



2022 年第三季度口语机经库  
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学雅思  
就上新东方在线」

## ◆ Topic Pool——Part One (2022.09-12)

Study/Work	Hometown	Accommodation	Snacks	Birthday
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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 working 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.

### Snacks

1. What snacks did you eat when you were young?

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

2. Do you often eat snacks now?

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

3. Do you think eating snacks is healthy?

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

### Birthday

1. What do you usually do on your birthday?

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

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

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

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

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

### Social media

1. Do you like social media?

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

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

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

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

No, I don't. Today there are too many rules and regulations governing social media and it's a minefield. I'd prefer to work in a more relaxing field that is not so connected to public information sharing, gossip and stuff like this. I am not a very public-facing kind of person really!

### Names

1. Does your name have a special meaning?

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

2. How do people choose names for their children?

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

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

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

4. Are there any differences between how Chinese name their children now and in



the past?

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

### Weather

1. Do you prefer hot or cold weather?

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

2. Do you prefer dry or wet weather?

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

3. What is the weather like in your hometown?

In my hometown it is hot and very humid for about 6 months of the year. It's unbearable when it's too hot and humid to be honest – it's hard to breathe and you sweat profusely as soon as you leave the house. Like I mentioned before, hot and dry weather is my favourite, with the occasional rain shower.

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

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

### Singing

1. Do you like singing?

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

2. Have you ever learnt how to sing?

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

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

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

for, or in front of anyone, if I could avoid it.

4. Do you think singing can bring happiness to people?

I understand that singing, if you're good enough at it, can make people feel very happy. The person singing as well as those listening. Singing is a great form of musical expression, and there's nothing more lovely than the human voice. So, yes, it can bring happiness for sure.

### Public Transport

1. What kind of public transport do you usually take?

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

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

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

3. Do most people prefer public transport?

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

4. When do you usually take public transport?

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

### Housekeeping and cooking

1. Do you like cooking?

I love cooking. Well, if I have time. Cooking well can sometimes take quite a bit of time and energy, so I mainly enjoy cooking on the weekends, when I don't have to go to work. Especially in winter, I like to cook in winter because we spend less time going outside and more time focusing on things to do in the home.

2. Would you like to learn how to cook?

I already know how to cook! I love cooking. I learnt to cook from my grandmother. She is a really excellent cook and she can cook anything from traditional Chinese dishes to western cakes and pastries. I enjoy cooking all sorts of different foods, and today you can find a lot of recipes online. So, I'd say I am already a pretty decent

cook, and I constantly try to learn new dishes.

3. Who normally does the cooking in your family?

My mother does most of the daily cooking, but my father cooks on occasions or helps out in the kitchen. Both my mother and father are good cooks, and both enjoy cooking, but my father is the one who likes to experiment with different recipes a bit more.

4. Do you think your home is clean and tidy?

I'm not sure. It depends on who you ask! I think I am quite tidy to be honest, but my mother thinks I'm really messy! She's very fastidious, I must say...perhaps way too clean and tidy, actually. My friend, in my view, is completely messy and I've no idea how she can study in her room. I'd say I'm in the middle!

5. Did you do some house cleaning when you were young?

I did a little, but not very much really. I cleaned the house a bit, and my mother encouraged me to help, but I must say that I didn't do a lot and wasn't expected to do much. My mother said she didn't want me to grow up to be a housewife just like her!

6. What housework do you like or dislike?

I dislike washing dirty dishes. That's one thing I hate. I love cooking, and preparing meals for people, but I hate washing up afterwards. I don't mind doing clothes washing, hanging the clothes up to dry in the balcony, or even cleaning the floors. But I hate washing the dishes.

### Geography

1. Have you ever studied geography at school?

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

2. Do you like geography?

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

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

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

## Puzzles

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

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

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

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

3. Do you like doing word puzzles or number puzzles?

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

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

Yes, most certainly. I think old people should do these things to keep their minds active – a lot of research shows that older people remain mentally sharp for longer if they keep engaging their brains in puzzles and activities that involving thinking and solving things.

## Writing

1. Do you write a lot?

I don't write much at all, actually. Now that I've graduated I no longer have to write endless essays and assignments, like I've been used to for the past three or four years. So, I don't write much – I write job application letters, and emails, but I don't have to write a lot at the moment.

2. What do you like to write?

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

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

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

## Technology

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

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

2. What electronic devices have you bought lately?

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

3. Are there any technological devices you want to buy?

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

4. What benefits does technology bring to us?

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

### Morning Routine

1. Do you like to get up early in the mornings?

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

2. What is your morning routine?

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

3. Which one is your favorite morning in the whole week?

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

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

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



### **Feel bored**

1. Do you often feel bored?

I rarely feel bored, actually. I'm always quite busy – I've got my studies, sporting activities and a fairly busy social calendar. I'm a very active person and I never seem to have time for all the things I want to do – so I've certainly no time to get bored.

2. What kinds of things would make you feel bored?

When I feel bored it's usually when I'm commuting and stuck in traffic. I find travelling by car quite frustrating in the big city, and it really affects my mood when there are big traffic jams. So, getting stuck in traffic or moving really slowly in traffic makes me feel both frustrated and bored.

3. What would you do if you feel bored?

If I feel bored I usually get quite annoyed, and that makes me want to talk to friends to get things off my chest. So, usually I will message my friends or give them a call and talk about my feelings, ask them about their day, gossip about daily life... things like this. This kind of thing usually relieves my boredom and frustration temporarily.

### **Meeting places**

1. Where do you usually meet your friends?

I usually meet friends at places where we do sports together. I'm a really sporty person and I like to spend my free time playing basketball and tennis. These are my main hobbies. So, whenever I've got free time and my friends want to play, then we will meet at a local sports club where we have memberships, and play. Sometimes we meet in a café in a mall not far from home or a restaurant.

2. Do you think there are some places suitable for meeting others?

There are a lot of places suitable for meeting up with other people. I mean, it really depends on what kind of things you do – some people meet in bars, or cafés, others, like myself, always meet up at the gym or sports club. Others tend to meet at shopping malls... It really depends.

3. Have the meeting places changed now compared with the past?

I think today, especially in cities, people have a wider range of options of things to do and places to meet. There are more activities and entertainment facilities compared to the past, for example, so often people will meet at those places, according to their hobbies and interests.

### **Computers**

1. In what conditions would you use a computer?

I usually use a computer for work. I used to use a computer for playing games and reading the news, too, but now I do these things on my phone and tablet – so, yes, I only use my computer for work really.



2. When was the first time you used a computer?

I first used a computer when I was in middle school. A friend of mine invited me round to his house and his father had one. I can't remember what type it was now, but it had some fun games. I was very excited about it at the time.

3. What will your life be like without computers?

Well, I can't imagine how I'd write essays and do my studies, but apart from that I think my life would be okay – I do everything else on my phone and tablet.

4. In what conditions would it be difficult for you to use a computer?

It would be hard for me to use a computer while on public transport, or in my grandmother's house in the countryside. You see, I work online mainly, and the internet is terrible in her village.

### **Collect things**

1. Do you collect anything?

I don't collect anything really. I used to collect small plastic figurines when I was a kid – characters from cartoons I watched, in fact. But now, I can't think of anything I collect... nothing really. My brother, however, collects football T-shirts!

2. Are there any things you keep from childhood?

I don't keep much from my childhood to be honest. We have moved house so many times, and always to fairly small flats, that I never really managed to keep or collect much. I have some old family photos and some books – that's about it.

3. Where do you usually keep things you collect?

Well... I don't actually collect anything, but if I were to collect things, I'd keep them in my room. That's what my sister does with her collection of soft toys – she keeps them in her room – some on her bed, carefully arranged, and some in the wardrobe.

### **Watch**

1. Do you wear a watch?

Yes, I wear a watch – I have a smart watch which I wear all the time. I use the watch to set calendar reminders, send short messages, make quick calls and make notes, as well as monitor my health stats and daily steps.

2. Have you ever got a watch as a gift?

Yes, the smart watch that I wear almost all the time – this was a gift from my uncle a few years ago.

3. Why do some people wear expensive watches?

Some people genuinely appreciate a fine, precision-made watch, and others enjoy the status symbol of having an expensive watch. Some people care about both!

## **Reading**

### 1. When do you read books?

I usually read in the evenings, when I'm in bed relaxing before sleep. I read books on my phone most of the time, although I do enjoy reading physical, print books more, really. It's just that in my dorm it's not that convenient to turn the light on at night to read. The light of my phone screen is dimmer and more convenient.

### 2. How often do you buy books?

I read books pretty much all the time. I'm a student, you see, so it's a part of my studies to be constantly reading books, articles, essays and all sorts of stuff related to my studies. So, I buy books fairly frequently from the campus bookshop or online digital books. When I have some free time and like to turn off from academic study, I like to read fantasy novels. However, today there are lots of different ways to get books without actually having to pay for them – you can take them from the library, you can borrow them off friends, or there's other ways to download books online, so in recent years I haven't bought books as much as I used to in the past.

### 3. Have you ever read a novel that has been adapted into a film?

I have yes. I've read Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*, some of the *Lord of the Rings*, and a few others I can't recall off-hand. I've read a few. I enjoy reading the novel first ideally, then watching the film.

### 4. Which one do you prefer, reading books or watching movies?

I think reading books. That's just my preference. I know that today most people prefer to watch films, but I have always been a book person. And it's part of my daily routine, to read in the evenings before sleep.

## **Advertisements**

### 1. What kinds of advertisements do you watch?

I detest adverts and I get annoyed when they come on TV or on apps on my phone. There are all kinds of adverts and I try to ignore them or skip them if I can. There are adverts for pretty much any product or service you can imagine.

### 2. Where can you see advertisements?

Online, on mobile apps, on websites, on the subway, in elevators. There are adverts pretty much everywhere in our lives where we are in commercial places, cities, malls, transport facilities, online, everywhere.

### 3. Have you ever bought something because of its advertisement?

I guess I have subconsciously. That's how advertising works, you get presented with ideas when you see adverts and then they affect the decisions you make. I recall buying lots of meal deals because of adverts I've seen online or in the elevator at work on screens.

4. Do you watch advertisements from the beginning to the end?

Usually not. As I said before, I try to ignore them or skip them. But If I'm standing in the elevator going to the 18th floor, and there is nothing else to look at, I find myself watching the adverts on the TV screens there, over and over again, so I guess I do watch some adverts from beginning to end. That's how the power of advertising works!

### **Evening time**

1. Do you like morning or evening?

Personally, I prefer the morning than the evening. The mornings are the times when I really can focus on my studies the best and my concentration is at its peak. That's mainly because I am someone who sleeps early and wakes up early feeling very refreshed.

2. What do you usually do in the evening?

In the evenings I like to relax, basically. Just rest and listen to music on headphones, or watch a TV show or something like that. I have friends who always study in the evenings. Not me. I like to rest in the evenings. I don't even go out much.

3. Are there any differences between what you do in the evening now and what you did in the past?

Yes, most certainly. When I was a bit younger I would have a much more active social life in the evenings, and I also used to try to study in bed at night too. Now, I have a much more organized life. I always get up early, get things done in the morning and in the day, and rest at night.

### **Old buildings**

1. Have you ever seen some old buildings in your city?

Yes, I've visited quite a few old buildings. I'm a big fan of history and so I enjoy going to the famous sights, but also when my family visit Chengdu to see us, I enjoy taking them to the most famous old examples of architecture and culture.

2. Do you think we should keep old buildings in cities?

We should always strive to preserve our history. History is an important and meaningful part of a country's culture and heritage and it's important to renovate and preserve old buildings.

3. Would you prefer living in an old building or a modern house?

I'd prefer to live in an old building, which has been modernized inside! So, I would like a bit of both! I like the charm of old buildings, but the functionality of modern living!

### **Sitting down**

1. Where is your favorite place to sit?

My favorite place to sit is in the balcony of my home. I have a lot of plants there, a comfortable chair, a small bookshelf. I love my balcony and it's south-facing too, so it gets plenty of sunlight.

2. Do you always sit down for a long time?

I often sit down on my balcony and read or just let my thoughts drift off for a while. I enjoy sitting and resting for quite a long time. I'm not a social person, so in my free time I like to be alone sitting down.

3. Do you feel sleepy after you sit down for a while?

I feel a little sleepy maybe. It depends on whether I'm tired or not. Generally, I sleep quite regular hours, so I don't feel tired until bedtime.

### **The area you live in**

1. Do you like the area that you live in now?

Yes, I like the area where I live. Since I have lived there for a long time it makes me feel comfortable. There is a saying: "Home is where the heart is". My family lives there and we enjoy each other's company so my heart is there. I like the phrase from one old movie: "There's no place like home."

2. How has your area changed in recent years?

Some positives changes are that the pollution is getting better. It was a lot worse a few years ago. Recently, the government has made some changes to the factories nearby you see. This has had a positive effect on the air quality. Some negative changes are: first, there are too many public bikes such as OFO and Mobike. They clog the sidewalks and there isn't enough room for pedestrians to walk sometimes. Secondly, there are not enough taxis. It is very difficult to get a taxi if you are in a hurry or it is raining.

3. Do you know any famous people in your area?

In my district of my city, I don't know any famous people. I think famous people tend to live away from the crowds in China, in places where they will be left alone and not bothered by people or the press.

4. Where do you like to go in your area?

I like to go shopping and hang out with my friends. When the weather is nice, I like to go to the park and enjoy the nature. It makes me feel refreshed. When my friends go with me it is even better.

### **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.

### 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.

5. What kind of sport did you do when you were young?

I did quite a lot of sports, actually. I'm a pretty sporty person and always have been. When I was young I mainly played football and basketball, and took part in school physical education – like ball control games and things like this. I love sport, especially team sports and competitive sports, more so than running or jogging and individual sports, I'd say.

6. What's the most common sport in your country?

For most Chinese, I would say football. People both watch it and play it. For one thing, it's pretty easy to do since all you need is a few players, a ball and a field. Also, the rules are simple, even little kids can handle this. In addition, football really brings people together for fun, and so it is a great way to make friends in a relaxing social atmosphere.

7. Do you like outdoor activities?

Well, if I'm completely honest, no not really, I don't actually enjoy doing things outside, I'm quite a homely person so I tend to prefer staying in, but I know it's



important and healthy to be active and get involved in some outdoor activities, so I do actually do some. I just wouldn't really say I like doing them.

### **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!

### **Talents**

1. Do you have a talent, or something you are good at?

I think I have a few talents, to be honest, but the one I am most proud of is my ability to draw. I'd say I am pretty amazing at drawing, actually. It's something I've always been good at – but I then started having art lessons about 5 years ago and became quite professional.

2. Do you think your talent can be useful for your future work?

That's a good question. Perhaps. Artists don't usually make that much money unless they are really popular and successful – so if I want to become rich, then it's certainly not so useful! However, in terms of career, I could focus on graphic design and illustration – I might be able to combine my talent with a fairly lucrative career that way.

3. Do you think people in your family have the same talent?

My father is an architect, in fact. And he is always sketching buildings as well as doing technical drawings. He's got a great eye for perspective and he introduced me to drawing when I was a child.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

## ◆ Topic Pool——Part Two (2022.09-12)

(蓝色为本季新题, 黑色为保留旧题)

### ◆ People: (11)

Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.

Describe a person who is fashionable.

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

Describe your favorite childhood friend.

Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.

Describe an interesting neighbor.

Describe a family member you want to work with in the future.

Describe a popular/well-known person in your country.

Describe a person you enjoyed talking with.

Describe a person you follow on social media.

Describe a person who makes contribution to the society.

### ◆ Object:

(具体 8)

Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.

Describe an object that you think is beautiful.

Describe a traditional product in your country.

Describe an invention that changed the world.

Describe something you received for free.

Describe a toy you got in your childhood.

Describe a piece of clothing that someone gave to you

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

(抽象 10)

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

Describe a program you like to watch.

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

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

Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.

Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.

Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.

Describe a song or piece of music you like.

Describe a story someone told you and you remember.

Describe a difficult decision you once made.

### ◆ Place: (6)

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

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

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

Describe a quiet place where you like to spend your time.

Describe an important river/lake in your country.

Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).

◆ **Event: (26)**

Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.

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

Describe a time when you received money as a gift.

Describe a disagreement you had with someone.

Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.

Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.

Describe a time when you shared something with others.

Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.

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

Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.

Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.

Describe a time when you used your cellphone to do something important.

Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.

Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.

Describe an occasion when you lost something in a public place.

Describe a contest/competition you would like to participate in.

Describe an important event you celebrated.

Describe a positive change you made in your life.

Describe a special day out that didn't cost you much.

Describe a time when you helped a child.

Describe a time when you were caught in a traffic jam.

Describe a time when you were very busy.

Describe a recent change in life that helps you save a lot of time.

Describe an occasion when you had a special cake.

Describe a time you visited a new place.

Describe a long walk you have been on.

