

2014-DSE
ENG LANG

PAPER 2 Model Essays

**2014 HKDSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PAPER 2
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PART A

Life in Lucky Village 40 years ago

Four decades ago, life in Lucky Village was very different to how it is now. **Nestled** halfway up a mountain, the villagers **scratched a living** from the land. It was relatively isolated, with just the occasional surrounding village several miles away. Most residents lived in poverty, residing in **ramshackle** huts, in conditions barely better than the pigs and chickens that were their main source of their food.

An event that changed Lucky Village

In the typhoon season of 1983, an event occurred that would alter Lucky Village forever. A **devastating** landslide occurred in the region where Lucky Village and its neighbouring settlements were located. Whole villages were wiped out: lives were lost, homes were destroyed, and **livelihoods** were ruined. Just one village was undamaged: Lucky Village. Survivors from the surrounding villages **flocked to** Lucky Village, where they were greeted with generous **hospitality**. Rumours and myths began to spread about why this place had been spared by the landslide, and visitors from far and wide made **pilgrimages** to the village.

What Lucky Village is famous for

Today, Lucky Village is a popular tourist destination, and has almost doubled in size since the day of the landslide. It is famous across Asia for its strangely lucky fate in escaping destruction that day, and today you can visit a large visitor-centre, which outlines the various claims and **conspiracy theories** about why and how the village was saved. Since the rise in tourism in this previously tiny village, the lives of its residents have improved **beyond belief**. The economic boom that followed their lucky escape has perhaps been the **luckiest break** of all!

(257 words)

PART B

2. Learning English through Sports Communication

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Peak School's Sports Club, to make a suggestion regarding the old equipment that Fitty's Fitness Centre no longer needs. **It has come to my attention** recently **that** your fitness centre is currently undergoing renovation. In the event that this involves removing old equipment, I would like to suggest that you might wish to donate this equipment to Peak School. This donation would have benefits for both parties.

First, a gift of old equipment from Fitty's Fitness Centre would bring **immeasurable** benefits to Peak School. As a state-funded organisation, our school cannot afford to buy the latest sports equipment, and our gym is suffering as a result. **As it stands**, much of the equipment is in a severe state of **disrepair**. Consequently, few students use the school gym; as fellow fitness enthusiasts, I am sure that you will share my **dismay** at this **state of affairs**. If Peak School were to receive a gift of some second-hand equipment from your fitness centre, I believe that the popularity of the school gym would increase, thus improving the health and wellbeing of hundreds of students.

Such a donation would also be advantageous for your fitness centre. In the event of your kind cooperation, we would be happy to put up a permanent plaque in the school gym, thanking Fitty's Fitness Centre for their donation. We would also hold a grand re-opening event at the school gym, which you would be most welcome to co-host with us. Both would provide excellent opportunities for you to **publicise** your fitness centre. I am sure that **in the light of** your current renovations, you will be looking for new customers; I believe that donating to Peak School would be a **fruitful** opportunity for this.

Indeed, I have hopes that by donating your old equipment to us, Fitty's Fitness Centre would begin a lasting and **mutually beneficial** relationship with Peak School. We could **explore the possibility of** holding sporting events together in the future, for example. You might also consider offering a discount to Peak School's pupils, parents and staff, thus **incentivising** this large local community to attend your fitness centre. In return, our school might be interested in using your facilities for sporting activities, such as weekly swimming lessons.

I hope that you will consider my proposal that you donate some of your unwanted equipment to Peak School. If you are interested, please contact me on chris.wong@peakschool.com, and we can negotiate some of the finer details, such as what equipment you would be happy to donate. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong

(441 words)

3. Learning English through Drama

RE: Poor behaviour on last week's trip to City Hall

Dear Drama Club members,

As you are all aware, a number of us attended a drama performance at City Hall last week. Unfortunately, I have received a complaint from City Hall regarding the behaviour of our group. We need to deal with this situation **promptly** and maturely, in order to ensure that we can have more trips like this in the future.

City Hall's first complaint was that our group made a lot of noise throughout the performance. Apparently, there were many students rustling food packaging and crunching food loudly. This was very **disruptive** for the rest of the audience. I understand that this was the first drama performance that some of our members had ever attended. However, this is no excuse for such unacceptable behaviour. When we are on trips, we must **bear in mind** that we are representing the school. As a result of this complaint, I have decided that we will not bring any food into performances in the future.

The second complaint was the most shocking to me, as I was completely unaware of this occurrence. The City Hall representative claimed that a small group of students went backstage during the **interval**, disturbed some of the actors, and had to be **forcibly** removed by City Hall staff. Clearly, this behaviour is absolutely **intolerable**. If you were part of this group, please **own up** immediately so that we can discuss this issue further. We cannot allow the actions of the minority to spoil our **hard-earned** reputation, so I suggest that you identify yourselves, in order to resolve this issue.

