

Register Number:

Date:

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BENGALURU - 27**

**END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: JULY-AUGUST 2022**

**II SEMESTER - BSC/BA/BCOM/BBA/BCA/BSW/BVC**

**L1 GE 221 - General English**

**Time: 2 hours Max Marks: 60**

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. **This paper is for students of II semester L1 GENERAL ENGLISH**
2. **This paper has SIX printed pages and THREE themes.**
3. **Please answer ANY ONE theme. Don’t answer questions at random from different themes.**
4. **DO NOT exceed the suggested word limit. Please indicate word count after each response.**
5. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**

**THEME 1**

**I. Read the following excerpt from Ruskin Bond’s *Chocolates at Midnight* and answer the questions that follow.**

One of the great pleasures of life is the afternoon siesta. In Mexico and other Latin American countries it has been perfected to a fine art. In warm countries like ours it is almost a necessity, especially for a farmer toiling in his fields from daybreak to noon. An afternoon nap under a peepul tree or in the shade of a mighty banyan does wonders for body and soul.

I take my siesta on the same bed that I sleep upon at midnight; but if I am travelling I have no difficulty in taking a nap on a plane or in a bus or in a railway waiting room, although I must admit that it’s been many years since I travelled by train. Under a tree sounds romantic, but the last time I tried sleeping under a friendly horse chestnut I was woken by chestnuts falling on my head.

Bed is best, especially on a cold winter’s day in the hills. And, at night, a hot-water bottle helps. Given a warm bed, I sleep like a baby. But like a baby I am inclined to wake up at midnight or at one in the morning, feeling rather hungry. And for this purpose I keep a bar of chocolate on my bedside table. There’s nothing like a chunk of chocolate in the middle of the night. It helps me feel that all’s right with the world, and I fall asleep again to dream of cricket bats made of chocolate and rainbows made of sugar candy. You must try it sometime, those of you who find difficulty in sleeping.

But a few nights ago I woke up prematurely to hear something nibbling away on my bedside table. *Katr-katr, katr-katr,*came the ominous sound.

I switched on the bedside lamp, and there sat a fat rat, nibbling away at my chocolate!

Now I am generous with most things, and I am happy to share my chocolates with you, gentle reader, but I draw the line at rodents. So I flung a slipper at the rat, who dodged it and took off with some reluctance, and then I had to throw away the remains of the chocolate for fear of catching rat fever or something horrible.

Anyway, the next night I kept a fresh chocolate bar in a drawer of the dressing table, where I felt sure it would be safe. Once again, my dreams were interrupted by the nibble and crunch of small teeth embedding themselves in my chocolate bar. I sprang out of bed, rushed to the dressing table, pulled out the drawer, and out popped Master Rat, the champion chocolate-eater! Away he went, leaving behind only half a bar of chocolate for yours truly. Apparently he’d found a hole in the back of the drawer, and spurred on by greed, had burrowed his way to the object of his desire.

A trap! A trap was what I needed. So I borrowed my neighbour’s rat trap—not the kind that kills, but the kind that imprisons (which may be worse)—and set it up with my favourite chocolate as bait. They say rats prefer cheese, but I wasn’t taking any chances. Anyway, the trap worked, and in the morning I found a disgruntled rat staring at me through the bars of his prison like the Prisoner of Zenda. Picking up the trap, I walked with it for half a mile up the road, and then released Master Rat in the bushes behind a popular bakery. Very irresponsible of me, but I thought the precincts of the bakery would at least keep him occupied.

Three peaceful nights passed. Once again, I enjoyed my midnight chocolate snack. Then — katr, katr, katr… He was back again!

‘Once more into the breach, dear friends.’ Another trap was borrowed and Master Rat was jailed for a second time. And this time I was taking no chances. I engaged a taxi, drove to the Kempty Waterfall with the rat in its trap. And there flung the protesting rat into the waterfall, much as the villainous Moriarty had flung poor Sherlock Holmes over another waterfall. The last I saw of the rat, he was swimming strongly downstream towards the Yamuna Bridge.

Peace at last. Chocolates forever! Dreams of candyfloss and golden syrups…

And then: *katr, katr, katr*…

I switched on the bedside light.

Two rats were on my desk, having a tug of war with my chocolate bar.

There’s only one thing to do.

I’ll give up eating chocolates. I’ll starve those rats out of existence, even if, in the process, I must suffer from extreme malnutrition.

Later: I have compromised by eating my chocolates in the daytime.

* **Answer the following questions in FIVE-SIX lines each. (3x5=15)**
1. Why is the ritual of eating chocolate at night important to the writer? Do you have similar such rituals?
2. Draw a picture to show how you would visualize the words “katr katr katr”. You will not be graded on the quality of your illustration but your attempt at visualizing details.
3. Pick an interesting image from the story and tell us why you find it interesting.

**I. B. Answer the following questions in about 100-150 words each. (3x10=30)**

1. Comment on the writer’s relationship with the rodents. How does he use language to describe his frustration?

2. Describe the repetitive situation the writer finds himself in as he attempts to get rid of the rodents. Does he succeed in overcoming the situation?