◆ 注：二、三部分具体题卡如下



## ◆ Topic Pool——Part Two & Part Three

### People:

- ◆ Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.
- ◆ Describe a person who is fashionable.
- ◆ Describe a person you know who loves to grow plants (e.g. vegetables/fruits/flowers etc.).
- ◆ Describe your favorite childhood friend.
- ◆ Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.
- ◆ Describe an interesting neighbor.
- ◆ Describe a family member you want to work with in the future.
- ◆ Describe a popular/well-known person in your country.
- ◆ Describe a person you enjoyed talking with.
- ◆ Describe a person you follow on social media.
- ◆ Describe a person who makes contribution to the society.

**Describe a person you know who is from a different culture.**

**You should say:**

**Who he/she is**

**Where he/she is from**

**How you knew him/her**

**And explain how you feel about this person**

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

and not-so-positive aspects of American culture. I feel good about him, though, he's a colleague and friend and after all, we have to accept people have different ways in the global world we live in today.

### **Part 3**

1. How can we get to know people from different cultures better?

Well, one of the most important things is to try to listen to them, ask them questions about their lives, their experiences, their families and their views, and adopt a less judgemental stance. Usually people understand each other better through talking about things, entering into discussion, and even agreeing to disagree – having discussions where we do not share the same viewpoints and being open to this. These are all ways to understand people from other cultural backgrounds.

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity?

The advantages are that a country can leverage more talent and more varied talent. When a place is highly multicultural there will be a greater sharing of different ways of doing things, and different ways of thinking. And, of course, the downside is that there will inevitably arise more conflict, as well. When people with different views mix together, there will be both greater sharing and at the same time greater conflict, as well.

3. How can traditional culture and other cultures coexist?

Well, they certainly can co-exist because they have been co-existing in many countries for thousands of years. People are highly adaptable if they are given the right contexts and environments to live in – a society that encourages diversity and diverse different views and perspectives will enable different cultural elements to co-exist – and though there will be clashes between traditional cultures, modern cultures and different cultures, there will also be a rich co-existence at the same time.

**Describe a person who is fashionable.**

**You should say:**

**Who he/she is**

**What he/she does**

**What kind of clothes he/she wears**

**And explain why you think this person is fashionable**

A person I know who is really fashionable is my friend, James. Actually, I'd say he was a fashion victim. Although he's a good friend of mine, I must say that we don't always see eye to eye about everything. And the one thing that I don't really like that much about him is his obsession with following the latest trends and fashion brands. He's a student, actually. He studies physics in my university. He mainly wears sporty clothes – and recently there are loads of new styles in the 'sports genre' that keep coming out. He seems to always be buying new sneakers, new tops, new hoodies, new

plastic-rubber slip-on sporty sandals... you name it! He also buys bags, bracelets or wrist bands, water bottles and all the kinds of accessories they sell in these stores or online. It's as if he's a huge victim of their advertising campaigns. I mean, it does make him one of the most fashionable people I know – there's no doubt about that – but, personally I think it's quite over the top and I don't see the attraction at all. I've never really worried too much about following fashions; I like to wear what I think looks nice and is comfortable, and I think I have good eye for coordinating clothes, but when it comes to following fashion trends or buying the latest stuff, I'm not that bothered. Anyway, my friend is a cool guy and a nice kind person... so, hey, I guess we all have different interests.

### **Part 3**

1. Are older people as fashionable as young people?

Usually they are not. As a general rule most younger people are more conscious about fashion than older people. Largely this is because of peer pressure and the youthful desire to embrace what they think is attractive and flaunt it. When people get older, they are not so interested in this kind of thing – they are more settled, less competitive about looks and image, and less bothered about what others think about whether they are “trendy” or “with the times” or not. Young people, however, can even get quite obsessed with image – to the point when I think it sometimes gets a little bit over the top.

2. Are women more fashionable than men?

I wouldn't say so. Though, I must say that many women are indeed more concerned about the way they look. Some of this is more certainly social pressure and the nature of society expecting women to be representative of beauty. For these reasons there are also loads more fashion items and accessories aimed at women, than men. Men's fashions are rather limited, boring and uniform really, whereas women's fashions tend to be much more interesting and highly varied.

3. Why is fashion more important to some people?

Some people are more concerned about looks than others really. City people, often, are more concerned about the way they look, and people who hang around in fashionable areas where there is greater pressure to keep up with trends and fashions. So, in general it's a combination of personality and social context – that is what makes some people more concerned about being fashionable than others. As well, of course, as how much income a person has to indulge in spending money on clothes and accessories.

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

**You should say:**

**Who this person is**

**What he/she grows**

**Where he/she grows those vegetable/fruits**

**And explain why he/she enjoys this activity**

A person I know who loves to grow plants is a lady I met in Scotland when I was in university. In fact she was my neighbour. I was living in a shared house in Bruford Road in Edinburgh, and next door lived a fairly old, but very energetic lady, called Nan. Nan was always changing her hair style, always wore long flowing dresses, and was quite moody, but a lovely lady, nevertheless. She had a small front garden and a quite long back garden. In the front garden she had wonderful flower beds of brightly coloured flowers, and a small lawn with a stone bird bath on it. And in the back garden she had bushes and a vegetable patch and some more leafy plants. I don't remember the names of all these plants in English, to be honest! Anyway, she spent quite a bit of time in her garden carefully looking after her plants, tilling the soil around the vegetables, watering them during the dry summer months and pruning the rose bushes. Because that summer I stayed there and spent a lot of time reading in the garden I would talk to her over the low fence which divided our gardens and we became quite good friends. She told me a lot about her love for plants and flowers and it seemed like this was a hobby that really kept her positive and happy in life. She wasn't so into people, or doing social things, but she did enjoy her garden. We chatted a lot that summer, and I think I learned a thing or two from her about how to appreciate nature and the simpler things in life. I think tending to her garden was really good for her mental and physical health, actually.

### **Part 3**

1. What do you think of being a farmer?

What do I think of that job? I'm not sure what I think really... A farmer is an important job in society and there is great worth in working with the land and growing produce and rearing animals for the good of society. I think farmers are very well paid in some countries, and incredibly rich – like in the USA or the UK, and in other countries farmers are the poor ones in society. I don't really know why, exactly... So, it depends where you're a farmer as to whether it's a really fulfilling and respected job or not!

2. Are there many people growing their own vegetables now?

There are more people than in the past yes, I think so. There is a current trend for people in cities to take more interest in the land – and some even have allotments and mini “vegetable farms” outside of the cities – I think they rent a spot of land – I'm unsure how it works. But I have noticed that an increasing amount of young people are interested in this, and I think that's a good thing.

3. Do you think it is good to let kids know how to plant?

Yes, I think that in school they learn these kinds of things. At least I did when I was in school. I also believe that if a family have a balcony or even some kind of garden, then it's important to give the kids an opportunity to grow vegetables, plants and flowers. Things like tomatoes are quite easy to grow in a warm balcony, and children can see a tomato plant growing quite quickly and learn how to take care of it, water it

etc. So, yes, I think it's definitely good to give kids the chance to grow and tend to plants or vegetables in the home.

4. What are the differences between traditional and modern agriculture?

I don't know much about the development of the agricultural industry to be quite honest. All I know is that in the past there were less machines doing the work, and a lot more manual labour involved in farming. There are now a host of modern highly advanced tractors and specialist farming equipment that make all aspects of farming faster and more efficient – obviously, traditionally, these things all had to be done by hand.

**Describe your favorite childhood friend.**

**You should say:**

**Who he/she is**

**Where you met each other**

**What you often did together**

**And explain what made you like him/her**

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

### **Part 3**

1. Why do people lose contact with their friends after graduation?

People lose contact with some friends for a variety of reasons. One reason is that their paths in life diverge and their lives go in different directions. They lose common interests and goals, and life moves on, their ambitions change and their priorities differ. This is not always the case, but sometimes is what happens, often gradually



over time. It's a common reason anyway. Another reason might be that you end up losing your friends' contact details, though today this is less common because people are often connected quite extensively with many friends and friends of friends via various online social media accounts.

## 2. How does modern technology influence friendship?

Modern technology influences friendships by enabling people to keep in touch all the time with friends and families, enabling people to see each other's daily updates on things like WeChat Moments and other social utilities and platforms, and also enabling people to make new friends through online friends and dating sites. Also, there are a lot of online forums where people can post comments, opinions, ideas and share their experiences around specific or general topics and themes – often those that get along or share similar views on these forums, can make friends with each other and then develop those friendships. So, modern technology, mostly internet-based technology and software, has a huge impact on friendships and relationships. From enabling people to nurture existing friendships, to helping people make new friends.

## 3. Do you think people's relationship with friends will change when they get older?

I think that friendships do evolve and change over time, and as we get older we have slightly different relationships with our friends, yes. It really depends. One example might be that as people get older maybe they have less time to spend with friends, and more responsibilities, so they might stay in touch with less friends, or be more selective about the friends they do spend time with. Children tend to play with a wider variety of friends, also because they are less discerning and have less prejudices. As we get older we take stronger likes and dislikes to people and also have less time for people who we might not immediately get along with or share common ground with. Evolving friendships are different too – adults who really want to maintain friendships will make efforts to develop them and be emotionally supportive of friends, and as the years go by, that can make friendships stronger, and last into old age. These are arguably the most valuable friendships.

**Describe a person who inspired you to do something interesting.**

**You should say:**

**Who he/she is**

**How you knew him/her**

**What interesting thing you did**

**And explain how he/she inspired you to do something interesting**

Someone who inspired me to do something that I think is really interesting, is a friend of mine who I met at a local café that I go to to study. She is called Banyan, and she is always in the same café with friends or studying, herself. We became friends one afternoon when she came over to me and just introduced herself. After that day, we talked together almost every time I went there to study, and we ended up doing all



sorts of things together – going for walks, going out to bars, parties, all sorts of fun occasions in the city. She was so inspiring and so much fun – she seemed to be afraid of nothing, and up for anything. Meeting Banyan was a real turning point in my life really. Anyway, one day she introduced me to her yoga teacher – one of her hobbies was a kind of Indian yoga – she does it every Sundays at a local club with a professional teacher. Anyway, she introduced me to the yoga club and I joined. It was great! I loved it. It involves manipulation of the body, which is brilliant exercise, and meditation – which is so good for the mind and the mood. I became really into this yoga and I still do it now, every Sunday. In fact, I've become quite good at it. It takes quite a while at first to get good, and be able to feel comfortable in all the different positions, but when you finally get to grips with that, you end up feeling incredibly elevated by the meditations. So, yes, this is something really interesting I did, and still do, which I think was very inspiring. And that's thanks to my friend, Banyan.

### **Part 3**

1. What qualities make someone a role model?

A good role model should have a number of key qualities, in my opinion. They should be sincere and a person of integrity – that means they should be genuine and not fake. Some famous people are just fake and put on a façade, and care about looks and image and not really connect to people on a deeper, genuine, inner level. I believe that a role model should connect to people in a natural way, set a good example and be a person of some moral standing. These are the most important qualities of a role model in my view.

2. Who can influence children more, parents or teachers?

It depends – parents can be a very strong influence on children, of course, as they live with their parents usually, bring them up, and spend their lives with them. However, teachers also have some influence on kids – teachers can be highly influential, and they are authority figures that children are taught to respect and follow – so teachers have a responsibility to be sincere and help direct children in the right direction in terms of studies and in terms of social behaviour.

3. Why should children learn from role models?

Children will always instinctively look up to people they believe are authority figures or people that are in the limelight – you know, in the news or on TV, or famous people. It's not that children should look up to them, it's the fact that they are likely to, or at least they are likely to be influenced by them. That's really what I think you mean. So, role models, in turn, have a responsibility to behave sincerely and genuinely and with a sense of moral rectitude – so that their influence on younger people can be a positive rather than a negative one. However, I don't believe that they should be fake, or even reveal everything about their private lives, no. I just believe they should present a sincere attitude in public.

**Describe an interesting neighbor.**

You should say:

Who this person is

How you know this person

What he or she does

And explain why you think this person is interesting

The neighbour I find the most interesting is an old man called Mr. Liu. He has lived next door to my grandparents for as long as I can remember. He's a wise, talkative and friendly old man with a lot of interesting stories and insightful pieces of advice. He has a big mop of white hair. He's fairly tall, and always walks with a decorative wooden walking stick with a carved bone handle. Because the weather is really warm most of the year where I come from, I often see him sitting on the wall outside his home reading novels. I sometimes stop and chat to him and he discusses news, history, the stories he has been reading, or talks about his garden. He enjoys gardening and has a small garden at the back of his house. He is almost always seen with a wooden cage with two birds in it. He's one of those older men you sometimes see in my city who take their birds in cages out 'for a walk' and talks to them and feeds them in the sunshine. I think he's a fascinating man and I've got a lot of time for him. I think most people in our street feel the same about him. He's also very helpful to the other neighbours and there was a time I remember quite clearly when an old lady up the road got sick – he made her soup and bread every day and took it round to her. So, he's popular too and nobody has a bad word to say about Mr. Liu.

**Part 3**

1. Do you have a good relationship with your neighbours?

Yes, we have a good relationship with most of our neighbours. But, like a lot of people, I don't think we really have much to do with their neighbours. In modern society today, people are quite estranged from the people who live near them. Everyone keeps a distance and doesn't really associate with them much. It's a shame really. This sense of community has largely been lost, especially in cities.

2. How can we improve our relationships with neighbours?

Generally I think it's a good idea to have a relationship with the people who live near us, and try to keep it on friendly and amicable terms. This can be done by being a little generous, occasionally giving gifts, or sharing food and making a point of stopping to chat when you meet them going in and out of the house.

3. Do you think neighbours are important?

Yes, of course. Everyone needs to feel a sense of community – we are living in a social world, not isolated in bubbles! So, neighbours are a normal and important part of daily life. I think it's a good idea to not be too close to neighbours though – maintain a good friendly relationship but not get so involved in each other's lives or

personal life.

4. Do you think people's relationships with their neighbours today is the same as it was in the past?

No, I think people are way more distant from their neighbours than they were in the past. Today people tend to live in apartment blocks in cities, and usually they don't want to have that much to do with all the other people living next door to them. Sometimes people are even suspicious of each other, to be honest. I think in smaller towns and places in the countryside there is more closeness between neighbours, but it seems that as societies develop and modernize there seems to be more distance between people and those that live around them. I'd say it was a sad, but natural consequence of development.

**Describe a family member you want to work with in the future.**

You should say:

Who he/she is

What he/she does

What kind of work you would like to do with him/her

And explain how you feel about him/her

A family member I would love to work with in future is my uncle. He is fairly young and full of energy and determination. He founded a small furniture business in Chengde, mainly specializing in old and tasteful home furnishings – handmade and certainly more interesting and elegant than most you'll see in the high street. He is a very good businessman with a keen eye for art and culture, so he has combined two skills and interests into a fairly successful business. He also does a certain amount of interior design, and has a small design team consisting of a couple of my cousins and some other employees who studied design in university. So, he is expanding his furniture business to embrace a wider field of interior design and is hoping to get some clients in the hotel industry. I think with my international experience and ability to connect with people from other cultures, and I speak English fairly fluently, I could play a PR or marketing role in my uncle's company, or work with client engagement and sales. I'd love to do this, as I am also quite into artistic pursuits and I believe I have a good eye for design, and would like to learn more about the world of business. Furthermore, I'm a people-person and I enjoy interacting with people and I believe I have a good aptitude for nurturing relationships. I feel that my uncle would be a marvelous person to work with, and I would be very happy to work with him – he's patient and tolerant, but also very focused, ambitious and determined. I think these are great qualities to have if you're going to run your own business successfully.

**Part 3**

1. What kinds of family businesses are common in China?

There's a whole range of different family businesses really – like in any country. I am

not totally sure which types are the most common, though... Well, I think maybe today a popular family business is buying and selling – something that has moved online a lot. Where people are engaged in selling products that they source from huge manufacturers, and make them available to everyday people either online or through stores and shops in their hometowns. This is something that is quite common. A friend of mine had a family who owned a whole chain of restaurants across the country – so in my childhood I knew a few families in the restaurant business – though I am not sure if this is hugely popular, but it certainly was amongst the people I knew. Chinese people love food culture and enjoy eating out, so a popular pastime is going to restaurants, and there are a lot of family restaurants in every town and city.

## 2. Why do people want to do family business?

Family businesses are a lot more personal than working for a big company. And although there can be more stress and pressure on the one hand, on the other hand there can be a greater sense of reward, personal freedom and independence and pleasure. Also, a family business usually means that there are other family members always on hand to help and share the burdens of responsibilities as well. In addition, skills are passed from generation to generation so sometimes it's more comfortable to get involved in your family business than to strike out on your own and craft a career for yourself – it can be a less stressful option for some.

## 3. What are the benefits of working with family members?

It's great to work with family members if you actually respect and get along well with them! I guess that's the same for anyone you may work with really. But, people shouldn't assume that working with family is a good thing, always. It's not if you have tensions and don't see eye to eye. But, if you get along well with them, then the benefits are numerous and include mutual understanding, support, emotional understanding and the sharing of burdens and responsibilities beyond that which is possible with strangers or colleagues in a company. These are the key benefits of working with family.