To **rectify** our group's actions, I would like each person who attended the performance to write a letter of thanks and apology to the staff at City Hall. By behaving improperly, we have abused their generosity in allowing us to attend the performance, and we need to attempt to mend our relationship with this establishment. Since the complaint has also been passed onto the Head of Drama, I intend to write a letter to Ms Lam, to persuade her that the Drama Club is mature enough to go on more trips in the future. If anybody would like to volunteer to help me write this letter, please let me know.

The Drama Club is a fantastic group, which **is** usually **a credit to** the school. It is a shame that we have potentially **tarnished** this reputation; we now need to act together to **remedy** the situation. I look forward to hearing from each of you. I will also see you all as normal after school on Tuesday for our club session.

All the best,
Chris Wong

(448 words)

4. Learning English through Social Issues

Dear Editor,

I have been following the debate in the *Hong Kong Daily* about Hong Kong as a filming location with great interest. Some people **vehemently** oppose the idea of filming movies in our **heaving** city centre, but I would like to suggest that the pros of this practice could outweigh the cons, if it is carried out sensitively.

One major advantage of allowing filming in the centre is the employment opportunities that it could offer to local people. There are almost 120 thousand people **out of work** in Hong Kong, many of them young people who are struggling to get a job in today's competitive market. Allowing film companies to work in Hong Kong would offer opportunities to work, or to gain **invaluable** experience in the film industry. There would be many positions as **extras**, as well as organisational roles. Whilst these positions might admittedly be short-term, they would provide experience that would assist people in future job applications.

If international **blockbusters** were to be filmed in Hong Kong, our city's global profile would experience a significant boost. Research has shown that Hong Kong is lacking in instantly recognisable landmarks. If Victoria Peak, for example, could be featured in films that are shown around the world, Hong Kong would surely **be placed firmly on the map** as a desirable tourist destination. I am confident that this would directly increase the number of tourists, bringing **innumerable** benefits to the city, particularly economically. In short, allowing filming in Hong Kong would raise the international profile of Hong Kong, and encourage tourists to visit.

On the other hand, I agree with previous contributors to this debate that filming in the city centre of Hong Kong could cause problems. Making Hong Kong the star of international films would clearly be positive for the city and its residents, but the **brass tacks** of the process would have to be carefully planned, in order to avoid extensive inconvenience to locals. For example, filming companies should be forced to film late at night if possible, to avoid disruption to traffic. If they have to film during the day, locations should be carefully selected in order to cause **minimal** inconvenience to the people who use Hong Kong's roads and buildings every day. Whilst filming in Hong Kong would be overall beneficial for the city, the everyday needs of local people must be made a priority.

Allowing the filming of movies in Hong Kong would provide substantial economic benefits to the city, through an increase in employment opportunities and international tourism. However, these benefits would only be **worthwhile** if the needs and wellbeing of local residents are taken into consideration.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong

(446 words)

5. Learning English through Debating

Dear Ms Lee,

As chairperson of the Student Union, I am writing to present the views of students on the subject of school lockers. The current policy is that only a few students are able to access school lockers, and I would like to respectfully request that this policy be changed, for the following reasons.

According to a survey that I have **conducted** across the whole school, 82% of students without lockers find it ‘a great inconvenience’ not to have access to lockers. One reason given frequently by students for this inconvenience was that it is difficult to remember what they need to bring to school each day. Furthermore, a number of students **cited** occasions on which the day of their sports practice was moved at the last minute. Since they had not planned to bring in their sports kit that day, they were excluded from these sessions. Allowing students to store their belongings in school lockers would **aid** students’ personal organisation, and allow them to take part in **spontaneous** extra-curricular activities.

Alarmingly, over 90% of students without lockers reported **recurring** pain in the back and neck. Students have to carry heavy books, sometimes including multiple textbooks, as well as other school **paraphernalia**, such as stationary and musical instruments. Certain students bear this heavy load for long distances, as they walk to school. This is known to be damaging to delicate back and neck muscles, particularly in the developing bodies of children. I know that you, as school Principal, care deeply about the health and well-being of your students. Providing wider access to school lockers would **alleviate** the pressures on students’ young backs, and have a direct positive impact on their health.