3. The word ‘siesta’ comes from Spanish and indicates a rest or sleep taken after lunch. Is there evidence in the passage to indicate why siestas are likened to a ‘fine art’? Do you think sleeping is an art? Why?.

**I.C. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in about 150-200 words. (15 marks)**

1. Have you ever resisted falling asleep in a place you were not supposed to? Describe the challenge.

2. The writer gave up on eating chocolates during the day. Write about an instance from your life where you have had to compromise on something for someone.

**THEME 2**

**I. Read the following excerpt from Biswanath Ghosh’s *Chai Chai* and answer the questions that follow*.***

At four in the chilly morning, the town of Mughal Sarai was fast asleep. Not a

soul in sight. Only I was there, and the rickshaw puller who was taking me to a hotel that was supposed to be two kilometres away from the station. I should have felt important: it is not often that you find yourself to be the sole commuter on the mighty, five-hundred- years-old Grand Trunk Road—the lifeline of India, the highway of the Hindi heartland, the tar thread that runs along the Gangetic Plain to connect Punjabi aggression with Bengali intellect.

But I was nervous. I had heard only bad things about Mughal Sarai. An editor, who had never been there, told me the place was full of crime. A police constable, who had lived there, warned me that the place was infested with goondas. And now I was right there, at this vulnerable hour, completely at the mercy of a town that sat on the eastern edge of Uttar Pradesh, dangerously close to Bihar.

I was desperately hoping that the train would bring me to Mughal Sarai well after sunrise. But when you are too eager to avoid a situation, you invariably end up stepping on its tail, just the way I had stepped onto the platform now—at 3.15 in the morning.

The same platform, till twenty-five years ago, was a source of fascination for me rather than fear: the train would make an interminably long stoppage here during our annual trips from Kanpur to Calcutta. It was here that lunch was served, in compartmented aluminium or steel trays, along with tepid water that came in soft-drink-type glass bottles with no crown or cap. Hygiene was not much of an issue back then. And considering that hygiene and fun—gastronomically speaking—are mutually exclusive, it was fun to have railway food those days. You could catch a glimpse of the meal as stacks of trays would be loaded into the train by a liveried attendant, and the few moments in which you could see and smell the food from a distance would have built your appetite considerably by the time the tray was placed before you. These days, most of the fun is lost in wrestling with aluminium foils and obstinate plastic containers that have become an integral part of railway food. It is one thing to be served with a

set of puris that are still giving off steam, quite another to tear through layers of aluminium foil to ‘discover’ a soggy set of puris bunched together.

Those were the days. Right now, the idea was to linger in the station till daybreak was close enough for the town to be safe. I bought tea which the chaiwallah poured, to my great delight, in a clay pot and settled on a bench occupied partly by a dozing, elderly couple. Once my train had pulled out, the platform began to resemble a large ward of a government hospital, with dozens of people scattered around in improvised beds—on the floor, by the walls, on the benches. They all looked numbed and weary, as if reeling from an epidemic or a natural calamity. Some were asleep, some trying to sleep, some trying to stay awake. The arrival of a new train would generate minor excitement much

like the arrival of the doctor on his nightly round, when everybody rushes to him with quizzical eyes to find out what is in store for them. The train gone, they are quiet again, back to the state of daze, as if resigned to fate. I bought another cup of tea and a Hindi newspaper, then killed some more time strolling up and down the platform. But the station clock was moving too slow for my comfort. I ran out of patience and headed for the exit, where a swarm of rickshaw pullers and taxi drivers was waiting to embrace me like longlost relatives.

**I.A Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in about FIVE to SIX lines. (3x5=15)**

1. Explain what the author means when he calls the ‘Old Grand Trunk Road’ the lifeline of India?

2. Is the comparison of rickshaw pullers and taxi drivers to long-lost relatives an apt one? Why do you think the author makes this comparison?

3. Examine the author’s description of the town as a place dangerously close to

 Bihar. Why does he say this?

4. The word ‘livery’ means a special uniform worn by a servant or an official. Can you recollect an instance when you might have seen a ‘liveried attendant’? In what context are you likely to see such uniforms today?

**I.B. Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in about 100-150 words. (3x10=30)**

1. “But I was nervous. I had heard only bad things about Mughal Sarai.” Do you think there is a gap between the writer’s preconceived notions about Mughal Sarai and his actual experience? If so, what prompted this shift in perception?

2. Would you agree with the notion that the food that brings us most joy is also the most unhygienic? Explain why/why not? Use an instance from your personal experience to substantiate your argument

3. Would you say it is a natural temptation to observe people while travelling? Write about an amusing experience you’ve had with a fellow passenger.

4. From the writer’s description of his travel experiences, what kind of person do you imagine him to be? Explain.

**I.C. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in 150-200 words. (15 marks)**

1. Write about a memorable train journey. What images are evoked in your mind when you think of train journeys?

2. Write about the elaborate preparations that are made to prepare oneself/family for a journey? Is it more exhausting than the journey itself? Discuss.