## 4. Is it easier to get promotion in big companies?

It depends, sometimes it can be harder and sometimes easier. For example, if the company is a very competitive, cutting edge IT company, then it can be really hard to get a decent promotion unless you are at a certain level and have exceptional skills. Also, you might need to foster and maintain a good relationship with your superiors, which isn't always an easy task if you are in a highly competitive environment. So, sometimes you can get ahead faster if you are in a smaller company. It all depends on the type of company, how popular it is, how successful it is and how skilled you are in your job and personal relationships.

**Describe a popular/well-known person in your country.**

You should say:

Who he/she is

What he/she has done

Why he/she is popular

And explain how you feel about him/her

I would like to talk about Ieoh Ming Pei. I am not sure if he is so well known to most Chinese people of the younger generation, but for students of architecture, like myself, he's really famous. He's actually a Chinese-American, but he was born and raised in Shanghai. He was hugely inspired by the traditional Chinese gardens of Suzhou, a city not far from Shanghai, famous for its ornamental gardens and canals. He moved to the United States as a boy and studied in Pennsylvania, but he always referred back to his Chinese heritage in his art and philosophy.

He is really popular amongst those who study architecture or have an interest in the evolution of design and urban planning. China has gone through some interesting periods of urban development over the past thirty or forty years, so it's an interesting field to learn a bit about.

One of I.M Pei's most famous, and globally recognized examples of architecture is the glass pyramid of the Louvre museum in Paris – not many people know that was designed by a Chinese-born architect, actually. He also designed the iconic Kennedy Library, dedicated to president John F. Kennedy, the famous Hancock Tower in Boston, and the Fragrant Hills Hotel just outside Beijing, in China, and don't forget, the Bank of China building in Hong Kong!

So, yes, he's popular in the field for his wide range of style and diversity – he's designed so many different types of buildings in different places, inspired by all sorts of different architectural styles and movements, that he's quite admired the world-over.

Although there are now lots of contemporary famous architects both in the world and in China, I still feel quite inspired by the life and works of I.M.Pei and I think that it's interesting to review the different things he's worked on over a period of more than a whole generation. I find it interesting to read and learn from these iconic characters.

### **Part 3**

1. What kinds of people are popular at work?

The kinds of people that are popular at work are almost always the people who are positive, give a good impression to others, keep their personal emotions a little bit to themselves, and are kind to their co-workers and get their work done without complaining or making a fuss.



2. Are bosses more popular than employees at work?

I wouldn't say that bosses are more popular, as such, but one certainly has to pretend they are. Bosses are bosses, and we always give more outward displays of respect to bosses – we have to show that we admire them, that we follow them, that we are aligned with their visions, goals and projects. So, in that sense, I guess you could say they are more popular, but really it's a kind of obedience that happens in the workplace – we always follow our bosses if we want a nice working life!

3. Which one is important, keeping a good relationship with colleagues or doing well at work?

I think both are equally as important in my opinion. I think that the atmosphere at work is quite important as we have to spend so much time there with colleagues, so I believe that maintaining a good relationship with colleagues, as well as being ambitious and dedicated in one's work, is important. Some people put career success ahead of relationships with colleagues, and maybe they do achieve promotions and other benefits, but personally I believe that one's social dynamics with key colleagues we have to work with on a daily basis, are very important.

4. What benefits can children get if they become popular at school?

Well, it always helps one's self-esteem if one is popular – it boosts your confidence. So, that is one clear benefit of being popular. Also, the more popular you are, the more likely you are to be invited to get involved in different activities, by both teachers and other pupils, so this can broaden your horizons, and further increase your confidence. So, it's a compounding thing really – popularity can be very good for people.

**Describe a person you enjoyed talking with.**

You should say:

Who he/she is

When you talked

What you talked about

And explain why you enjoyed talking with this person

I am a fairly chatty person, so I think I attract people who are talkative and who like sharing their feelings and personal anecdotes about life, so I am often bumping into people who are pretty interesting that I enjoy talking to. I am also pretty extrovert and I go out a lot – I love going to gallery openings, bars, restaurants, events, all sorts – I have friends who work in the media too and I'm training to be a journalist, so you could say that it's part of my job, my career, to be open and talk to people. The one person that really stands out in my mind that I have really enjoyed talking to was a Dutch artist I met in 798 Art District in Beijing. He was a fascinating individual, and he was there for the opening of his art exhibition entitled "Erotic Art of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asia"... Yes, a fairly daring title... And his paintings and sculptures were even more



daring, I can tell you!

When I first arrived at the event, I mingled with the other attendees for a while, grabbed a couple of wines, walked and talked with random people and looked at some of his sculptures and paintings. Everyone had a lot to say about them as they were quite risqué and bold – and, as you might know, Asian people tend to pretend to be reserved and shy about this kind of thing on the surface. As I drank more wine and became more confident I realized that I should try to talk to the artist himself, to get some material for an article for the magazine I was working with. Eventually I managed to corner him by a huge bronze and clay statue of a cubist naked ballet dancer in the far corner. He was an exuberant and flamboyant man, who just didn't stop talking as soon as I introduced myself and said I was working for the college art magazine. He told me all about his life, his travels, and the personal and spiritual motivations behind his art work. He was probably the most fascinating individual I've ever spoken to. We exchanged phone numbers and agreed to meet the following day to talk about his pursuits in more depth. And, well... that's another story!

### Part 3

#### 1. What do young people talk about when they meet up?

Young people talk about all sorts of things, it totally depends on what kinds of young people you're talking about. There are people who are into sport and love talking about their teams, and how they are doing. There are young people who are really into music, and they spend a lot of time chatting and comparing music they have recently discovered or enjoyed. And, of course, there are people who just enjoy random gossip about the news and celebrities. So, anything really!

#### 2. Do you think it is necessary to be honest when talking with friends?

I think in general if you are a relatively honest person you will make more long-term good friends than if you are someone who is not honest. Generally speaking that is. If you are too honest and direct you also run the risk of offending people, so I guess you could say there is a balance between being direct and honest and being diplomatic with friends, depending on the situations you find yourselves in.

#### 3. On what occasions do we need to talk with strangers?

We talk with strangers in shops, when ordering food in restaurants – with the people serving us. These are often strangers, in a way, I suppose. But, other times we may talk to strangers might be at social events like parties when we are introduced to new people and end up chatting and socializing – perhaps even on our first days in a new job or a new university or at conferences, presentations or things like that. It really depends on the lifestyle we have and the situations we find ourselves in. Weddings are also occasions in which we often meet people for the first time and end up chatting to them.

**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 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.

### Object: (具体)

- ◆ Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.
- ◆ Describe an object that you think is beautiful.
- ◆ Describe a traditional product in your country.
- ◆ Describe an invention that changed the world.
- ◆ Describe something you received for free.
- ◆ Describe a toy you got in your childhood.
- ◆ Describe a piece of clothing that someone gave to you
- ◆ Describe a gift you would like to buy for your friend.

Describe a photo you took and you are proud of.

You should say:

When you took it

Where you took it

What is in this photo

And explain why you are proud of it

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

### Part 3

1. Why do some people like to record important things by photos?

Photos are nice ways to store memories. As much as our brains can remember a lot of



things, there's something really special about taking out an old photo album, or looking at one online, and going through memories of the past. I think history and memories are what keep us alive and keep life meaningful. I think that's why people like to keep photos, and why they are special. History makes us who we are today, and the past dictates the people we are in the present. Photos capture an aspect of our past.

2. What can people learn from historical photographs?

People can learn all sorts from historical photos. Firstly, we see what a place actually looked like in the past – and then can compare it to the present. Secondly, written documentation of history can only go so far, especially when it comes to capturing what places and people look like. Secondly, the written word can be more easily be censored and distorted compared to a photograph. Some say that photos never lie – and that's what they mean – a photo can't be distorted so easily to cover up the truth. However, with today's digital advances, maybe that isn't true anymore!

3. Is taking photo the best way to remember something?

No, I don't think so. I think a photo is a means to jog our memories and share memories with others, but it isn't the best means of actually remembering something. Our own minds, and our ability to share and communicate with others in a sincere and authentic manner, are the real things that help us remember things – and our sense of respect for our, and other's past, and our sentimentality and our sense of nostalgia. These are more powerful than any photograph can be.

**Describe an object that you think is beautiful.**

**You should say:**

**What it is**

**Where you saw it**

**What it looks like**

**And explain why you think it is beautiful**

An object that instantly comes to mind that strikes me as really beautiful is a painting my friend Jayne has in her house on the staircase wall. It's a painting of a field of tulips – I think it's in Holland. It's a huge field of pink and red tulips stretching out into the distance, with a cobalt blue sky above it. It's a particularly beautiful painting because of the way the painter has captured the light. I think that he must have been painting the field in the morning, as the morning sunlight, cast its light across the field and onto the flowers – the light casts shadows and brings out the brightness of the flowers – they almost come alive in the painting. Almost as if they are moving or about to move in an incredibly light breeze. I think the painting is especially beautiful for two reasons – firstly because, as I've described above, it's a fantastic painting by an excellent oil painter, and secondly because I am especially drawn to nature and paintings of the natural world. They say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and



this is very much true in my opinion – I am never attracted to abstract or even impressionist works of art, I find immense beauty in the simple natural, still lives and pictures of landscapes, mountains, fields, lakes and trees. So, it is true that beauty, and the perception of beauty, really is decided by personal opinion and personality. I think that paintings are more beautiful than photographs, because we know they have been created with the care, dedication and talent from a skilled painter, who has patience, calm and diligence. I think this also adds to the beauty of art – thinking about how much talent and effort went into creating the piece.

### **Part 3**

1. Do you think there are more beautiful things now than in the past? Why?

I don't think so. There are simply different beautiful things, or different developments in the world of creating beautiful things. There is less natural beauty than in the past because humans have destroyed a lot of natural environments. On the other hand there is more beautiful art and architecture because we have developed richer traditions from more globalized societies.

2. What beautiful scenic spots are there in your country?

There are lots of scenic spots of great beauty in China. It's a vast country so there is beauty in mountains, valleys, even desserts and lakes and places of icy cold – to jungles and rainforests, tea plantations and even quaint ancient towns, set amongst rivers and hills. There's a lot of scenic spots. The list is almost endless!

3. Where do you think people usually come into contact with beautiful things?

Usually in countryside locations or in places where there are mountains and lakes. These are the most picturesque places. Some people see beauty in the modern world as well as the natural world – people who love to enjoy city architecture, both modern and old-style might be drawn to places like Shanghai, which have curious mix of both traditional, modern and international architecture. Some find great beauty in those kinds of things too. Others prefer temples, landscaped gardens, parks, or places of simply pure natural, untouched beauty.

4. Why do you think people create beautiful things?

Human beings are always drawn to things of beauty. It's a natural instinct for humans to want to see and be in places that are beautiful. I have no idea why people are drawn to these things, but because of this, they are attracted to create things of beauty as well. Artists, architects and everyday people, all in their own different ways, enjoy creating beautiful and attractive things. I think it makes people feel positive and look on the bright side of life.

**Describe a traditional product in your country.**

You should say:

What it is

When you tried this product for the first time

What it is made of

And explain how important this product is

A traditional product that I really like, which is very typical in China, is tea. I love Chinese tea and have quite a large collection of it. I also have a couple of tea sets, too. I like tea because it is not only good for the health, the mind and the body, but it is part of an ancient tradition and has its roots way back in our country's history. It reminds me of the more civilized, meditative and sophisticated times in China's history, before the crassness of communism or the current obsession with over-capitalist materialism and greed. It takes me back to a time when we sat and enjoyed calm philosophical and cultural conversations and enjoyed art and literature and discussion and debate. Tea, and the whole process of making tea and sharing tea, is a very peaceful, almost spiritual product. I know quite a bit about the different varieties of tea as well, and the slightly different ways of brewing them. I am also really into the different equipment and jugs and cups and ceramic tea pets and all the things associated with Chinese tea.

I first tried this product at a fairly young age because my father's brother, my uncle, had a small tea shop in Xiamen. I live in Beijing, so Xiamen is quite far away, but we used to go during the summer holidays. It's really hot there, so we spent a lot of time sitting in the cool tea shop, around the big wooden polished table, sipping tea and chatting with the locals who came in. It was a wonderful atmosphere in there and I've always held this memory quite close to my heart and tried to recreate it in my own little way at home in Beijing.

**Part 3**

1. Do young people admire traditional products?

I think there are more and more young people today who are rekindling an admiration for traditional products. I think until recent years young people were not so interested, but now, I think they are beginning to develop more interest in our traditional culture. To some extent, I think this is a good thing. There are many traditional aspects of Chinese culture which are worth delving into and learning about and embracing.

2. Why is it important for children to learn about traditional products?

Children should learn both traditional and contemporary history really. I think that learning about traditional arts and crafts, and products, if you like, is all part of this. And when I say this, I don't mean just related to our own country, but the traditional products and customs from around the world, too.

3. Does the government have responsibility to protect traditional products?

Yes, to some extent, at least in terms of historical relics and also places of historical interest and everything associated with them. But generally, I don't think it's really the responsibility of the government – it's more down to individual respect and care for traditions and history. I guess the government has a responsibility to ensure this is encouraged in society, yes.

4. Do you think traditional products have better quality than modern products?

Very often, yes. In the past people made things by hand more, and certainly with a lot more care than today. We live in a bit of a throw-away society today where things are made cheaply on production lines in factories and people are a bit spoilt so they don't really even think about buying a more traditional item and taking good care of it. People cared about things more when they were made closer to home and by hand, most certainly.

**Describe an invention that changed the world.**

You should say:

What the invention was

What it can do

How popular it is

Why it is an important invention

I'd say an invention that really changed the world, is the car. Since the car was invented, people have been able to get from A to B faster and easier than ever before. Distances between towns and villages became much shorter, and trade improved. In many ways the car, or the motor vehicle, I should say, because this includes lorries and trucks and haulage in general, have transformed the world of business and transportation. Of course, today, the car is a normal and natural part of life for most people, and many of us could not survive without a car. So, it's very popular today, and I would argue that perhaps it is too popular – if you look at the traffic jams in cities and the terrible air pollution... So, this is another dimension to the invention. After all, everything has its downsides too.

So, yes, all in all, the motor vehicle has been a very important invention and has enabled people to do more trade and also travel around independently much more than ever before. It's changed the way we live, the kind of places we choose to travel to and how quickly and how often we travel there. So, for individuals the car has contributed a lot, to what we can do, in terms of shopping, going on holiday, dropping the kids off at school, and all of these things. It has had a big impact on more aspects of our lives than we perhaps realise. Perhaps we even take it for granted these days, like a lot of things.

**Part 3**

1. What kinds of equipment are important in schools?

Well, in terms of equipment I think that for education it's important today to have computers. Teachers need to use multimedia in classrooms, and also children need to learn to become proficient at using computers because IT is an important skill to learn in today's increasingly computer-dominated age.

2. Which invention do you think is the most useful at home?

In terms of inventions in the home I'd say the washing machine, without a doubt. It saves people a lot of time and energy. Before the washing machine people spent hours every day washing and drying clothes – something that takes up a lot of time and a lot of space. But today, with washing machines with built-in driers, this operation can be done quickly and with very little effort.

3. Do you think there will be no teachers in school in the future?

I think there certainly will be teachers. I believe it will take a very long time for real human teachers to be replaced by robots or by some form of AI, and I believe that humans need other humans to learn with and to learn from, and this is an instinct that cannot be replaced by a computer or form of AI robot. So, no I don't think teachers will be replaced and disappear from schools. Not at all.

**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 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 temperate 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

The friend I would like to buy a gift for is my best friend, Jean. She was my dormitory mate in university and since then we have been very close friends. We've shared a lot of things in life together, from relationship troubles, struggles with our studies and issues with our parents. So, I always give her a well-considered gift on her birthday. I would like to buy my friend a voucher for a new restaurant in the city centre. I like this kind of gift. The restaurant I have in mind is a kind of modern Chinese-Western fusion restaurant, run by a famous chef from Guangdong. They issue really beautifully designed gift vouchers and coupons for special meals. I will buy her a voucher for a meal for four, as she can then take her sister and parents. The reason I would choose this as a gift is because she is a huge lover of food. She adores trying out different restaurants in the city, and she has a personal blog about them. She's kind of become a local food expert in a way and a lot of people follow her blog. She goes to all sorts of restaurants, local eateries to international fine dining establishments. The restaurant I would buy a voucher for is a new restaurant that I know she has not been to yet. So, it's perfect.

### **Part 3**

#### 1. When do people send gifts to others?

People in China usually give each other gifts on their birthdays, and perhaps sometimes at Christmas. Some people follow the Christmas tradition, although it isn't really our festival. What is more common in China is giving people money. This is a strong tradition, perhaps because it is more practical and people can then spend it on what they need the most.

2. Do people give gifts or red packets on traditional festivals?

Yes, people usually give both. In fact, when you arrive at someone's house for a traditional festival, you'd likely take some wine, some fruits or other food gifts. And for certain family members you would give a red packet with some money in it. Nowadays, with a lot of online shopping and digital spending, people can give digital red packets with their social media apps on their mobile phones.

