

# Cambridge IGCSE<sup>®</sup> (9–1)

# SET C

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**FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH**

**0990/01**

Paper 1 Reading

INSERT

**2 hours**

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## **INFORMATION**

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–1(e)** on the question paper.

**Text A: Can a 'happy to chat' bench really tackle the epidemic of loneliness among the elderly?**

*This text is an article about loneliness among elderly people.*

If you walk along the Victorian promenade in Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, you'll notice one bench that sticks out from the rest. Sitting 100 metres from the pier head is a bright yellow sign marking "The 'Happy to Chat' bench: sit here if you don't mind someone stopping to say hello."

It was unveiled earlier this year in a bid to tackle loneliness among the elderly in the seaside town, where pensioners make up a third of the population. 5

The idea is championed by Ashley Jones of the Senior Citizen Liaison Team, who got involved after meeting an 89-year-old widow who had given away more than £25,000 of her savings to a con artist because his phone calls were her only human interaction. 10

More than nine million people in the UK say they "often or always" feel lonely, according to the British Red Cross. With the problem so endemic, can something as simple as a bench really be enough to fix the problem?

I got chatting to 67-year-old Ann Davies. She has lived alone since her divorce 13 years ago, and spends much of her time volunteering. 15

Full of natural wit, it's very easy to warm to Ann after just a few minutes. At one point she reaches over and fixes my wonky jacket collar – "I've got to do this" – as she explains why she takes regular advantage of Burnham's chatty bench. "Even just somebody looking at it is enough – they say, 'Oh, this is a good idea, what's all that about then?'. You start chatting about the bench, and it goes on from there. 'Are you on holiday? Do you come down every year?'. It's just natural. 20

Next, I meet Helen Brodie MBE who joined forces with Ann to set up the Women Who Write group, which sends postcards and letters to elderly people in care homes.

The pair have used the bench to strike up a number of conversations with strangers. Recently, they chatted to a man who was missing one of his thumbs. After a while of talking, Ann asked what the story was, and the man explained he had chopped his thumb off in a work accident. 25

Another lady, in her eighties, told Helen that she had been evacuated to Burnham during the Second World War. "She is quite isolated and doesn't get anybody to chat to, and she was worried about boring me," Helen remembers. "But I was sat here listening for hours." 30

As the afternoon wears on, and the gloomy sky dims further, I call it a day and travel back to London with my spirits high. Perhaps there is hope for neighbourliness after all.

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

**Text B: Poignant loneliness film released by  
The Silver Line in time for Christmas**

*This text is a review of a film called *The Anniversary*.*

The Silver Line film shows a lady alone in her home recalling an anniversary gift brought for her by her husband. She then sits at a desk from which she removes a framed photograph of her husband and then a photograph album dedicated to their wedding anniversaries. At midnight she lights a candle and then looks through the album, ending at an empty page headed '50th anniversary – Renewing our vows'. She speaks the only words of the film through her tears: "Happy Anniversary my darling." 5

The release of the film in the run up to Christmas has been timed to maximise its fundraising potential with the charity hoping to bring in much-needed donations.

The Silver Line Founder, Dame Esther Rantzen, has spoken about loneliness on the release of the film, "I always remember the Queen's quote when she went to New York to commemorate those lost in 9/11. She said 'Grief is the price we pay for love'. Loneliness is also often the price we pay for loss. Loss sometimes of sight, or hearing, or a job, but very often, as in my case, and in this film, the loss of a loving partner." 10  
15

Speaking about the film, producer Beastall said, "I love the challenge of making a film that speaks to people despite there being very little said – in the case of Silver Line's film it's four words.

"The film is all about this lady's story and how she came to be lighting a candle on her wedding anniversary. Sad though it is, we needed to convey the sense of despair some people are experiencing." 20

"The Silver Line is there to listen to these people and through the film I know they will raise funds and awareness of the charity too."

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

### **Text C: Mrs Palfrey at the Claremont**

*This text is taken from the start of a novel. Mrs Palfrey, whose husband has recently died, moves into a hotel in London called The Claremont.*

Mrs Palfrey first came to the Claremont Hotel on a Sunday afternoon in January. Rain had closed in over London, and her taxi sloshed along the almost deserted Cromwell Road, past one cavernous porch after another, the driver going slowly and poking his head out into the wet, for the hotel was not known to him. This discovery, that he did not know, had a little disconcerted Mrs Palfrey, for she did not know it either, and began to wonder what she was coming to. She tried to banish terror from her heart. She was alarmed at the threat of her own depression. 5

If it's not nice, I needn't stay, she promised herself, her lips slightly moving, as she leaned forward in the taxi, looking from side to side of the wide, frightening road, almost dreading to read the name Claremont over one of those porches. There were so many hotels, one after the other along this street, all looking much the same. 10

She had simply chanced on an advertisement in a Sunday newspaper while staying in Scotland with her daughter Elizabeth. Reduced winter rates. Excellent cuisine. We can take *that* with a pinch of salt, she had thought at the time.

At last the cab slowed down. 'Claremont Hotel' she read, as clear as could be, in large letters across what must be two - even, perhaps, three - large houses made into one. She felt relieved. The porch pillars had been recently painted; there were spotted laurels in the window-boxes; clean curtains - a front of emphatic respectability. 15

She hauled herself out of the taxi and, leaning on her rubber-tipped walking-stick, crossed the pavement and climbed a few steps. Her varicose veins pained her today. 20

She was a tall woman with big bones and a noble face, dark eyebrows and a neatly folded jowl. She would have made a distinguished-looking man and, sometimes, wearing evening dress, looked like some famous general in drag.

Followed by the driver and her luggage (for the hotel gave no sign of life), she battled with revolving doors and almost lurched into the hushed vestibule. The receptionist was coldly kind, as if she were working in a nursing-home, and one for deranged patients at that. '*What* a day!' she said. The taxi-driver, lumbering in with the suitcases, seemed alien in this muffled place, and was at once taken over by the porter. Mrs Palfrey opened her handbag and carefully picked out coins. Everything she did was unhurried, almost authoritative. 25 30

She had always known how to behave. Even as a bride, in strange, alarming conditions in Burma, she had been magnificent, calm - when (for instance) she was rowed across floods to her new home; unruffled, finding it more than damp, with a snake wound round the banisters to greet her. She had straightened her back and given herself a good talking-to, as she had this afternoon in the train. 35

When the porter had put down her suitcases and gone, she thought that prisoners must feel as she did now, the first time they are left in their cell, first turning to the window, then facing about to stare at the closed door: after that, counting the paces from wall to wall. She envisaged this briskly. 40

From the window she could see - could see only - a white brick wall down which dirty rain slithered, and a cast-iron fire-escape, which was rather graceful. She tried to see that it was graceful. The outlook - especially on this darkening afternoon - was daunting; but the backs of hotels, which are kept for indigent ladies, can't be expected to provide a view, she knew. 45

The best is kept for honeymooners, though God alone knew why they should require it.

The bed looked rather high, and the carpet was worn, but not threadbare. Roses could be made out. A corner fireplace was boarded up, but still had a hearth before it of peacock-blue tiles. The radiator gave off a dry, scorched smell and subdued noises. Heavy wooden knobs to the drawers of the chest, she noted. It was more like a maid's bedroom. 50



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