Finally, I recognise that providing every student with a locker would **incur** a cost to the school, and there might be issues regarding where the lockers would be located. If these issues were **insurmountable**, perhaps we could reach a **compromise**. 68% of students, including those with lockers, felt that the current method of locker **allocation** is unfair. According to the existing system, lockers are provided as rewards for academic excellence. The result is that the same outstanding students tend to have access to the lockers throughout their school career. I would suggest that a fairer system would be to randomly **allocate** the lockers each term, resulting in more students having the opportunity to make use of this valuable facility.

We are lucky to attend this outstanding school, and we appreciate senior leadership’s willingness to listen to the student voice. I hope that you will consider changing the policy on this issue, bearing in mind the large proportion of students who are currently affected by lack of access to school lockers.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Wong

(456 words)

6. Learning English through Workplace Communication

A Whale of a Time!

As a student, it's tempting to spend the summer relaxing and **recuperating** from a hard year of schoolwork. This year, however, I **took the plunge** into the world of work and was employed by Ocean Park as a costumed performer. Here is what it was like to spend the summer holiday dressed as a giant whale.

A typical day as a costumed whale at Ocean Park involved a lot of standing around, entertaining the visitors who approached me. The purpose of my role was to entertain guests with my **hilarious** costume, as well as to provide interesting facts about whales. I would arrive at Ocean Park half an hour before opening time, so that I had time to look over the whale facts I had to memorise, and put on my **cumbersome** costume. Then, I would spend the whole day standing by the Grand Aquarium. Mainly, I had photos with amused visitors and sometimes, they stayed long enough for me to tell them the facts I had learned. At lunchtime, I would go to the staff office to enjoy my packed lunch, before going back to my spot by the Grand Aquarium until closing-time.

The experience was mainly positive. For one thing, I now know a great deal of information about whales, which could come in useful one day! (Did you know, by the way, that a blue whale's tongue is as heavy as an elephant?) I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the visitors, particularly the children who enjoyed playing and dancing with me while I stomped around in my costume. Most of the children were **adorable**. I also felt very privileged to gain **behind the scenes** access to Ocean Park. As an animal enthusiast, it was truly thrilling to spend some time with the animals after the park closed to the public.

However, my summer experience certainly made me appreciate the challenges involved in being a costumed character performer. The issue that **plagued** me all day was the heat: my whale costume was very heavy, and lacked ventilation, meaning that it was almost unbearably **stuffy**, particularly when the weather was warm. Problems also arose when dealing with children: some ill-disciplined children kicked and mocked me, while others were frightened by my costume and started crying when I tried to speak to them. This only applied to a small minority of kids, but it was nonetheless irritating and embarrassing whenever it occurred.

Overall, working as a costumed whale at Ocean Park was a brilliant experience. I gained skills in entertaining and interacting with other people, as well as patience and **resilience**. I **had a whale of a time**, in the **figurative** and the **literal** sense!

(449 words)

7. Learning English through Popular Culture

Stand Up for Comedy

Do you break out in a sweat when you're asked to tell a joke? I know I do. Now imagine telling jokes for twenty minutes on a stage in front of a crowd of people. That's exactly what stand-up comedians do. I hadn't quite realised just how **nerve-wracking** the experience must be until I saw a stand-up comedy show last week.

The stand-up comedy show at the Coffee Shack last week absolutely **blew me away**. Throughout the evening, young stand-up comedians took it in turns to go onstage and give a twenty-minute comedy performance. There was a wide range of performances: some told **one-liners**; others told traditional jokes; some told funny **anecdotes** from their own lives. These **anecdotal** performances were my favourites. Whether the stories were true or not was irrelevant: the **punchline** was invariably hilarious. The performance took place in a café, which created a relatively chilled-out atmosphere. However, standing on the stage with a single spotlight must have been a **daunting** experience.

Indeed, attending this performance made me truly appreciate the challenges of being a stand-up comedian. Although most were supported by the crowd, there were a few very awkward moments. A few performers struggled to get any laughs from the audience, resulting in **strained** silences. Even worse, some performers were **heckled** by the audience. This must have been extremely challenging to deal with. From what I saw, the most effective method was for performers to react quickly to the **hecklers** with a witty **comeback**. However, this is easier said than done. Being a stand-up comedian requires **nerves of steel** and the ability to **think on one's feet**. It's certainly not an occupation for the **faint-hearted**.

The performers I saw were very inspiring, and I believe that other students at Peak School could benefit from watching them too. Seeing people behaving so confidently on stage inspired me to be more confident myself. It was also fascinating to watch people coping with criticism in such a public arena. For me, it **put my problems into perspective**; although I might be facing criticism from my teachers or my peers, for example, at least I am not being publically humiliated onstage! Other students might have a similarly encouraging experience. At the very least, I would recommend watching a stand-up comedy show to enjoy an evening of relaxation. We are all aware of the importance of having time to wind down after a long day of studying.