3. Is it hard to choose a gift?

It can be hard to choose gifts for people. It really depends on the person. Some people are easier to buy for than others. Some people are happy with books or simple gifts, and others have higher expectations of gifts and are harder to buy for because they also might have very specific tastes. It can be tricky to choose gifts for some people, and a little bit stressful.

4. Will people feel happy when receiving an expensive gift?

Most people will feel happy because they will feel that the person really cares for them. On the other hand, there are people, like myself, who will feel a bit embarrassed. It can feel awkward receiving a really expensive gift, and put a pressure on a person to reciprocate when it's time to return the gesture on their birthday. So, it can be a bit awkward.

**Object: (抽象)**

- ◆ Describe a movie you watched recently and would like to watch again.
- ◆ Describe a program you like to watch.
- ◆ Describe an important thing you learned (not at school or university).
- ◆ Describe a story or a novel that you have read and you found interesting.
- ◆ Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.
- ◆ Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.
- ◆ Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.
- ◆ Describe a song or piece of music you like.
- ◆ Describe a story someone told you and you remember.
- ◆ Describe a difficult decision you once made.

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

**You should say:**

**What it was about**

**Where you watched it**

**Why you like it**

**And explain why you would like to watch it again**

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

**Part 3**

1. What are the differences between watching movies at home and in the cinema?

Watching films at home is much less atmospheric than watching them in the cinema. The cinema gives you an all-round powerful experience, both in terms of audio and visuals, whereas watching a film at home is much less dramatic. Basically because you've got a smaller screen – a very small screen often – and a nothing like the kind of surround sound speaker systems they have in modern cinemas. So, yeah, a cinema is a much more powerful experience, and you can also eat snacks, like popcorn and

make it feel like a much more special occasion too.

2. Do you think actors (or actresses) are important to the success of a movie?

Yes, I think that a director should choose good actors and actresses in order for a movie to be a success. But they not only should have the right kind of skills – and be good actors, of course – but they should also be passionate about acting in the movie itself. If they don't like the film, or the plot, or the role they are going to be acting in, then they are less likely to do a good job and help make the film a success.

3. Why are there fewer people going to the cinema to watch movies?

Fewer people are going to the cinema to watch movies in my country because the movies are now quite poor. They have basically spent a lot of money advancing special effects, but the plots are terrible – well, in my opinion – the plots are weak compared to the Chinese films that were coming out in the early 1990s – those had feeling, sincerity and told the stories of the lives of normal, real people. This new slew of movies are more superficial, like Hollywood blockbuster-style films. Also, people are lazy and just watch films on their phones and tablets today – not as many people go to the cinema as before. It's a shame really.

**Describe a program you would like to watch.**

**You should say:**

**What it is**

**What it is about**

**Who you watch it with**

**And explain why you like to watch it**

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

### **Part 3**

1. What programs do people like to watch in your country?

People in my country are real fans of Korean soap operas. They love them! In fact, I think that some people are even crazy about them. I have a colleague called Nan, and she's really into this one Korean boy star – she's crazy about him – I can't remember his name but he's some young, handsome guy. Anyway, Korean soap operas and their actors are really popular with people of all generations. Other people like nature documentaries and cartoons – people watch a whole range of different types of programs really, depending on their age and personality.

2. Do people in your country like to watch foreign TV programs?

Yes, a lot of American TV series were popular a few years ago. I'm not sure if they are so popular today amongst the new generation of youngsters, but certainly my generation really enjoyed a lot of TV from there – especially family comedies and dramas. These days I think they are losing popularity, though. But yes, Korean soap operas and Japanese anime and cartoon series are still the most popular I'd say, all round. They appeal to the cultural tendencies of Chinese people more, in general I'd say.

3. Do students watch programs in class in China?

Students sometimes watch programs in class. It depends on the school, the subject and the teacher. There are programs which are beneficial for learning, and some teachers who have multimedia equipment in the classroom will use certain programs or snippets from programs to help reinforce learning in the classroom. It tends to engage student's interest more than a teacher just standing there talking the whole time. Some teachers even advocate the playing of movies in class, and set assignments based on those films. That can be interesting and stimulating for learners. I don't think that is so common, though.

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

**You should say:**

**What it is**

**When you learned it**

**How you learned it**

**And explain why it was important**

An important thing I learned – which was not at school or uni – was from my parents, more specifically my mother. That was the value of being honest. This may sound a bit strange, but it is what comes to mind first, so I chose to talk about it. You see, I was predominantly brought up by my mother, as my father was always away working far from home. She's a kind of sensitive person, but also a dedicated and committed person – if she decides to do something, for herself or for others, she approaches it with an attitude of honesty, sincerity and commitment, until the task is complete. She talked to me a lot as a child – about a whole range of topics, both everyday things and



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

### **Part 3**

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

Children can learn values from parents, and grandparents. This is the most important thing that we learn from our family as we grow up, before we even go to kindergarten or school – basic human social values. We learn these from both parents and grandparents – depending how much time we spend with either. We learn the basics of good behaviour, moral values and virtues, and how to conduct ourselves in society – in the outside world. Of course, we learn many other things as well, but this is the most significant I believe.

2. Do you think some children are well-behaved because they are influenced by their parents?

Yes, I most certainly do. I think that the primary influence for children is their parents and their upbringing at home. And whilst school does have a strong influence on their social education as they grow up, the fundamental basis of their personality and behaviour does come from what they learn at home with their parents and family members, and the values they instill in them from a very young age.

3. Is it necessary for adults to learn new things?

It is important that adults always are aware that learning new things is important – as adults need to continually grow and develop to become better people, too, not just children. There are plenty of ways in which adults can self-improve, and not just in terms of career skills, but also in social behaviour and how they treat others. If we want the world to be a better place, then these things are important for adults too – absolutely necessary, I'd say.

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

**You should say:**

**When you read it**

**What the story or novel was about**

**Who wrote it**

**And explain why you found it interesting**

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

### **Part 3**

#### **1. How does technology help people tell stories?**

Technology basically helps people gain more access to stories – we can access stories online, on our phones, on computers, in digital book form, and we can also listen to audiobooks with the same technology. This means that technology gives authors the opportunity to reach out to wider audiences and tell stories that more and more people can see and hear. This inspires more innovation and motivates writers and storytellers to create more stories – as there are more ways of sharing them than in the past – thanks to technological developments and advancements.

#### **2. Why are mystery novels so popular these days?**

Mystery novels are not just popular nowadays. I think they always have been popular! People are drawn to the mysterious, the unknown, the thrills of potential danger, and the idea of solving puzzles. All of these things are captured in mystery and detective novels. Humans need escapes from the boredom of everyday life and the humdrum

nature of the daily grind – and mystery novels fill this gap!

### 3. What kinds of stories do children like?

Children love all sorts of stories, but predominantly I'd say that they like stories involving magic and fantasy. Children have strong imaginations, and they enjoy engaging in stories that are highly imaginative. So, things like Harry Potter, The Hobbit, fantasy stories that feature anime characters, cartoon characters, talking animals and imaginary creatures in strange and curious imaginary worlds, are all popular themes in kids stories.

#### **Describe something you do to keep fit and healthy.**

You should say:

What it is

When you do it

Who you do it with

And explain why you think this method is important

I run every day. I don't go to the gym – I dislike gyms – I run. I run for about 40 minutes every morning, and I choose a different route each morning. Well, I have about 4 or 5 routes programmed into a special app on my phone and I choose one of those each morning. I love this way of taking exercise, and it's not only good for keeping physically fit, but it keeps the mind healthy and alert too. The morning is the best time of day for me to do this, because I always get up early anyway, so I can take a run for about an hour and a half, then come back home, shower, get changed, and go into work. This is my usual routine. It's great, and by the time I arrive at the office I feel energized and refreshed and ready to start the day productively and positively.

My routine, my method of keeping fit, is effective, because it's ideal for my lifestyle and my personality. I like a certain amount of freedom and I'm a fan of nature. Where I live is pretty close to two parks and a very scenic area of the city, so when I run I usually take routes through the parks and areas where there are lots of trees and flowers and plants. This, to me, is much better than going to a gym and being surrounded by machines and technology and depressing walls. So, in my mind combining a love for nature and a morning run, is the best way to get fit physically and mentally, and is a fantastic start to a day. I usually run alone, almost all of the time, actually. But occasionally, a friend joins me. He's also passionate about running, but usually can't coincide with my routine because of his job. He joins me in the holidays and sometimes on weekends. But, frankly, it's fine for me to train alone. I like my own company, especially when running.

### **Part 3**

#### 1. How do old people keep fit?

Older people keep fit in all sorts of way. One typical way that you may have seen is

old people exercising in local community gardens and parks on those kind of exercise machines. These exercise machines are fixed to the floor and are good for moving your legs, arms and swinging and cycling on the spot. Other ways they keep fit might be to walk in parks, do square dancing in groups with friends, or play badminton. Some old people still enjoy tai ji.

2. How can parents help their children to keep fit?

Parents usually don't have to do much, because children usually love running around, playing games and getting involved in sports and activities. Also, in schools, kids have to do a certain amount of sports, anyway, so this also contributes significantly to them getting fit and keeping fit.

3. Do you think it is useful for governments to use celebrities to help people raise health awareness?

I'm not sure. I think that celebrities already get involved in helping raise people's fitness and health awareness, especially sporting heroes. But perhaps, if the government want to encourage people to keep fit more, and not lounge around, especially teenagers who spend a lot of time on computer games and mobile phones, then it would be helpful if famous stars helped to promote fitness, sure.

**Describe something that surprised you and made you happy.**

You should say:

What it is

How you found out about it

What you did

And explain whether it made you happy

There is one thing that really surprised me that I would like to talk about. That's the time when I won a singing competition in university. I love singing, and I am a pretty good singer – in fact, I think I am a really good singer and it's been my main hobby for years. I'm not a sporty person and I'm not that social either but I love singing. So, I spend a lot of time listening to, and singing along with, and practicing my favourite songs. I go to KTV at every opportunity I have with friends, and I often go to a little bar near to campus where they have a KTV set-up. So, I'd say I get quite a bit of practice in.

Anyway, the second-year students on campus arranged a singing competition just before the summer holidays. I, of course, put my name down as one of the contestants, and I have to say, I was really quite confident about winning. However, after registering, I discovered that loads of really talented students had also registered. I saw them at some of the meetings and saw the rehearsals in the sports hall... I couldn't believe how good they were – they were amazing. I then started to really worry – I mean – I am quite a competitive person to be honest, and this is my only

real talent, so I for some reason I cannot explain fully, I was really thinking I could win easily. After seeing some of these other guys practicing, I felt really demoralized – they were brilliant.

So, I put in a special effort to practice and drove my dorm-mates crazy in the process. I practiced as much as I possibly good. The same song, an Adele song, over and over again. Although my dorm-mates were sick of it, they were also very supportive of my efforts and really were gunning for me to win.

Anyway, on the day of the contest, everyone performed really really well. I honestly thought that if I was lucky I might get third place. You see, I still felt I couldn't properly hit the vocal range of Adele and get to and sustain those high notes while singing.

Well, the surprise was – when the votes came in from the judges, I won! I came first! I couldn't believe it! Everyone, including the other contestants, were actually really praising of me and thought that I deserved to come first. Of course, I was super-happy and also I felt that my hard work, efforts and determination had paid off in the end!

### **Part 3**

1. Is it good for people to be happy?

Of course, it's good for people to be happy! Happiness is a very important thing in life, and also from a biological point of view if someone is happy then it is good for their body as well as their mind. It improves general health, motivation, all sorts. So, yes, happiness is incredibly important, and also I've heard that studies show that having good friends and family is very important for health too – being happy with an active social life is also a key to longevity, they say.

2. How do people express happiness in your culture?

Some cultures are more expressive than others, but I think that all cultures have some common ways of expressing happiness. We laugh, we smile, we tell jokes, we talk about the positive things that are happening, and we feel more active. People behave in a more lively and vibrant manner when they are happy and this is expressed in their everyday behaviour and attitude.

3. Do you think happiness has any effect on people?

So, yes, all in all, I believe happiness has a very positive effect on our mental and physical health and enables us to improve our self-esteem, achieve more in life, and become even more happy. So happiness is something that effects people strongly – it compounds.



**Describe something that helps you to focus on study/work.**

You should say:

What it is

How often you do it

When you start doing it

And explain how it helps you concentrate

What really helps me focus on my studies is classical music – light classical music. I always put violin or cello music on when I am studying, or clarinet music. I don't put it on loudly. I just put it on in the background, and I choose really calm concertos and pieces of music that are not too fast or too erratic. This helps my mind detach from the stresses and strains of daily life, and helps to make my thoughts calm and focused. It's a habit I've had for many years, which started, I think, when I was in high school, and a teacher recommended it. I began doing it in my dorm at university almost every time I had to study and I found it worked wonderfully. In those days I used to listen to music on headphones, because I shared the dorm with others, but now I have my own room. I play it on speakers from my computer. I am a person who needs to be in a quiet place when I am studying – a place where I cannot hear the sound of traffic on the roads or anything like this – so putting on calming, relaxing classical music can also help to drown out any of the sound of the city that might come in through the window. So, yeah, this is my main method of concentrating and relaxing when I really need to focus on studies and shut out the outside world.

**Part 3**

1. Why do children nowadays find it hard to concentrate on study?

Children always have short attention spans so they find it more difficult to focus on one thing for any length of time. Today, there are more distractions because there is more they can do – playing online games on phones, watching TV or tablets, and getting involved in all sorts of different activities with friends or family. Because there are just so many options today children are a bit spoilt and have higher expectations and want to constantly have fun! This means that today their concentration spans can be even worse than before!

2. What kinds of distractions are common in your life?

In my life common distractions are usually centred around my cellphone. The cellphone really is a dominant factor in our lives – way too much – and it's quite unhealthy to be honest. I'm constantly receiving messages, or waiting to receive messages or curious about what friends are doing, so I'm sending messages! It's crazy when I think about it – just how much mobile phones have come to dominate our lives. I'd say some people are even addicted to them.

3. Why do children need to learn to focus?

Children need to learn to focus because as they get older it's a skill that is necessary

for studies and work and getting on in life. Focusing on something calmly is also related to patience – and we must develop patience to survive! Especially in cities where we are always having to wait for things and grapple with all sorts of practical issues to get things done. Being able to maintain calm and patience and focus on something without stressing out is even more essential today than ever!

#### 4. What kinds of jobs require higher concentration?

I believe that jobs that require high levels of concentration are things that require attention to detail – like being a surgeon, or a programmer or something like this. You know, professions that are high stakes, but require the person to really concentrate so that they do not make a mistake. So, I'd say that any job which is potentially dangerous, or requires a high level of attention to detail, is something that requires a person who can concentrate well.

#### **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 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 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.

**Place:**

- ◆ Describe a popular place for doing sports (e.g. stadium).
- ◆ Describe the home of someone you know well and you often visit.
- ◆ Describe a place in your country that you would like to recommend to travelers.
- ◆ Describe a quiet place where you like to spend your time.
- ◆ Describe an important river/lake in your country.
- ◆ Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).

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

**You should say:**

**Where it is**

**When you went there**

**What you did there**

**And explain how you feel about this place**

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

**Part 3**

1. What are the benefits of children doing sports?

Children should most certainly do sports regularly – at least once or twice a week in

school. That's because they need a certain amount of physical exercise to keep them healthy, as well as a break from the mental dimensions of study and learning in class. Everyone does, to be honest – a balance of mental and physical activity is important for us all.

2. Do young people like to do sports?

Young people mostly enjoy sports and games yes. Nearly all young people anyway. Some are not very sporty, admittedly, but usually these people are perhaps more into individual sports and activities like cycling or long distance running, or maybe even rock climbing, and not into team sports. It's also down to personality.

3. Is it necessary to build sports venues?

Absolutely yes, it's important to have sports centers in every district of a city so that everyone can go somewhere rain or shine, summer or winter, to get exercise or participate in sports and games. Also, cities need huge venues for hosting national and international competitions, to take part in global contests and also host events. So, yes, it's absolutely necessary.

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

**You should say:**

**Whose home it is**

**How often you go there**

**What it is like**

**And explain how you feel about the home**

There is a home that really sticks in mind! It's the home of my friend, James, and his family, who live just in the community next to ours. The reason I find it particularly interesting is because it's in a much older community – and those old residential buildings are, in my opinion, much better, because the rooms are really big, and the ceilings are high, and they all have balconies. The modern residential buildings may look cooler, but they are often small, they don't have balconies and the ceilings are much lower. I visit there often because the family are really welcoming and kind and relaxed. And, also, there's plenty of space, so often we just hang out in the living room – well, one of them – they have two, in fact. I go there about 4 times a week, actually, and even more in the holidays. James' mother cooks really well... in fact, so does his father. They seem to enjoy it, and prepare meals quickly, that are really tasty. Often, I will stay there the whole day and we play on the Playstation, read books, play football in the community gardens. Stuff like that. The house is decorated in a very curious way – the father has travelled all over the world and filled the house with interesting paintings, and decorations from mainly African countries, and some South American countries. So, yeah, it sticks in mind as I spend a lot of time there.

