PART 1 – COMPREHENSION AND INTERPRETATION

Question A

Read the following text

He's moving towards the bed when he hears a low rumbling sound, gentle thunder gathering in volume, and stops to listen. It tells him everything. He looks back over his shoulder to the window for confirmation. Of course, a comet is so distant it's bound to appear stationary. Horrified, he returns to his position by the window. The sound holds at a steady volume while he revises the scale again, zooming inwards this time, from solar dust and ice back to the local. Only three or four seconds have passed since he saw this fire in the sky and changed his mind about it twice. It's travelling along a route that he himself has taken many times in his life, and along which he's gone through the routines, adjusting his seat-back and his watch, putting away his papers, always curious to see if he can locate his own house down among the immense almost beautiful orange-grey sprawl; east to west, along the southern banks of the Thames, two thousand feet up, in the final approaches to Heathrow.

It's directly south of him now, barely a mile away, soon to pass into the topmost lattice of the bare plane trees, and then behind the Post Office Tower, at the level of the lowest microwave dishes. Despite the city lights, the contours of the plane aren't visible in the early-morning darkness. The fire must be on the nearside wing where it joins the fuselage, or perhaps in one of the engines slung below. The leading edge of the fire is a flattened white sphere which trails away in a cone of yellow and red, less like a meteor or comet than an artist's lurid impression of one. As though in a pretence of normality, the landing lights are flashing. But the engine note gives it all away. Above the usual deep and airy roar, is a straining, choking, banshee sound growing in volume – both a scream and a sustained shout, an impure, dirty noise that suggests unsustainable mechanical effort beyond the capacity of hardened steel, spiralling upwards to an end point, irresponsibly rising and rising like the accompaniment to a terrible fairground ride. Something is about to give.

He no longer thinks of waking Rosalind. Why wake her into this nightmare? In fact, the spectacle has the familiarity of a recurrent dream. Like most passengers, outwardly subdued by the monotony of air travel, he often lets his thoughts range across the possibilities while sitting, strapped down and docile, in front of a packaged meal. Outside, beyond a wall of thin steel and cheerful creaking plastic, it's minus sixty degrees and forty thousand feet to the ground. Flung across the Atlantic at five hundred feet a second, you submit to the folly because everyone else does. Your fellow passengers are reassured because you and the others around you appear calm. Looked at in a certain way - deaths per passenger mile - the statistics are consoling. And how else attend a conference in Southern California? Air travel is a stock market, a trick of mirrored perceptions, a fragile alliance of pooled belief; so long as nerves hold steady and no bombs or wreckers are on board, everybody prospers. When there’s failure, there will be no half measures. Seen another way - deaths per journey - the figures aren’t so good. The market could plunge.

(560 words)

from Saturday, Ian McEwan (1948 - )
Say whether each of the following statements is True (T), False (F) or Not Stated (NS). Put a cross on the correct box

1. The protagonist is travelling on a plane.
   T ☐ F ☐ NS ☐

2. The protagonist mentally revisits a fixed pattern of actions he often takes before landing at Heathrow.
   T ☐ F ☐ NS ☐

3. The fire is spreading inside the plane.
   T ☐ F ☐ NS ☐

4. The comet in the sky is a sign of ill omen, foreshadowing that the plane is going to crash.
   T ☐ F ☐ NS ☐

5. The plane coming in to land has been flying over the Atlantic.
   T ☐ F ☐ NS ☐

Answer the following questions. Use complete sentences and your own words.

1. What narrative technique is used in this passage and from whose point of view are the events narrated? What is the overall effect of this choice?

2. Focus on the language of sense impressions. The protagonist indeed perceives the reality surrounding him through his senses. Which sense(s) is/are most used? Support your statements with relevant quotations from the text.

3. Explain the meaning of the simile “like the accompaniment to a terrible fairground ride” (lines 20-21) by referring to the text.
Read the following text

**Schools in England Introduce a New Subject: Mindfulness**

LONDON — Students in England already learn about mathematics, science and history, but hundreds of schools are preparing to expand the traditional curriculum with a new subject: mindfulness.

In up to 370 English schools, students will start to practise mindfulness as part of a study to improve youth mental health, the British government said.

They will work with mental health experts to learn relaxation techniques, breathing exercises and other methods to “help them regulate their emotions,” the government said in a news release announcing the program.

The goal of the program is to study which approaches work best for young people in a world of rapid change. The government said the study, which will run until 2021, is one of the largest of its kind in the world.

“As a society, we are much more open about our mental health than ever before, but the modern world has brought new pressures for children,” Damian Hinds, the British education secretary, said in a statement.

“Children will start to be introduced gradually to issues around mental health, well-being and happiness right from the start of primary school,” he added.

The initiative comes months after a survey commissioned by the National Health Service found that one in eight children in England between the ages of 5 and 19 suffered from at least one mental disorder at the time of their assessment in 2017.

The survey, which was published in November, also indicated a slight increase in mental disorders in five to 15-year-olds, which rose to 11.2 percent in 2017 from 9.7 percent in 1999. Disorders like anxiety and depression were the most common, affecting one in 12 children and early adolescents in 2017, and appeared more often in girls.

Imran Hussain, the director of policy and campaigns for Action for Children, a British charity, in the United Kingdom, called it a “children’s mental health crisis.”

“Every day our front-line services see children and teenagers struggling to get to grips with how they fit into the increasingly complex modern world — contending with things like intense pressure at school, bullying or problems at home, all while being bombarded by social media,” he said in a statement on Monday.

He added: “Services like these can lessen the anxiety, pain and anguish that some teens go through, but also reduce their need for intensive support further down the line.”

(394 words)

Choose the answer which fits best according to the text. Circle one letter.

1. Mindfulness will be introduced in some English schools
   a. as a practical subject
   b. as an experimental course
   c. to cure mentally ill pupils
   d. to improve the quality of the school syllabus

2. English students will be taught to
   a. develop public health professional skills
   b. modify their behaviour and personality
   c. recognise and manage their feelings
   d. increase their lung capacity

3. Young people in contemporary society
   a. feel stressed out and anxious
   b. tend to neglect their well-being
   c. receive little attention from society
   d. may tend to overestimate themselves

4. Mindfulness has been introduced as a result of
   a. a detailed academic study
   b. a mandatory form of assistance
   c. an online questionnaire returned by families
   d. a detailed analysis of children’s mental state

5. The British charity “Action for Children”
   a. deals with young people and their real worries
   b. provides online expert advice daily
   c. offers assistance to teenagers addicted to technology
   d. manages government campaigns against bullying

Answer the following questions. Use complete sentences and your own words.

1. How will young people benefit from practising mindfulness?

2. What issues does the phrase “children’s mental health crisis” imply?
Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca

PART 2 - WRITTEN PRODUCTION

Complete both Task A and Task B.

TASK A

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.” — Jane Goodall, English primatologist and anthropologist.

Discuss the quotation in a 300-word essay. Support your ideas by referring to your readings and/or to your personal experience.

TASK B

Reading books and watching films have a lot in common. However, they are two very different life events. Write a 300-word article for your school magazine about your choices and personal experiences regarding reading books and watching films, highlight the diverse features of both, say which you prefer, and why.

END OF EXAMINATION