I have so much respect for stand-up comedians. I would encourage all the students at this school to watch this kind of performance, for an evening of hilarity and entertainment.

(439 words)

8. Learning English through Poems and Songs

Set Your Talents Free!

As many of you know, earlier this year I entered a poetry competition as part of the Hong Kong Schools Poetry Festival. Ms Lee suggested that I enter the competition to find Hong Kong's most promising young poet. Despite my initial **reluctance**, I learned a great deal from this experience.

To prepare for the competition, I first conducted **extensive** research into previous winners, to see if there was a particular 'winning' style or subject. It was reassuring to find that the winning poems were very diverse, so I did not feel that I had to **modify** my poems to fit a particular mould. I then reviewed my collection of poetry, to try to find the best one. This proved a near-impossible task alone; instead, I had to **face my fears**, and show some of my poetry to other people. Choosing a selection of my personal favourites, I approached friends, family and teachers to ask them for advice. Most people complimented 'Droplets of Joy', and so this is the poem I entered into the competition.

Entering the competition was a simple process, but emotionally complex. To start with, I **was in two minds about** entering the competition at all. The winner would have their poem published in a highly-respected **anthology**; to see my work in print would be the achievement of my life's ambition, and yet the thought of my inner feelings being displayed to the world filled me with **dread**. I got through to the second round of the competition, which involved reciting my poem in a public **recital** at school. This was extremely intimidating, but I did it. I would like to thank everybody who attended the recital, and gave me such **raucous** applause. It was one of the proudest moments of my life.

I didn't win the competition in the end, but the experience taught me some important lessons that I would like to share with you, my fellow students. Showing your talents to other people can make you feel vulnerable; however, it is crucial that you do not hide your talent. As a wise man once said, nobody would light a lamp and hide it under a basket. So if you **foster** a talent, it would be **appalling** never to show it to anybody. Another valuable lesson that I learned was that although I do not consider myself 'popular', the school community really came together to support me during this time. Even if you think you are alone, if you ask for help, there are people at this school who will come forward and surprise you with their encouragement.

I would like to encourage everyone not to be afraid to **nurture** and display your talents, even if it makes you nervous. What's more, you might be pleasantly surprised by the friends that you make in the process.

(474 words)

9. Learning English through Short Stories

A Swift Departure

There are a lot of rumours about Sally Lee. I've heard people say that she was a foreign spy. I've heard people say that she had killed someone. I've heard people say that she never existed. But she did exist. She was my roommate, and this is her story.

Looking back, I suppose that the clues were there from the very start. Before my arrival, I had been told that I hadn't been allocated a roommate. So when I arrived at my student room, **laden** with bags and nerves about the years ahead, I was surprised to see a mild-looking young woman in my room. Assuming that it was just an administrative error, I greeted her and was soon confident that we would be **firm friends**.

Perhaps I should have become **sceptical** about her position when she was not registered for any classes. She attended the classes with the largest lectures; of course, it's easiest to hide in a crowd. I told her that she should complain to the admin office. But she would always laugh it off, **quipping** that she was always being forgotten.

Apart from these seemingly small glitches, she did nothing to arouse suspicion. She worked harder than anybody else I knew, and she was the perfect roommate: tidy, quiet and friendly. I could see from her tatty clothes and second-hand belongings that she had money problems. I was well aware that university tuition was expensive, but being quite well-off myself, I helped her out whenever I could, without embarrassing her.

Our relationship was uneventful until that **fateful** night two months into the first term. I came back to my room after a long day studying at the library, to find Sally frantically **shoving** her modest belongings in a tattered suitcase. A river of tears was streaming down her cheeks, and she was jerking from barely-**stifled** sobs. "Sally!" I cried, catching her small, cold hands in my own. "What are you doing?"

Between her **heartfelt** sobs, she explained everything, her eyes downcast as if ashamed. It turned out that she had never enrolled at the university. She hadn't been able to afford the tuition fees, but she was desperate to study and escape the poverty which loomed over her like a spectre. "I thought," she moaned, "that if they saw how hard I worked, they might give me a degree anyway. I don't know... I **wasn't thinking straight!**"

Now, the university had found out, and were threatening to **escort** her from the premises. "I have to get out before they throw me out; it would be too humiliating!"

Ignoring my assurances that we would find a solution, that she must **be eligible for** a grant, Sally said with devastating **resignation** that it was too late. She reached out and gave me a tight, warm hug. Then, suitcase in hand, she walked from the room with her head held high. That was my last sight of Sally. My attempts to find her have always been **futile**. I hope that she managed to evade the life of poverty that she had tried so hard to flee.

(520 words)