### **Part 3**

1. What are the differences between houses or buildings in the city and in the countryside?

Houses in the city, at least today, are usually smaller and...well...strictly speaking they are apartments in residential blocks, not 'houses' in the European sense of the word. I mean, everyone lives in high-rise apartments in cities, whereas in the countryside it is more common for people to live in either smaller apartment blocks or individual houses. Homes tend to be a bit bigger in the countryside, because there's more space – they, however, tend to be much older and have less modern amenities and facilities.

2. Do you prefer to live in the city or in the countryside?

Well, personally I love the countryside, as I love nature...But, it's not that easy to find work in the countryside in my country, and the facilities are a lot less than in cities, and the people are a lot more parochial and narrow-minded about the wider world – although they can be really friendly. So, for someone with a more international leaning, like myself, the countryside is a little stifling and boring and lacks opportunities for career development and cultural life.

3. What are the safety risks in residential buildings in cities?

There are a few safety risks, but to be honest, I don't think there are many in my country in cities. At least not that I know of. I guess fire safety can be an issue in poorer areas, as buildings might not be maintained well or comply with the latest fire safety standards. In terms of safety from burglars or intruders most communities that I know of in cities in my country are pretty safe and all have walls and guards and you can't easily get in unless you have ID or residential access permission.

4. Is it expensive to decorate a house or an apartment in the place where you live?

It really depends how you do it. Like most things in life you can do it cheaply, or you can spend more money and get a really professional job. It can certainly be expensive, though, especially if you want a good quality job that will last many years. These things can get quite expensive these days.

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

**You should say:**

**Where it is**

**What it is**

**What people can do there**

**And explain why you would like to recommend it to travelers**

There's a place in Fujian province called Xiamen – I'm sure you've heard of it. This is where I'd recommend to travelers to China. It's a great place, by the coast, with a fantastic climate and lovely, warm, friendly people, great food, and interesting cultural things to do and see. And, if you're into Chinese tea, there's a lot of really

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

### **Part 3**

1. Is it important to take photos while traveling?

Yes, I believe so. I think that photos are memories stored that we can access in the future and that can remind us of good times, or at least interesting times, and interesting things that we have seen and experienced. Some people take photos of friends and family, and others are more into sights and things like that. Whatever we prefer to take photos of, they are now a permanent record of our experiences in life, and that in itself is a very valuable thing. I'd say it's important when travelling, most certainly.

2. Can we trust other people's travel journals on the Internet?

Haha, I've not really thought about it. Yes, and no, I guess. Some people's blogs and journals are likely to be accurate and trustworthy, and other people's are likely to be perhaps distorted. By distorted, what I mean is that some people might get money from travel agents from hotels and destinations to post great reviews of their places, so that will certainly influence their writing. This would be my biggest concern. I think it's important to read journals and reviews where you're fairly sure the person hasn't been paid a commission from a hotel or travel company to portray the place really favourably. Avoiding these kind of journals will ensure we get closer to the truth.

3. What factors affect how people feel about their journey?

The main things that influence how people feel about a journey are the transport and accommodation. If the transport and hotels are nice and comfortable, and offer smooth customer experiences, then that will have a huge influence on how we feel about a trip or journey somewhere. If the service is poor, or the places are not up to the expected standards, or perceived as good value for money, then we will be disconcerted and likely to have a bad feeling about our trip.



**Describe a quiet place where you like to spend your time.**

You should say:

Where it is

How often you go there

What you do there

And explain how you feel about this place

A quiet place where I like to spend time sometimes is a specific corner of my community garden. It's an area in the far north corner of the community, almost hidden behind a number of trees and bushes, and with a small paved patio area with wooden benches around it, and a trellis with climbing plants. I really like this area, and I go there when I want to read in spring or summer, or when I want some peace and quiet and to get away from my family members or the children that are often playing in the gardens. It doesn't seem that many people go there because every time I go there, it's empty, there's nobody else there. I love being around nature, and it's hard to find quiet places in my city where there aren't any people, or traffic noise or hustle and bustle, so I have become quite attached to this quiet area in the gardens. I sometimes just go there and sit and think or play with my phone, chat to friends on Wechat, play games, things like this. At other times I take a physical book, like a novel, and sit and read. It's an ideal place to wind down and it's very secluded. I must say they tend to the gardens in my community really well, and that's the positive side of the area where I live - despite being very central and very convenient, it's actually an area with a lot of trees and the local community make a lot of effort to keep the gardens looking nice, plant new flowers at certain times of year and look after the borders and the pond in the middle. It's important for some people, like me, to get to find a particular place that feels like your own, where you can escape from everything, so I feel very lucky that I discovered this small area tucked away in the back end of the community gardens, an area which seems to be very unpopular with other people - I don't know why - but I hope it remains like this because it has turned into my personal little safe haven.

**Part 3**

1. Is it hard to find quiet places in cities?

Usually, yes. In china, especially. There is such a large population in China, and so many people and so much noise from traffic and construction work and things like this, that it means it can be quite difficult to find a place which is not only quiet, but actually pleasant to sit in too. This is the problem with modern developments and modern cities - they attract so many people that they can lose their sense of tranquility as they become more modern, more developed and more built-up. But there are a lot of nice parks and gardens in most Chinese cities, and in those parks and gardens it's usually possible to find quiet, aesthetically pleasing areas where you can relax and escape from the world for a bit.

2. Why is it quieter in the countryside?

Well, quite simply, the countryside is not built-up, has a much lower population, and therefore is more peaceful. That's simply a product of being in a less populated environment, away from the big cities. The downside, of course, is that you can get bored, because there is less variety of entertainment and activities in a country location, so if you're into a more cosmopolitan lifestyle, you know, going to fancy international restaurants or bars or cinemas and things like this, then you will most likely get very bored in a countryside location. However, if nature is your thing, and you prefer quiet contemplation, then country towns can be the nicest places to settle down.

3. Compared with young people, do old people prefer to live in quiet places?

Older people live a slower and calmer pace of life usually, so they will often prefer peace and quiet, whether it's staying at home more, or being in a generally quieter place. Younger people are often in search of excitement and entertainment and often want to go out with friends, discover new things, spend time in lively and more noisy places, and engage more with the outside world, beyond where they are brought up. This explorative tendency is common amongst most young people, so they tend to feel that countryside places are rather tedious and lacking the novelties and thrills of the big city.

**Describe an important river/lake in your country.**

You should say:

Where it is

How big/long it is

What it looks like

And explain why it is important

An important lake in my country is Qinghai Lake. It's actually the largest lake in China and it is located in Xining, well... outside Xining actually, in the hollow of the Tibetan plateau. It's a very famous lake in my country. I know the lake fairly well because I am from that province, from a town not too far from the lake. I am not sure exactly how big the lake is, but I'd say it was about 3,000 or 4000km square. It's massive! It's really massive and pretty deep too. It looks pretty impressive to be honest. It's an iconic symbol of the area, and it's located in an area of stunning natural beauty. The lake is important for the area as it used to be the one and only real source of fresh water, a key fishing area, and a natural attraction. People in the villages nearby also believe the lake has a strong power... I guess you'd call it a lucky power. There are a lot of older, superstitious people in my town and they all seem to believe that the lake houses some powerful spirits or something like that. I'm not sure I believe that, but I can imagine that in the past many people told mysterious and magical stories about the place. For me, however, the lake is important for different

reasons – it's the first place I ever went fishing with my father, and also it's the very first place I learned to swim!! With my uncle!! So, as well as being an incredibly important feature for the province and the surrounding towns and villages, it's also got a special significance for me. Maybe the lake is enchanted, after all!

### **Part 3**

#### 1. How can rivers/lakes benefit local people?

Lakes have been incredibly important since the dawn of time. They have been a major source of water and of fish for people for centuries, millenia in fact. Today, they continue to be important for local communities for the same reasons, but tourism has taken off in the past few decades, and this offers a good source of revenue for the local community. Hotels have sprung up in towns and villages near large famous lakes, boat trips can be arranged, and walking tours and hikes nearby. These all bring fame and a certain amount of money to the local areas.

#### 2. How do rivers/lakes affect local tourism?

The downside of the tourism that lakes attract is the damage to the environment. Especially in a country where there are so many people and tourist sites are inevitably packed with crowds – and often crowds that are not necessarily that respectful to the natural environment. So, although lakes have a huge effect on local tourism, attract thousands of people who want to see them, fish in them, go on boat trips on them, and bring great revenue to an area, the lakes and the area itself can be negatively impacted from an ecological standpoint, which is a shame.

#### 3. Are rivers/lakes useful for transport?

Yes, of course – rivers mainly. There are a number of famous rivers in China which are all still used today for transporting goods and people from one place to another. Transport along rivers takes longer, but most certainly is a fairly common and reliable means of taking heavy loads from one place to another – especially through areas where the roads are bad or snaking through high mountain passes. Rivers provide a stable, reliable, if not slightly slow, means of transporting goods. And, of course, tourists – some tourists go on river cruises!

**Describe a city you would recommend as a nice place to live in (not your hometown).**

You should say:

What it is

Where it is

What you know about this place

And explain why you recommend it as a nice place to live

A city I would strongly recommend as a lovely place to live is Dali, in Yunnan

Province. Dali is, in fact, more like a town, really, as it is not as big as most cities. But, I think of it as a city, anyway. A small one! Dali is really beautiful and has developed and grown in the past ten years into a cultural and touristic centre as well as a thriving agricultural community. It is set in the mountains and surrounded by the most picturesque scenery you can imagine. The people are warm and friendly and have a laid back attitude to life, despite being quite hardworking. The lifestyle there is very different to most cities in China, and there is a relaxed vibe in the air, and a genuine feeling of history. I am familiar with the place because a friend of mine, an artist, by the name of Liu Yang, lives there. I met him in university and one holiday he took me back to stay with his family there. I loved it. We rode horses in the hill, went looking for butterflies with his uncle, and I tagged along as he took photos for his latest art exhibition. You see, he is mainly a photographer and regularly holds exhibitions in Beijing, so every time he goes back he goes out taking photos, sometimes of the people of the town, and on other occasions purely of the natural views. There are wonderful little family-run guest houses in the town and quaint restaurants, traditional Chinese medicine shops and regular performances of music and dance. It really is a place to soak up a bit of artistic atmosphere, and you feel you're being transported to another world. A world free from the commotion of the capital cities. I love it there, and think it's a great place for a holiday, for anyone who loves nature, culture and the arts and traditional customs of Yunnan, China.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. Which part of your country is the most populous?**

The most populous area of my country... well.. to be honest, I don't actually know. I don't know a lot about demographics and things like this, but I'd have to say that most cities in China have massive populations, especially Chongqing and the surrounding area. That has a massive population and is most certainly the most populous city I know in China, although I don't know about regional demographic figures.

#### **2. What are the advantages of living close to the workplace?**

There are loads of obvious advantages to living close to one's workplace. Firstly, you don't have to get out of bed so early in the morning and you can just walk to work in a few minutes. This is a wonderful luxury, actually, because nobody enjoys commuting in cities here – the people, the traffic, the crammed subways and so forth. So, I'd most certainly say the key advantage is that you do not have to endure a horrible commute, and you can get up later.

#### **3. What kinds of places do old people prefer to live in?**

Old people generally prefer to live in quieter places, quieter areas of cities, and more peaceful communities, that's for sure. I think as we get older we start to go out less, enjoy the environment around our homes, and spend less time going about the city meeting people, eating out, and so on, and more time focused on the home and perhaps the gardens nearby. I, personally, would certainly like to retire in a quieter

place, even a quieter town really, and avoid the city entirely. But, there are some old people who like being in the centre of big cities – it's what they are accustomed to, and so they like to stick with what they're familiar with.



### Event:

- ◆ Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.
- ◆ Describe a time when you made a decision to wait for something.
- ◆ Describe a time when you received money as a gift.
- ◆ Describe a disagreement you had with someone.
- ◆ Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.
- ◆ Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.
- ◆ Describe a time when you shared something with others.
- ◆ Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.
- ◆ Describe a time when you saw a lot of plastic waste (e.g. in a park, on the beach etc.)
- ◆ Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.
- ◆ Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.
- ◆ Describe a time when you used your cellphone to do something important.
- ◆ Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.
- ◆ Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.
- ◆ Describe an occasion when you lost something in a public place.
- ◆ Describe a contest/competition you would like to participate in.
- ◆ Describe an important event you celebrated.
- ◆ Describe a positive change you made in your life.
- ◆ Describe a special day out that didn't cost you much.
- ◆ Describe a time when you helped a child.
- ◆ Describe a time when you were caught in a traffic jam.
- ◆ Describe a time when you were very busy.
- ◆ Describe a recent change in life that helps you save a lot of time.
- ◆ Describe an occasion when you had a special cake.
- ◆ Describe a time you visited a new place.
- ◆ Describe a long walk you have been on.

**Describe a problem you had while shopping online or in a store.**

**You should say:**

**When it happened**

**What you bought**

**What problems you had while shopping online**

**And explain how you felt about it**

I've had many experiences with online shopping, but the one I recall the most clearly is the time that I bought an item and had such trouble getting a refund from the seller. I can't remember the name of the store now, but anyway, I bought a thick coat for winter – it was quite expensive actually – and when it arrived, it had a rip in the back and the zip was faulty. I contacted the company through the online chat and they said they were happy to refund it, and I should just send it back. I arranged with a delivery

service to send the package back and it went smoothly. They confirmed they had received it okay. Everything seemed to be fine. Then there was total silence for weeks.... Yes, weeks! I contacted the seller, nothing. I checked my bank account and shopping platform order and returns messages, nothing. I messaged them countless times, and they simply did not reply. I had no idea what they were playing at but I was pretty angry. I contacted the online platform and they said they would put in a case against the seller. I didn't really want it to get to this stage because that kind of process takes a long time sometimes, and is quite annoying. Anyway, they put in a case against the seller, and after all sorts of calls, steps, hurdles and disputes, I eventually got my refund. To be perfectly honest it kind of put me off online buying, at least online clothes buying. I like to just go to shops, try an item on, buy it or not buy and that's that. That, to be honest, is the simpler and more enjoyable way of shopping. I think this whole online shopping thing is massively overrated to be honest.

### **Part 3**

1. What kind of service do you think is good?

I think that a smooth, efficient service where they deliver what you ordered or asked for, and get your items within the promised time frame – and the items arrive in good condition, or are good quality – is the best we can ask for when it comes to service. I have some of the worst customer service experiences in the world in Beijing, to be perfectly honest. So, I'm not the best man to ask... I would say that 100% of the time the waiters in restaurants get things wrong, are rude or stupid, or both, and don't seem to do their jobs very efficiently. However, the service is usually fast and the quality of the food is great! Well, mostly.

2. What would you do if you bought something disappointing from the internet?

I would send it back. Online shopping is really popular in my country. Actually, I would say that it is a national obsession. Chinese people are really good at two things: taking photos of their meals and putting them on WeChat moments, and buying things online. They are the main national hobbies I think – we are probably more obsessed with these two hobbies than any other country's people I know on the planet. So, because of this, we have a quite efficient and developed online shopping culture – and most of the time you can successfully return an item and get it refunded or exchanged if you're disappointed with it with a high degree of efficiency.

3. Do you think online shopping will replace in-store shopping in the future?

Well... to be perfectly honest, if the current trend continues, I am sure it certainly will. There are more physical shops and stores closing down every day – including the huge food court right near my office, along with the electronics market near my office, and countless other places. This is probably due to two factors. Firstly, the current measures and economic policies, and secondly, the fact that we all stay at home all the time ordering everything online. So, yes, I believe given this trajectory, soon we will be living in our offices and ordering everything online, and possibly not even set foot

in the outside world at all. Let's see!

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

**You should say:**

**When it happened**

**What you waited for**

**Why you made the decision**

**And explain how you felt about the decision**

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

### **Part 3**

1. Why do some people prefer slow-paced life?

Because a slower-paced life is less stressful and gives people more time for peaceful contentment. Sometimes the world of cities and businesses is a highly stressful one where a lot of time is wasted, and a lot of energy is expended in getting things done, and there is little time left to actually relax and enjoy more peaceful environments. A slower-paced life offers greater peace and tranquility and some people are attracted to this more than the hectic and ambitious lifestyles that can be popular today.

2. Is it necessary for people to learn to be patient?

Yes, absolutely. Developing the quality of patience is very important in life. We need to be patient in daily life, while waiting for things and waiting for others, and we also need to be patient with our own expectations in life too – we can't expect instant gratification or instant results from things we do or things we want to happen to us. That's just what life is like – we all have to learn to wait, and to wait without too much impatience or anxiety.

3. Are people less patient now than in the past?

Yes, I think a problem with younger generations today is that they expect everything fast and have a huge sense of their own entitlement. This means that they are way less patient than people in the past. And this is a shame really. I think a lot of this is due to the fast-paced nature of modern society, and the fact that we have more opportunities than in the past, and therefore we become more greedy and impatient when we don't get what we want when we want it.

