lot of pictures of birds and animals that he had seen in national parks all over China. It was a real hobby of his, and he also wrote about the animals and their habitats, their

breeding habits, eating habits, all sorts. I was really drawn to his level of professionalism, how he presented the information he found, and how he recommended documentaries and other websites where people could learn more about animals. With the rise of social media these days people are able to really indulge and share their passions and interests like never before, and I think this animal-lover's blog is a really good example how one person's passion and interest can be shared online with millions of other interested parties. I first came across him on one of those online blog sites that I subscribe to. I believe he has also just started to do a podcast, too. I am keen on podcasts and I think they're another good way for individuals to have a voice in society and share their thoughts and views on things. It also helps to raise other people's awareness about important issues in the world too. This guy doesn't just teach people about wildlife but also tries to promote environmental initiatives as well. I think the online medium is ideal for promoting these kinds of good causes.

Part 3

1. Why do people like to use social media?

Social media is used by almost everyone today. It's incredible really. Perhaps it's even a bit too pervasive and too much part of our lives. People become hooked on social media, checking their friend's Wechat moments, following their blogs, looking at their photos, comparing fashions, dinners, what other people have done on the weekend. It's like the modern form of gossip – always being connected to the lives of others and seeing what they're doing at every moment of each day. It's really quite incredible on the one hand, and a great way for people to connect, but it's also a bit overwhelming and a bit too much!

2. What kinds of things are popular on social media?

Social media today is used for a lot of promotions, advertising and things like this. People can't help getting sucked into this world, and so I think pretty everything online is attractive and popular to some segment of society or another. People who are into eating out often following people who are promoting or reviewing restaurants, people who are interested in sports follow those with sporting interests, people who are into fashion spend hours looking at fashion posts, photos and articles. There is something for everybody and every interest.

3. What do you think of making friends on social network?

I think it's a double-edged sword really. Social utilities are a great way to connect with new people and make friends, but at the same time they are spaces where we can meet total strangers and get sucked into a world of cheaters and scams. One has to be very careful with social media, to be honest, because you can end up getting into personal contact with some very strange people, who have very strange and often bad intentions. People need to learn to be very discerning with social media and be very careful who they talk to and what they talk about, and never share very personal information with complete strangers that we've only ever met online.

Describe a time when you gave a piece of advice to another person.

You should say:

Who you gave it to

Why this person needed your advice

What advice you gave

And explain how you felt about the result

The time I gave a piece of advice to someone that I remember most clearly, was a time only a few weeks ago. It was to a good friend of mine, probably one of my best friends actually. She had fallen out with a friend of hers, and they had not been speaking for some time, and she was very upset about it. Without going into all the personal details of the fall-out, suffice it to say that it was a pretty big fall-out and the other friend was really upset with her for hurting her feelings and being way too direct about her opinions. My friend talked to me about this and I listened very carefully to the whole story, and had a good think about it before offering any advice. I advised her that she should first make a peace offering – approach the friend, apologize for being a bit insensitive, and offer her a gift, a simple gift of flowers or chocolates, and perhaps an invitation to coffee or a dinner. Then I suggested that she, after apologizing for her part in the disagreement and fall-out, explain her own feelings about the whole thing and try to then establish a mutual understanding. My friend decided to follow my advice. At first, I must admit, she didn't want to because she's quite a proud and stubborn person and does not like to apologize for anything. But I convinced her that some degree of apology is usually a good idea to show the other person you respect them and diffuse some of the negative feelings. I also advised her not to talk or gossip about this to other friends, but keep it quite quiet, so that it doesn't blow more out of proportion. Things often get worse and blow out of proportion if more people talk about it and add their own opinions and feelings and perspectives. So, my friend did follow my advice and the two of them did meet for coffee and the result was very positive. Actually, I think it strengthened their friendship more in the end. I was happy that I had given very considered and sincere advice.

Part 3

1. Is it good to ask advice from strangers online?

It depends what that advice is. There are some kinds of advice which are really good to ask people that you don't know, on online forums or chat groups and things like this. Like, for example, computer issues, or technical issues, or advice on the quality of certain things you might want to buy online. But when it comes to very personal issues, family issues, and matters of the heart, I would say that it's almost always best to seek the advice of someone who is close to you, who knows your personality and personal history.

2. What are the problems if you ask too many people for advice?

If you ask too many people advice on an issue, especially a complicated emotional one, then you can get too many diverse opinions and get more confused. Sometimes it's a better idea to ask one or two close friends or family members and not a whole range of different people. It's a tricky one, in some ways, because it's also good to get a variety of opinions on things, and not just one or two, because people can sometimes surprise you and offer solutions that you'd never thought of or that your close friends and family hadn't thought of. But generally it's best to be a little careful and moderate the amount of people you share your personal problems and dilemmas with.

3. What are the personalities of people whose job is to give advice to others?

There are quite a few jobs related to giving advice. One that instantly springs to mind is that of a counsellor or therapist – someone whose profession is giving advice and listening to your emotions and feelings. The kind of person who is good at giving advice in this kind of profession is usually someone who has a high degree of empathy with other people, and quite a bit of experience at understanding people from different backgrounds and with different types of problems. As well as possessing empathy, this kind of person usually is also quite pragmatic and practical – which is very important in helping people get over personal issues or solving personal problems.

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