**Describe a time when you received money as a gift.**

**You should say:**

**When it happened**

**Who gave you the money**

**Why he/she gave you the money**

**And explain how you felt about it**

The time that stands out the most when I received money was last year, in fact. You see last year was my first ever birthday away from home! Yes, honestly it was. You see I'm in my first year of university in Beijing, and all my other birthdays I was in my hometown with my family, with the exception of this last one in June. So, this last birthday I felt a little bit down to be honest. I have some good new university friends, admittedly, but I felt a little bit awkward celebrating my birthday with them. Anyway, I went out for a meal with them, and paid for a really nice Thai restaurant near to campus – I thought it would be a nice change to have a Thai meal, and recently I've been thinking a lot about tropical places and beaches and these kind of "holiday dreams", so I decided to invite my new group of friends to a Thai meal. It was lovely, and they even had a small traditional band that played music on a little stage as we ate. Anyway, during the meal I received a flurry of text messages on WeChat, from my mother, my auntie, my uncle and some cousins in my hometown, and each one sent me a 'red packet' of money and a really nice greeting for my birthday. I was so pleased because the meal was really expensive, for me anyway, and also it meant I could be a bit more generous and order some more wine, some interesting desserts, and take my friends out for drinks in a cool bar after the meal – as well, of course, as investing in some clothes and other useful things for my university life. So, I felt very touched by the generosity of my family and it really did help me, and enabled me to offer my new friends a special night out. It's nice to be in a position to be generous

like that. I felt really good on several levels, although I did miss my family, and it was my first birthday without them.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. Why do people rarely use cash now?**

It has become increasingly popular over the past ten years to use digital forms of payment. I'd say it has really taken off in the past five years, really. The first I remember in my country was WeChat pay, where you connected your social media account to your bank card, and then you could pay in stores by scanning a code, or transfer money to a friend. Soon after came Alipay and some other international forms of payment. These got really popular very quickly in my country, and meant that people found it much more convenient and easier than using cash. Before that you could swipe or scan your bank card, but for some reason this was not nearly as popular as the phone app payment systems which seem to be the norm these days. It's just so quick and easy.

#### **2. Do you think it is useful to give money as gifts?**

Well... yes, it's useful I guess. I think it's a lot less personal than actually giving a physical gift, but it's certainly useful to the receiver because they can use the money to buy what they need rather than having a gift they may not want or need. It's also easier for the buyer, because they don't have to spend the time and energy thinking of a gift that is suitable for a person – this can be a real struggle for some people – some people are just not easy to buy for. So, all in all it's useful, most certainly, but I think it's rather impersonal and cold and takes the charm out of gift-giving.

#### **3. When do children start to realize the value of money?**

Children start to realise the value of money when their parents decide it's a good time to teach them. And this depends on the family, and their attitude to money. It's important for some people more than others. Some families believe in giving children everything, and therefore kids grow up without a real concept of how money is earned and how one works to make money. Other children, who perhaps grow up in less affluent families, tend to be educated more about the value of money from a younger age, as they are less likely to be spoilt. It depends both on a family's economic situation and the family attitude towards money and teaching children about money.

**Describe a disagreement you had with someone.**

**You should say:**

**Who you had the disagreement with**

**What the disagreement was**

**What happened**

**And explain how you felt about it**

The last time I had a disagreement that really bothered me was with my mother, and it



was about a boy I was dating, in fact. Perhaps that's a little personal, but I don't mind talking about it. I became really good friends with this guy who is studying physics in my university. We got closer and closer and found that we shared the same interests. We loved chatting to each other, and we were attracted to each other. After a few months he invited me on a date, in a more formal way, I mean – you know, almost suggesting we might be boyfriend and girlfriend. I was quite happy about this, as I had been waiting for him to make that move, anyway, to be honest. Anyway, we went out and spent more time together, I'd say, as boyfriend and girlfriend, though we hadn't really formalized it 'officially' by that point. During the winter holidays I talked to my mother about him, and actually she really disappointed me. She went on and on about how this would distract me from my studies, and that boys usually had bad intentions, and I should be careful not to be tricked into doing things I didn't want to do... and predominantly, like I said, she seemed really worried that this would distract me from studies and that I'd get all emotional and wrapped up in my romantic feelings and not focus on the practical aspects of life. Anyway, we argued furiously about this... And in the end I spent a few days feeling really angry with her about it and wondering what I should do. You see, I always want to respect her feelings and views, but at the same time, I feel she doesn't really even listen, let alone respect, mine. So, yeah, I felt bad about this. And to be honest, I still do. We have resolved things a little bit, but still she goes on about the topic too much and in a very dogmatic way. To be fair, actually, her attitude pushes me more towards him! So, it has the opposite effect. That can happen when parents push people too much – they go the opposite way.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. What do you do if you disagree with someone?**

It totally depends on the situation and who I am disagreeing with! If I disagree about something with a friend, then I am likely to be direct, but diplomatic in voicing my disagreement. If I disagree with a boss or a teacher about something, I am much more likely to not say anything and keep my mouth shut. It also depends on how important the thing is that I disagree with someone on!

#### **2. How do we stop an argument from escalating into a fight?**

The best way to stop an argument escalating is to calm down, count to ten and not say anything for a while. It's best also to avoid sarcasm, avoid saying nasty words or making threatening accusations or blaming the other person – and the best way to avoid saying the kinds of things that pour fuel on the fire, is to not say anything for a while.

#### **3. What disagreements do parents and children usually have?**

Parents and kids disagree about a whole range of things, depending on the age of the kids and the disposition of the parents. Small children and parents usually disagree about things like food – parents always want kids to eat healthily, and kids always want to eat sweets or food that isn't so healthy – so you often see arguments, or

parents pushing children to eat and children whining that they don't want to eat that particular type of food – things like this.

**Describe an outdoor activity you did in a new place recently.**

**You should say:**

**What the activity is**

**Who invited you to participate in it**

**Whether you asked for help during the activity**

**And explain what change you had in the activity**

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

### **Part 3**

1. What outdoor activities are popular in China?

Outdoor activities that are popular in China today are mainly sports really like basketball, football and stuff like this. We don't particularly do that much else, at least not on a daily basis. You know, table tennis sometimes, tennis as well. The same kinds of sports that most people do really. Some people are getting more involved in things like rock wall climbing, and more adventurous sports like this, but this is not really common – at least not amongst people that I know.

2. What are the differences between after-class activities done by young and older children?

Younger children usually do very simple and fun after-class activities, whilst older kids do more serious athletics and sports on a more competitive level. Children just do stuff usually, that keeps them healthy and improves and maintains their coordination. Older children have to learn actual physical skills. I'd say this was the main difference, really.

3. Should young people try as many new activities as possible?

Yes, I believe young people should be encouraged to try out as many activities as they can, but I do think that they should not be forced to get involved in too many activities... After all, some parents really push their kids to be highly competitive and do a whole range of after-school classes in everything from music to dance to sports, to maths, to languages – this can be way too much – and there's already too much pressure on young kids. So, there's always a healthy balance parents need to achieve.

**Describe a time when you forgot an appointment.**

**You should say:**

**What the appointment was for**

**Who you made it with**

**Why you forgot it**

**And explain how you felt about the experience**

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

### **Part 3**

1. How do people who are busy every day remember things they need to do?

Good question! Well, it depends on the person. Some people use their phones and computer calendars to keep track of all the things they need to do. Others, like my mother, who is more traditional, has a little diary, a small book she writes in to keep a record of all the things she has on in the coming weeks or months. Other people are just a bit more disorganized and rely on their memories – which I do not think is the best way to do things – I guess it depends how good your memory is really!

2. How do Chinese people know their family history?

Most Chinese people know about their family history through their parents, grandparents and other family members keeping good record of it. It's normal that families keep some kind of record of their history, both in their own memories and in the form of photograph albums and other documents which trace the history of the family. Most people hear about their family history from their parents and grandparents telling them stories about their lives and the lives of their family members. Some families, as you can imagine, are more nostalgic and sentimental than others when it comes to their history and their relationships with the wider family unit.

3. Is it important to know about family history?

I certainly do. Everyone should keep track of their family history, and remember their ancestors and all the things in the past. I think it's kind of quite important really, as we only have one family, really, and our family have survived for generations and generations, so it's important to give respect to the past and remember where we came from and the people that have come before us. I also think it's human nature to want to remember family history, and keep it alive to some extent. I do know that some people care more about this kind of thing than others, though.

**Describe a time when you shared something with others.**

**You should say:**

**What you shared**

**Who you shared it with**

**Why you shared it**

**And explain how you felt about sharing it**

There are lots of times I've shared things with others; I regard myself as a fairly generous person and I also enjoy sharing things with others. The last time I shared something with someone else... let me think... well, actually, the last time I shared something quite important and significant was with my friend, who is also studying the same subject, business management. I had managed to get hold of a number of seminal textbooks, in digital format, for one of our courses, and he had also managed to find a few books too. So, we both met up with USB memory sticks and we shared the materials we had found for these courses. We also had dinner together and shared

our ideas about the courses, how we may approach studying them and doing the assignments, and the best online sites where we could find more of the materials, ideally for free. So, I think this is something that many students do, actually, share materials, share ideas, share perspectives on studies. I always feel good about sharing things, whatever they are, because it encourages a social culture where being helpful and kind is something that increasingly more people value. I think in a busy society, a competitive environment, and a quite stressful modern world, it's important that people do not forget the value of sharing and helping others. As a student you're usually under quite a lot of pressure, perhaps financially too, and so it's the kind of environment in which people really should share things with each other, help each other out and try to make life better for those around us. It's not just physical things that people share, like my example above, it's thoughts, ideas, opinions and values. It's worth remembering that these are equally as valuable as tangible physical things!

### **Part 3**

1. What are the consequences if children don't know how to share?

If children are not taught to share, and do not enjoy sharing, they will inevitably grow up to be spoilt and boisterous and selfish people. I think that it's vital that children, from a very young age, are taught to share things, not snatch things from other children, and be considerate and respectful to others. I don't like to see high levels of competition and rivalry amongst people and I think that showing other people you are willing to share is part of promoting good values and reducing negative rivalrous habits.

2. How do people feel about sharing accommodation with others on campus?

Personally, I don't mind sharing a flat with others. I think if you're sharing with the right people it's okay. However, there are all sorts of problems that can arise when people share a living space with other people – some people can be messy and untidy, other people can be argumentative and have strong personalities which clash – it's not easy living with other people and basically you've got to live with people that you can get along with. That's challenging for a lot of people, to be honest.

3. How can parents and teachers teach young children to share?

Parents and teachers have the responsibility of teaching children to be caring and sharing individuals. Basically, it's vital that parents instill good behavior and manners into children, and I am a firm believer in teaching children to be kind and supportive to each other. I think that society has become far too competitive these days and this can make children a bit unkind and so parents and educators need to promote values that will enable children to grow up to be good responsible members of society.



**Describe a time when you needed to search for some information.**

**You should say:**

**What information it was**

**When you searched for it**

**How you searched for it**

**And explain why you needed to search the information**

I have to search for information a lot. I am currently working on my dissertation for my master's degree so I seem to spend most of my life searching for information online, through university archives and academic journals and books! The most recent time was only yesterday. I needed to find a number of research papers to support a theory that I am writing about as part of my dissertation. Basically, I logged on to the university archives – they are all online now – and I spent several hours putting in different keywords and locating different research papers in peer-reviewed journals about the topic. I briefly skim-read them and selected the ones that were most relevant to what I want to write. It's a fairly long and arduous process, but also quite interesting and inspiring. Actually, when you get used to it, it is enjoyable and quite easy, as you learn to “join the dots” between different scholar's ideas and concepts and how they support their arguments. This is all part of the process of searching and analyzing information for master's degree studies. I usually use the computer in the library or access the archives from my laptop at home. It's something I enjoy doing and I'm happy I left plenty of time to do it, so I won't have to panic, and I am sure I will finish my dissertation well before the deadline, then have time to polish and perfect it in a relaxed manner.

### **Part 3**

1. How can people search for information now?

The most common way of searching for information is online, of course. We use the internet today for almost everything and there are millions, literally millions of websites with all the information that we can think of at our very fingertips. So, generally people don't need to go to libraries anymore. Although I'd argue that physical books are also useful, as reading on a screen of a phone, laptop or tablet can be annoying after a while.

2. With the development of the Internet, are libraries still important?

Libraries are still important, I believe. As libraries are not only places where we can look at physical books anymore, they are places where we can use computers, sit at comfortable desks and work, and sit in peace and quiet to think and study. For this reason, I do not think libraries will ever be phased out, and they will continue to exist, especially in further educational settings.

3. Does the development of the Internet have any influence on disadvantaged people?

The internet does help people from all walks of life access information and study. Even people on very low income or with difficulties leaving the home, or living in remote places, can access the internet at very low cost. This was not the case before the internet at all. If you were living in a remote area of a poor country it was very hard to get access to books and information – but now it's very easy. So, the internet has levelled the playing field in this sense and given opportunities to people who otherwise would not have access to educational information.

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

**You should say:**

**Where you saw the plastic waste**

**When you saw the plastic waste**

**What you did**

**And explain how you felt about this experience**

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

### **Part 3**

1. Why do some people like to use plastic products?

Everyone uses plastic products to some extent. They're now completely ubiquitous. So much is made out of plastic, from simple, lower-quality plastic for bags and packaging to the higher quality, very durable plastic that is used for making phones and electronic equipment, casing and car interiors and all sorts. So, I am not sure if people “like” using plastic products really – I think they are just a part of everyday life as plastic, of varying sorts, features in almost everything.

2. Do you think we should use plastic products?

We should certainly make more effort to reduce our use of plastic, that is for sure. We should try to limit our use of plastic to those things which are absolutely necessary and not just frivolously use plastic bags when we don't need to, or buy things with loads of plastic packaging and so on. So, though the use of plastic is unavoidable really, we can at the very least reduce unnecessary use of plastic in daily life and be more careful about our attitude to recycling and waste.

3. How can we reduce our use of plastic products?

We can reduce our use by recycling more, for starters. That act in itself makes us think more about the amount of plastic we collect – as we can see it mounting up in our recycling bin at home, so we become more aware of just how much we waste. Secondly, I think we should re-use bags more often when we go shopping, rather than just taking new bags from the vendors or supermarkets every time we buy things. These are two key steps we can employ to reduce plastic use.

4. What kinds of plastic waste are often seen in your country?

Mainly plastic shopping bags from supermarkets and markets and packaging. We use a lot of packaging in China, especially with the obsession with online purchasing, so this means that things get delivered in plastic, often. So, I believe that the biggest use of plastic must be supermarkets and online shopping businesses that use plastic in their packaging. I can't think of anything else off-hand, but there must be lots more examples – plastic is everywhere these days.

**Describe a time when you enjoyed an impressive English lesson.**

**You should say:**

**When and where you had the lesson**

**Who gave the lesson**

**What the lesson was about**

**And explain why you enjoyed the lesson**

A time I enjoyed an impressive English lesson was when I went to a summer school in a town just outside London when I was a teenager. The summer school was set in a wonderful countryside location in a really old “harry potter” style school, rented out for the summer by the organization that ran the international summer camp. There were students from all over the world there. Anyway, the lesson that I enjoyed the most was from a Scottish teacher called Charlotte. She was in her early 30s, and had a wonderful way of making learning fun. She was quite firm and strict, but at the same time, she encouraged everyone to fully engage in the lessons. She told interesting stories of her travels, explained words and vocabulary on the board at the same time, asked a lot of questions about our opinions and views, modelled answers, corrected our answers, came up with language games, detective-like puzzle games that got us

talking and using the language... I don't know how to describe it but she was the best teacher I've ever had. The lesson I liked the most was a detective game where we had to solve a mystery by reading the plot, the clues and then interviewing all the suspects – we had target language to incorporate into our interactions of course, and she corrected us sporadically throughout the game, but it was so much fun. It was designed really well... and was just as exciting as a really thrilling detective novel – except we were the characters in it! It was great and made me really enjoy learning. In fact, I think I remember more language from that lesson than any other in my life of lessons learning English!

### **Part 3**

1. Is it interesting to be a foreign language teacher?

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

2. What makes a good foreign language teacher?

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

3. 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.

4. Do you think grammar is important when learning foreign language?

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

**Describe a difficult thing you did and succeeded.**

**You should say:**

**What it was**

**How you overcame the difficulties**

**Whether you got help**

**And explain how you felt after you succeeded**

A really hard thing that I did that I really feel I succeeded in was passing my driving test. I know that sounds a bit silly, because most people pass their driving test, but I have a sort of problem... I'm not sure how to explain. It's a sort of problem with perception and I always mix up my left and my right and things like this. So, driving or doing any kind of sport that involves hand-eye coordination, or playing an instrument, is more difficult for me than for most people, because of this problem I have. So... anyway, I was really worried about my driving test, as I was sure I would not pass it. In fact, I failed it several times already... so, you can see how hard I found it. I passed the theory test easily – that's the one you do on the computer – but the practical driving test was the one I failed. So, I just kept on trying. I kept on practicing with my dad in his car, with a sort of computer simulator game on my tablet, and eventually, this summer, I actually passed! I am so happy that I had the determination and dedication to keep trying after having failed it three times. That really just goes to show how important it is to keep on trying and not give up, if it's something that is important to you. The reason it was important to me to pass my driving test is that I am really into exploring and photography – it's my main hobby – so I need to be able to get out to remote natural places and take photos of landscapes, birds and other places of interest. So, you can't really do that well if you can't drive yourself. So, anyway, yes, that's something I'm really pleased about, relieved about and frankly feel totally liberated from now! I won't have to do it again for another ten years I hope!

### **Part 3**

1. What kinds of things do children feel 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.

4. What's your definition of success?

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

**Describe a time when you used your cellphone to do something important.**

You should say:

When it happened

What happened

How important the cellphone was

And explain how you felt about it

The time I recall using my cellphone for something pretty important was when I went on a short trip with a few friends to Pingyao, in Shanxi Province, just outside Taiyuan. It was the national holiday and we had about a week off. I was responsible for booking the hotel, and my other friend was in charge of organizing the transportation – basically the train and the bus.

Anyway...In the days before the trip, I got into a really stressful situation at home. I don't really want to go into all the details now, but lots of things happened at once – there was a sort of tragedy of sorts in the family in Changchun, and I had relatives, including my mother calling me a lot, I had a falling out with my landlord, because he wanted the rent in advance and there had been a problem with the bank transfer, and I fell out with my boyfriend over something really stupid, in retrospect. So, because of all this, I completely forgot to book the accommodation for me and my friends in Pingyao, for the trip. I just totally forgot.

So, on the morning of the trip we met at the designated meeting place, by Beijing

railway station, and as soon as I arrived and heard them all talking about it, I realized “Oh no! I’ve not booked the accommodation”... In fact, we had some time to wait for our train and we were sitting in a fast food outlet having breakfast and I quietly on my cellphone looked up a few places and found, luckily, there was availability for the six of us at this really nice courtyard hotel near the centre of Pingyao old town. I quickly booked it, there and then using my phone, and then when everyone asked, I said “yeah, no worries, I booked it days ago”... and nobody knew any differently.

Now, in the days before online payment systems and bookings, this would have been impossible! So, I feel really happy about this kind of method of booking! Also, I must say I was quite lucky, because during national holidays in China everywhere is usually really full booked, so you can’t often find places you want at the last minute. So, I admit, I also got quite lucky this time. I felt great about this, of course, and it improved my mood a lot as well.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. What do you usually do with a cellphone?**

With my cellphone I usually just chat with friends, on social media, read a bit of news, play a few online games if I’m on transport or in bed at night, stuff like that. Sometimes I watch TV series and films on my phone, too. But not so often. Mobile phones are basically like small hand-held computers these days, so the majority of people use them in that way – to write emails, to edit photos and to play games and engage with social media.

#### **2. What are the differences between young people and old people when they use cellphones?**

Today there are not so many differences as there used to be when mobile phones started to become ubiquitous. Today, old people and young people use cellphones in pretty much the same ways. There are a lot of older people who now play games on their phones as well. I’d say that older people are not so into social media as younger people – they use messages for more practical communication, and not so much chatting or posting of photos and stuff like this. However, times are changing and with people travelling less these days, there are more and more older people communicating using various social media tools on their phones.

#### **3. Do you think there should be a law to stop people from making phone calls in public places?**

I think there should be some sort of restrictions, but not a law as such. I think that people should be encouraged to be quiet on the phone in subway stations, subway trains and public places. But I do not think there should be laws for these things. To be honest, education is the best way to encourage good behaviour, rather than living in a society where there are laws for every single thing we do or say.

**Describe a time when someone asked for your opinion.**

You should say:

Who asked for your opinion

Why he/she wanted to know your opinion

What opinion you gave to him/her

And explain how you felt when he/she asked for your opinion

There are a few times when people have asked my opinion. I think it's because I have ended up, on several occasions in my life, being a sort of advisor, a listening ear, a mentor, if you like, for some of my younger friends. The time that really comes to mind right now, is last year when my work colleague was having a real dilemma about whether she should leave the company and go work at a smaller company, for less money, but a more exciting job and possibly better future prospects, or stay with our company and have a more stable, secure job, but without many prospects of future development or task variation in the role. I sat and listened to her for some time and tried to understand what really mattered to her. You see, our choices in life often depend on both practical issues like pay or living conditions, and also on what really makes us feel whole, motivated, happy and encouraged in life to self-develop. I realized that she was the type of person who needed more than just stability and a salary and a boring job – it really mattered to her to have some sense of strong self-development in her working life. She was not super-ambitious, but she needed something more than just the basics. Because of this, I advised her that she should move to the smaller company, as long as she was willing to put in the extra hours, and be prepared to work harder. And that if you're going to search for task variety, interesting promotional opportunities and personal development in work, you also have to put a lot of effort in. It's not always the easiest path, but it can be more exciting, if you're the type of person who needs ambition. I felt quite good, and mature, in giving my views to her, and I liked listening to her and trying to work out what really mattered to her, and why. I think that one of the most important things in giving advice to people is actually carefully listening to the feelings of others first. So, yes, I felt good and I think I am good at advising people, in general, mainly because I am an active listener.

**Part 3**

1. Why do some people dislike giving their opinions?

Some people are worried about offending others, or are shy about stating exactly how they feel because they do not like to be seen as overly assertive, dominant or opinionated. These kinds of people often keep their real feelings to themselves, and prefer to either say nothing, or just quietly go along with others. It's a personality thing – some people are simply more forthright in their views, and others are more passive, usually for an easier life, or because they are less confident.

2. Are there any apps designed for collecting opinions about products and services?

There are a lot of apps today which aggregate only shopping experiences, provide

recommendations based on other customers' ratings and reviews. I guess these apps are the main sources of online collection and evaluation of others' opinions. There are also these features built into the online shopping experience itself – integrated into the websites and apps of online stores. Many of which give independent and increasingly honest ratings from customers. This is a great guide for taking into account what other customers have felt and experienced, before we make a purchase ourselves.

### 3. Why do people like to express their opinions on the Internet nowadays?

People in general have the tendency to want to express and exchange opinions. It's a very natural human emotion, and it's the way we analyse things, make decisions and reach conclusions. So, fundamentally, the discussion of different views and opinions is an intelligent and useful pursuit. The internet today is the main forum for idea sharing – everyone spends their time on their phone or online, and they love social media apps, especially in China. So, yes, these social utilities give people the tools and opportunity to share and express personal views and opinions on a range of popular and contentious topics.

### 4. What are the disadvantages of giving opinions online?

The disadvantages of giving opinions online is that you can get into online arguments with people, and people don't like to be disagreed with at times. If you don't share the same opinion as someone else, some people do not react well to this. So, there are disadvantages but I would argue that the advantages outweigh those significantly – I will also agree that expression opinions and views is an important way for a society to develop and self-reflect and encourages personal and group self-development.

#### **Describe a time when someone gave you positive advice on your work.**

You should say:

When it happened

Who the person is

How the advice affected you

And explain how you felt about it

There is one time that sticks in mind when someone gave me positive advice about my work. I'll try to tell the story. You see, I worked as an intern in a technology education company in Zhongguancun, in Beijing. It was a young company, and I spent a summer working in the sound recording studio. You see, the company hired all sorts of voice actors to record online spoken materials, in a number of languages but mainly Chinese and English. I studied media studies in university and I have been moving in the direction of working with sound recording and editing since I got back to China a year ago. Anyway, I got this job as an intern, well, in some ways more than an intern because I was responsible for the whole studio for that summer – from the setting up of the equipment and the organizing of the schedules, and the recording and editing itself. I didn't have to hire the voice actors, but I had to guide them through

the process, on arrival, and coordinate all the recording sessions and so forth. The best advice I received on this job was to really maintain a great relationship with the people we hire to come and act for us. This sounds silly maybe.... but it is in this job that I realized the real importance of treating people not only with respect, but going that extra mile to make them feel really welcome. Especially as it was a small company and we couldn't afford to pay them that well, it was even more important to keep them happy. You see, because I'm used to working in front of a computer all the time, and in sound studios, I don't often mix with people that much and I can be unintentionally quite standoffish and quiet and not especially engaging with outsiders. When my boss gave me the advice to be extra nice and polite, and make a real effort to be positive and display a more "American style optimism" I thought that this was a bit pointless... but then after a month or so I realized that it really did make my job easier, because the same people would come back every time we needed them, and it made scheduling really easy and saved me a lot of time on the job, too, because I didn't need to explain our system and processes each time – they just came in, sat down. I handed them the scripts and they did their job. It really speeded things up and helped to build positive relationships, and have the same voices for a range of our products. So, all in all, that simple piece of advice about nurturing positive relationships with a more engaging and extrovert attitude, really really helped me. It's often these little things that can make a big difference in life, and we all should remember this more often.

### **Part 3**

1. Is it important to give children positive feedback?

I think it's very important to give children positive feedback. Children are especially sensitive to criticism and encouragement, and often if you encourage them positively they will become more confident and make more efforts in certain areas, and if you criticize them they will go the opposite way... So, all in all, I am a firm believer in the importance of positive feedback and encouragement for children. It makes them enjoy things like study and therefore they succeed and perform better.

2. What would happen if parents overly encourage their children?

If parents are too encouraging of their children and never criticize them then this is also a form of spoiling your kids. They can become over-confident, arrogant and competitive with others in the wrong way. By 'the wrong way' I mean they can become aggressive in their attitude to competition and their attitude to others. There is a fine balance between praising and encouraging children, and spoiling them and turning them into over-confident arrogant individuals. Parents need to be judicious in this regard.

3. Do you think negative feedback is more important than positive feedback?

I do not think that negative feedback is more important. I think positive feedback is more important, and also, remember, positive feedback can also highlight areas that need to be improved as well. We do not have to see such a strict division between



negative and positive feedback. You can give constructive feedback that highlights strengths and weaknesses – it's really all about how you deliver the feedback and your attitude to presenting it to people. That's what makes the difference.

**Describe an occasion when you lost something in a public place.**

You should say:

What you lost

When and where you lost it

What you did to find it

And explain how you feel about this experience

The time I lost something in a public place that really sticks in my mind is when I lost my glasses. It was awful. I was in a crowded place, an outdoor music event in the park, and there were lots of people all crammed together in a thick crowd near to the stage. I was excited to see the band close-up and so I pushed to the front with my friends. When we were there the band became really animated and played their most popular songs – and at that moment the crowds just went wild – people were dancing, flailing their arms around, basically being crazy and not paying any attention to those around them. I was also getting excited and carried away myself.

Then suddenly as I swung my head strongly to the music my glasses flew off my face and over the people and somewhere into the crowd! I couldn't believe it! I panicked!!

I suddenly stopped dancing and tried to push my way through the crowds of dancers to where I thought my glasses might have landed. I was pushing but at the same time to trying to apologise and appeal to the people to move out of my way, that this was an emergency because I'd lost my glasses. But, of course, nobody seemed to notice or care – the music was so loud and the crowd was so wild that nobody seemed to notice my desperation. I felt terrible.

Now, fortunately for me, and by way of some miracle, maybe, a man suddenly turned around, and was holding my glasses in his hand, above the crowds... I went towards him as fast as I could through the thick masses of dancing people, and I could then hear him saying "whose are these, whose are these? I nearly trampled on them!" .... I greeted him and we shouted over the music words of appreciation and thanks. I then invited him for a drink and we both made our way through the crowds and shared a beer together at the food and drink tent in the park. I felt great, and very grateful and lucky that day!

### **Part 3**

1. What kinds of things do people usually lose?

Normally, people lose cellphones and wallets mainly – sometimes they lose their bag by leaving it on a bus or a bench or some place like that. People often lose things

when they are distracted, either because they are really excited and not thinking straight, or because they are nervous or stressed and in a panic. These are the two main reasons why a person might lose things.

2. What do people often do when they lose personal belongings?

People usually start with panicking, frantically, then they gather their composure, and start to retrace their steps in the mind – where they went, who they talked with, where they may have lost the item. Usually it's a lot easier to deal with such things if you retrace your steps very calmly and try to visualize in your mind the different places you went to and where you stood or sat. Then, people will usually go back to the key places where they think they may have left the item, and ask around.

3. What kinds of people often lose things?

Well, anyone can lose things, but the kinds of people who \*often\* lose things might be people who are inclined to be easily distracted, people that don't focus on the moment very easily... emmm... also some people are just more absent minded than others... people who are perhaps drunk... people who are tired. Children have a higher tendency to lose thing than adults, perhaps because they are always moving from one thing to another and getting really excited about things and not thinking about the importance of personal possessions. Emmm... I think that's about it.

**Describe a contest/competition you would like to participate in.**

You should say:

What the contest is about

Where the contest will take place

When it will be held

And explain why you would like to participate in it

I would like to participate in a fashion design contest. In fact, I've taken part in a few before... I love such design events, functions and parties. I'll tell you why – I am studying fashion design in university. I studied one year in Milan, and I am now in my final year in Shanghai. When you study design you spend a lot of time reading news and watching fashion events. And, to some extent, taking part in smaller fashion events hosted by the department at university. But, there is a particular fashion design contest hosted in Shanghai every year, in one of the top hotels in the city. It's a huge event and all of China's best designers take part in it – and get to watch the best models in the industry walking on the runway, wearing their designs.

So, basically, one day, I'd like to have one of my clothing designs taking part in this particular fashion competition. It's a big ambition, and I'm a long way off yet, but it's good to have ambitious goals for the future and I think it's not unobtainable. I've had some small successes already in the field, won some minor contests and got myself into a couple of fashion magazines. So, if I continue to come up with innovative and

interesting designs, look for greater inspiration and practice my skills at design, I think that I stand a good chance of taking part. For this particular competition, I don't even care about winning - just being able to take part would be prestigious enough. If you can get one of your designs on the catwalk at this contest, you're pretty much guaranteed to succeed in the industry. So, yeah, I'd love to participate in this contest for that reason - I want to become a well-known female clothing designer!

### **Part 3**

#### **1. What are the contests commonly seen on TV?**

On TV the most popular contests are singing talent shows, quiz shows and perhaps sports contests of sorts. That's about it really. I also saw a painting contest once - that was quite popular in Europe, but not really very popular in China, really, so I am not sure if many people have seen that - Portrait Artist of the Year, it's called.

#### **2. Why are competition shows popular?**

People like the spirit of competing with others, the sense of excitement, the fact that it pushes you to do your best, and even more, it pushes you to exceed even your own expectations sometimes. It can be a really good thing for people to compete - it can be motivating. And so, people also like to see others competing too, and get involved in the tension and energy of a contest. Especially from the comfort of their sofa - watching it on TV!

#### **3. Do you think it is necessary to encourage people to compete with others in companies?**

I think competition in companies is important only to some extent. People will naturally compete anyway, for promotions, higher salaries and more favourable positions in a company, so I don't think it's really necessary to add any extra encouragement. I think there are more important things to encourage in a company culture than competition - like sharing, collaborating and innovating together, rather than competing against each other.

#### **Describe an important event you celebrated.**

You should say:

What the event was

When it happened

Who attended the event

And explain how you feel about the event

An event that I celebrated that I really enjoyed was the birthday of my friend, Lala. She is a really fun and inspiring girl, who always chooses to do things a bit differently to other people I know. She held a special birthday party, which she arranged totally by herself - and invited a few of us. It started in the afternoon at the opening of an art gallery which belonged to one of her friends - there were snacks, wine, some talks

about art, and some really fascinating and interesting people there. Then five of us moved on to a restaurant nearby, a Yunnan restaurant, and had a fantastic meal. She loves the more tropical-themed places of south China so she almost always chooses restaurants like this. After eating and presenting her with her cake and gifts, we went to a jazz club where we had cocktails and sat and watched some live jazz music. The singer was incredible. We stayed there until the very end, then moved on to a nightclub which was more loud and raucous and much less sophisticated – but by this point we were pretty drunk and wanted to let our hair down and have fun and dance. So we danced for hours, almost until dawn, actually. It was a fantastic occasion, and I enjoyed how varied the day was, and how I met and chatted with so many interesting and random, cool people. Lala is a great friend and I'm really looking forward to her next birthday, actually! I felt great about the whole day and it gave me a renewed inspiration for life in my city – especially as I had been feeling quite down about things at the time.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. What kinds of events do people usually celebrate?**

The main events people celebrate in a year are annual festivals like Spring Festival, birthdays, maybe a wedding sometimes. People might also celebrate the birth of a child, or the 100th day after a child is born – these are the key important events that people might hold celebrations on. Religious people may also celebrate some special religious festivals, as well. These can be quite interesting – I remember taking part in a Tibetan celebration in Sichuan that was very interesting and colourful, with lively music and dance.

**2. Do people often celebrate events with a large group of people or just few people?**  
I think that both, actually. Most major festivals are celebrated in the family, so it depends how many family members you have! Most get-togethers of this nature are quite large as lots of family members might gather in one place to eat and drink for a few days. However, if you have a smaller family, then maybe there won't be so many people at such events. So, a lot boils down to the size of your family and where you all live – today families are much more separated by distance – family members living in different cities many hundreds of miles apart. So, such events can be smaller today than they were in the past.

#### **3. Do people often celebrate festivals with families?**

Yes, usually festivals are celebrated with families, both in China and over the rest of the world, too. Usually that's the case anywhere – festivals are times of family celebrations first and foremost, although people may also invite friends or hold dinners with friends or work colleagues as well. Especially in a country as large as China, where families can be separated by vast distances, national holidays and festivals might be the only times of year people can spend time reunited with their family members.

**Describe a positive change you made in your life.**

You should say:

What the change was

When it happened

How it happened

And explain why it was a positive change

A positive change I made in my life was to decide to take up mixed martial arts, MMA, as a hobby. I was never especially good at sport, or that bad at sport really – but I was not really that interested or enthusiastic about sports, so I never got involved in much. And that also meant that I didn't really get much exercise. I enjoyed walking a lot, but living in the centre of a huge city, well... it's not an ideal place to go for pleasant walks. Anyway, one day I was eating in a restaurant and a guy was going round handing out leaflets. I took the leaflet and looked at it, and it was advertising a martial arts centre really near to my home. I stopped the guy and asked him a few questions – the type of martial arts looked different to traditional Chinese ones like wushu, and it attracted my attention, it piqued my interest. We got chatting and he said that I could go for two free sessions before committing to a membership – that way I could decide whether I liked the classes or not.

So, I decided to go for the trial lesson the following day, and I loved it. I went to the second free session, and I loved it too. I'd never felt inspired by a physical activity or sport like this before, so it was quite a novelty for me. I signed up and started on the course, and months have gone by and I'm still going twice a week and sometimes also on weekends to. I am aiming to enter a competition this summer – I've made loads of new, motivated and interesting friends, and I've got myself much fitter and stronger.

So, all in all, this was a really positive change I made in my life that I'm still really happy with.

**Part 3**

1. Is it easier for young people to change?

Compared to older people, yes, it's usually easier for younger people to implement changes in their lives or routines. Not only do they have the energy, but they also have the spirit of motivation and the idea that they have their life ahead of them to carve out new pathways and develop in new and interesting ways. However, there are an increasing number of older people who are less traditional, these days, and who are making all sorts of interesting changes in their lives and embracing new ideas, new hobbies, new interests and even new careers. So, it's more of an attitude than an age thing, I think.

2. What are the disadvantages when people keep making changes in life?

Making a lot of changes in life, however, can be a bad thing. Some people do not



settle on one thing and stick to it, and they don't give things a chance, before moving on to something else. This can be a terrible habit, as you also have to learn in life to stick with things, through good and bad times, and not just try to change your path or your lifestyle as soon as times get hard. Like most things in life, you have to be wise and make judicious decisions.

3. What are some of the major changes that occur to people throughout their lives? The main points of change in people's lives are when they first go to school, when they go to university, when they get their first boyfriend or girlfriend, when they get married, when they move out of home, and so forth. And, when they maybe have children. These are the classic rites of passage in most people's lives – although people are breaking away a bit from the traditional model of life these days and we are seeing greater diversity – for example some people do not want to get married or have children.

**Describe a special day out that didn't cost you much.**

You should say:

When the day was

Where you went

How much you spent

And explain how you feel about that day

A special day that I will always remember is one I had with a bunch of friends last summer. In fact, it may not sound that special really – but to me, to us, it was really marvelous. It was during the summer holidays, and many places were closed, and we didn't have enough money to leave the city or go on an excursion anywhere, so a friend of mine suggested that we buy some food, some drinks and take some chairs and cushions and arrange a big picnic in Chaoyang park with as many classmates and friends that we could get together. It ended up being amazing – we invited literally everyone we knew, and they invited everyone they knew, and so on. In the end there were more than 50 of us in a huge and fairly secluded area of the park, eating and drinking and chatting and playing games and music together in the park. I think in total I spent about 40 yuan on some drinks and some snacks – and because we all pooled our resources and shared, and all spent more or less the same amount, we had loads of food and drink for everyone to enjoy. I made a lot of new friends, had some great conversations. We played some fun games and all in all it was a fantastic time. The weather was magnificent and really warm and sunny. We had a shady spot by some trees and I spend the hours as the sun set just lounging around and chatting. It was a fantastic and very memorable day.

**Part 3**

1. How do people spend their leisure time in China?

People spend their leisure time in a variety of different ways, depending on their

interests and personality, and, of course, what they can afford to do. Some people get involved in a lot of sporting activities and take it very seriously. Others spend time shopping online or in malls, and others like to go out to bars and clubs and restaurants in a highly social capacity. There are all sorts of things people enjoy doing during in their free time. And in most cities there are a lot of things people can do – lots of clubs, societies, adventurous activities, and a whole range of cultural options too.

2. How does technology affect the way people spend their leisure time?

Technology has greatly influenced how people spend their free time. Firstly, I think a lot of people have become very lazy about doing things in person with other people, and can spend hours, days or even weeks watching TV series online, playing online games, chatting with friends on social media – all without actually leaving the flat – all through their cellphones. I think there's a big downside to this, and although technology has connected us in so many ways, it has also resulted in a lot of people living very sedentary lives and only communicating with others through their phones.

3. Do you think only old people have time for leisure?

Old people often have a lot more leisure time because they have already retired. They may not be as active as they used to be in their youth, but they certainly have a lot more time to read, listen to the radio, lounge around and take it easy. Some old people are responsible for looking after grandchildren, so they are more occupied than others, but generally speaking older people have a lot more time – and especially if they have a decent pension, they often find it's the time in their lives when they can relax more and rest more and live a calmer and more comfortable life.

**Describe a time when you helped a child.**

You should say:

When it happened

Who you helped

How you helped him/her

And explain how you felt about it

There is a time that really sticks in mind when I helped a child. In fact, it's a rather interesting memory and quite amusing in some ways. I was at my grandmother's village in the countryside one holiday, and I was taking walk just outside the village. I saw a young boy, maybe he was about 7 or 8 years old, crying and pointing up at the sky. I stopped and asked him what the problem was... he had lost his kite. I looked up to where he was pointing, more closely. It was not actually the sky at all, it was the top of a large chestnut tree. I squinted and looked more closely and saw that his kite was stuck right up the tree... right at the top of the tree.

I was quite hesitant at first. I mean... I thought about climbing up the tree, but frankly I was scared, not very good at climbing trees, and feeling a bit lazy about it. However,

when I looked at the boy again, and saw how sad and desperate he looked, I gathered my energy and thought that I'd give it a go. I climbed up the main trunk and then pulled myself up onto the branches. It wasn't actually so hard, and the branches were quite sturdy. However, it was a really tall tree and it was a little frightening to have to go so high up. I tried not to look down, as that made me feel a touch of panic, and eventually I reached up to where the kite was. I had to walk along a branch, that was the scary bit, then reach over to grab the kite. I then climbed down.

When I got to the bottom and handed it to the kid, he was absolutely delighted. He was staying at his grandfather's house about 20 minutes walk away, and we walked back together and sat and ate lunch with his granddad, who seemed very happy and amused with the whole story, and pleased that the kid had got his kite back! I felt good about the whole experience and happy that I had made the decision to help him rather than not tried. It also meant that I had gotten to know two more people in the village that I hadn't got to know before – the child and his grandfather. So, all in all I have fond memories of this occasion.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. Do you often help kids? How?**

I am not often in situations when I can help children really, to be honest. I don't really see kids that often. I work in an office full of adults. I commute to work in my car each morning, and on the weekends I play tennis with friends and go to bars and restaurants. There aren't many families with kids living where I live, and my cousins live in another city! So, all in all, I hardly ever see children in my daily life really.

#### **2. Why is it necessary to do volunteer services?**

I don't think it is necessary at all. But it is certainly beneficial to get involved in voluntary work. It really helps us to learn about the value of supporting others, without the motive of personal financial gain. Voluntary work can be quite a learning experience and can really help us nurture the qualities of empathy for others. I certainly think that every student should be encouraged to spend some time and energy helping in a voluntary organization.

#### **3. Who benefit more from the volunteer services, the volunteers or the people they help?**

Both benefit. As I mentioned earlier, the volunteers benefit a lot in gaining experience in the field, and foster greater qualities of empathy for others at the same time. The people you help benefit, of course, from whatever the voluntary initiative focuses on, but they also get an emotional boost from simply knowing there are people out there who want to help them, who care, and who are there to give a helping hand for purely altruistic reasons. This, in itself, is very emotionally encouraging to people in need.

**Describe a time when you were caught in a traffic jam.**

You should say:

When it happened

Where it happened

How you passed the time while waiting

And explain how you felt when you were in that traffic jam

I've been caught in traffic jams countless times. Really. So many times I can't begin to count them! You see, I live in Beijing, and we have some of the worst traffic jams in the world – with the possible exception of India. It's insane. Sometimes you can spend hours trying to get to a place which should ideally take about 20 minutes, just because of the sheer volume of traffic on the roads. However, the time which infuriated me the most was when I had set off two hours early to go for a really important job interview in Haidian – that's a district a little far from where I live, but, again, on a good day it should only be 30 minutes in a cab, at most. So, I hailed a taxi. The traffic looked bearable – and we set off. As soon as we hit the third ring road there was an incredible traffic jam – it was not even moving. Thick thick traffic as far as the eye could see, and not even moving an inch. The driver told me that he had heard on the radio, or seen on his app, that there had been a car accident up ahead which had caused the traffic to come to a standstill. I sat there, quite patiently at first, but then I started to lose patience. An hour went by, and we had progressed about 200 meters up the road, and were literally crawling along. Then a thunderstorm hit, and this slowed the traffic down even more. In the end I arrived at the interview over 40 minutes too late, I was soaking wet getting from the taxi to the building, because the driver simply couldn't find a place to park, and I was really in bad spirits. The funny thing is – they actually ended up giving me the job!!! I couldn't believe it! So, all in all that was a really memorable traffic jam!

**Part 3**

1. When do traffic jams usually happen?

Traffic jams happen all the time in most Chinese cities. We simply have too many people with too many cars. But the worst times are, of course, rush hour times. This is when most people are going to, or coming from, work. At these times there is a high volume of traffic on the roads at the same times and this causes some pretty big traffic jams.

2. What are the causes of traffic jams?

Well, too many cars, buses and vehicles on the roads at one time cause traffic jams. It's simple really. And perhaps not having enough road space to accommodate such a large volume. It's a real problem if you're in a city with a huge population – and especially a city where people's wealth has increased quickly over the past decades – you end up with a sudden rise in people driving private cars, and the roads are not really capable of taking that much traffic at once, and public transport may still be

crowded and inconvenient.

3. Do you think the problem of traffic congestion will be eased in the future or will it become worse?

I think it will always get better as cities develop – especially if the government put enough time and resources into developing public transport and promoting the use of public transport over private car use. There are already quite a few restrictions on traffic in China today, and they have put a lot of effort, also, into improving the subway systems and bus routes. So, I am quite confident that traffic congestion will get better rather than worse in the future. But it may take time.

4. What would you suggest as possible solutions to the problem of congested traffic?

One solution which I think needs to be addressed faster, is to make sure subway trains have enough carriages so they are not so crowded. Quite a few more wealthy middle class people, and managers and executives in China, simply do not want to go on a densely crowded subway. Not only is it very uncomfortable, but they feel it is not in line with their status. I believe, like in London, New York and Tokyo, if the subway trains were greater in number and there was more space in carriages, executives and white collar workers would be more willing to take public transport instead of driving private cars.

**Describe a time when you were very busy.**

You should say:

When it happened

Where you were

What you did

And explain why you were very busy

There have been many times when I've been really busy, but a time that immediately comes to mind is when I was preparing for an art exhibition with a friend in university. I'll try to explain what went on. Basically, I was in charge of an art exhibition of paintings from a South American painter for the university Spanish department. You see, I was one of the main students, let's say, in the third year, and so I got involved in all sorts of exchange programmes and things like that. Anyway, there was this South American art exhibition which was to be hosted for two weeks in one of the gallery spaces in the next campus. I was in charge of making sure all the paintings were unpacked and put up in the gallery after the shipment arrived at the department, and advertising the exhibition, and organizing the opening event. You see, there's always an opening event at art exhibitions, where you provide wine and snacks and there's a little talk and an introduction to the artist and some of their paintings, and all of that. You see, the artist herself could not attend, so I was kind of representing her.



The reason I was really busy was because I had to juggle different things all at the same time, or at least it seemed like it. I had to not only ensure that all the paintings were unpacked very carefully, then put up on the exhibition walls in the exact way that the artist had explained (she provided a diagram and explanation of how to lay them out), then stick labels under each painting, that corresponded to the labels on the back, and then work with some computer designers to make fliers, and advertisements for the event, make an invitation list.... then organize the catering, the snacks and wine.... you can imagine! All of that to host a gallery exhibition opening. And I was determined to do a good job, because, on top of all that I had to manage a photographer and videographer to take photos and film the event, to put on the artist's website.

So, basically for several weeks before the exhibition, and especially in the days preceding the exhibition, I was incredibly busy, and quite stressed out, and trying to keep everything and everybody who was involved in the project, in order and properly organized so the event was a success.

### **Part 3**

#### **1. What are the advantages and disadvantages when people keep busy?**

The advantages of keeping busy are that you are always engaged in something which keeps the mind and body active, and that's pretty good for your mental and physical health, they say. As they always say "if you want something done, ask a busy person". The disadvantages of being busy are that if you are too busy you can get quite stressed and overwhelmed and you might not have time to fit in all the things you need to do, as well as get sufficient time to rest and relax and recharge your energy levels.

#### **2. What kind of stressful things do people experience at work?**

People at work can experience a range of different things that may cause them stress. Firstly, some jobs might be high pressure in terms of tight deadlines and complex tasks; other jobs may require managing people and projects and be difficult due to external factors, like customer demands. In other cases a job might be stressful if you don't have a good relationship and communication with your boss or co-workers. There's a variety of reasons why someone might get stressed at work.

#### **3. Who do you think undertake more pressure? Adults or children?**

Adults usually experience more pressure than children, in general, as they have the pressures of family life as well as work and other responsibilities. However, as children get older and go into middle school, for example, the pressure builds up as they have an increasing amount of homework – this can get more intense the older they become. So, it depends on the age really, as to how much stress people endure, as well, of course, as their individual life circumstances.

**Describe a recent change in life that helps you save a lot of time.**

You should say:

What it is

What you have done

How it helps you save time

And explain how you feel about this change

A recent change in my life that really saved me a lot of time was when I moved house to live near to my workplace. You see, I work in a small company in the West of Beijing, set in one of the hutongs. It's a boutique interior design studio. I used to have to commute for an hour or more to get from my home, where I lived with my parents, in the south of the city, to my workplace, and it was not pleasant. I had to change subway lines twice and travel in the thick crowds of rush-hour. I hated it. So, when I got a bit of a promotion, I decided to rent an apartment near to my workplace. I found a really nice loft apartment literally 2 minutes walk from our interior design studio.

As you can imagine, living right next to my place of work was so much more convenient than living over an hour away. Not only did I save time getting to work, of course, but I completely cut out the painful and horrid subway journey. I now only have to walk down a pleasant little narrow street, listening to the sound of the birds, before turning left at the corner, and arriving at work. It's fantastic. So, not only did this change save me a lot of time, but also saved me my sanity too!!! I am a sensitive person, and these things can really make a huge difference to my mood in general, and as a result, my work performance too.

**Part 3**

1. Do you think technology helps people to save time?

Technology usually helps people save time, or at least should do. However, there are also incidents when technology can actually cause more hassle and more problems than doing things the traditional way. It's a double-edged sword, really. But, ideally, most forms of modern technology are designed to streamline processes and save time, most certainly.

2. Do you think parents and schools should be responsible for teaching children to save time?

That's a bit of a strange question in my view, but... anyway.....I think that both at home and in school time management skills are important. And there are slightly different ways people should learn to manage their time as they get older. In school time management is key to getting homework done and hitting project deadlines. At home, likewise, parents need to supervise kids doing homework, to some extent, and raise their awareness of how best to manage their time so they balance schoolwork with leisure time. So, in different ways I would say teaching "saving time", or "time management" is the job of both parents and teachers in school.

3. Do you think it will be easier for people who can manage time well to become successful?

I think that successful people have a great sense of discipline, usually, anyway, and are excellent at managing their time. At least this is the impression I get. Most people I know who are successful in life are excellent at concentrating, dividing up their time between social life and work life, and knowing how to focus when they need to, on the things that matter, when they matter. So, yes, I think it is easier to become successful if you are a good time manager.

**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 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 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 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!

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