**THEME 3**

1. **Read this article titled *Walking librarian — the Kerala woman who distributes over 500 books a month on foot* written by Radhamani K and answer the questions below.**

*Residents of the hilly Mothakkara village in Kerala’s Wayanad district had no easy access to books at the library. Then Radhamani took matters into her own hands.*

For as long as I can remember, reading has been one of my greatest joys. The way authors build a world through their writing and manage to capture a reader’s imagination never fails to amaze me. I believe that reading stays in our minds far longer than what we see.

When I was a child, I would read all kinds of stories to my father, who loved listening to them. He did not get much of an education and therefore, couldn’t read. I took it upon myself to read entire books to him. I would give him updates about events around the world by reading the news. I would even read the text on wrappers and anything with packaging delivered to our home from the grocery store! On my father’s behalf, I would write letters to our relatives and friends and then read those letters out loud so that he could check what I had written. That was perhaps how my love for reading began, and it grew as I grew older.

It was the same love that made me choose the job of a “walking librarian” at Pratibha Public Library, an offshoot of Library Movement in Kerala. The library was built in 1961 in my village Mothakkara, in the Mananthavady taluk of Kerala’s Wayanad district. This region is home to beautiful rivers, small waterfalls, farms and a wide diversity of birds and plants, and surrounded by lush green mountains.

Although the library has been around for almost 60 years, people in the village – women in particular – had no easy access to books until a few years ago. Despite their love for reading, their tight schedules, busy farming lives, and the distance and time to commute to the library made it difficult for them to visit regularly to borrow books. Their reading was limited to Mangalam, Manorama and other weekly magazines. Since 2012, when I started working at Pratibha Library, I have been delivering books to the homes of the library members six days a week. I give them two new books each time, collect them after eight days, and keep a record in the library register. I work based on the guidelines that the library council provides for book distribution and delivery.

By now, I have become familiar with the tastes of various members through continuous interaction. Every week, I look at the library’s collection of books and try to find books that would appeal to the members’ tastes. The library has over 11,000 books in the Malayalam, English and Hindi languages, and we currently have 102 members, including some senior citizens. I carry around 25 to 30 books every day – a mix of different genres – in a cloth shopping bag, so that members can select books of their choice. The cool weather in Wayanad makes it conducive for walking.

The ardent readers of my community now spend more time with books once they reach home from work. People who work outdoors, in the fields, also take books from me while I’m on my way to their houses. Now, no longer forced to restrict their reading to weekly magazines, people have started reading books of different genres regularly. My ability to create opportunities for them to read and bring smiles to their faces as they welcome books arriving at their home gives me great pleasure. All these years, I have been delivering 500-550 books a month on average. That changed with the pandemic in 2020 and the subsequent lockdown enforced to minimize its spread. I am no longer able to reach all areas as some have been declared containment zones. I am now able to deliver only 300-350 books a month. Yet, it’s been heartening to see the positive effect that reading has had on some people amidst the chaos that the pandemic brought along. Most members who were feeling stuck at home and low during the lockdown, find peace through reading the books that I deliver to their homes.

During this phase, I also started providing books to all the indigenous tribal children. It is a delight to see their excited faces when they see me with new books. Some children call me over the phone to confirm my next walk towards their houses! Over time, I have developed strong bonds with all the reading members. Some give me wonderful reviews on books that they find interesting and urge me to read them. I note down the titles of those books and make sure that I take them home next time. In a way, these members create opportunities for me to nurture my passion for reading. On a member’s recommendation, I recently read a book titled ‘Aadujeevitham’ by Benyamin. It impacted me deeply, and Najeeb – one of the characters in the book – will live forever in my mind, giving me strength and motivating me not to give up but fight in adverse situations.

I love everything about my job. It gives me an opportunity to expand my worldview by having interesting conversations and book discussions every day. I love sharing books and daily life with people. My job has taught me the most important lesson of life – what you give is what you reap. I treat all the library members with affection and care, and I earn respect from all in return. My experience as a librarian also helped me as a tourist guide, an additional role I took up in 2014. When I realized that I needed to learn more about a field that was completely new to me, I extended my love for reading to travelogues, travel books and books about different destinations across the globe. The confidence that I gained by interacting with members of the library helped me in my interactions with guests from around the world. That, in turn, helped me improve my English!

Some people hesitate to take membership in our library as it costs them ₹ 25. Those who can afford the registration fee pay for themselves. There are also those who love to read but cannot afford the fee. I pay their registration fee from my earnings so that everyone with a passion for reading gets books to read. Some members feel that I should be paid an additional amount for walking to their houses, but the excitement on the faces of readers when they see me with my books are my rewards. I feel very content that at 63 years of age, I am able to walk up to 4 kilometers every day, delivering books to people and being their “walking library”.

**I.A. Answer the following questions in about 5 - 6 lines. (3 x5 =15)**

1. The word ‘genre’ means a style or category of art, music, or literature. How do you understand the word in the context of this passage? What are some of your favourite genres?

2. What does the term ‘walking library’ denote? Is there evidence to suggest that this is a rewarding job?

3. What role does Radhamani play in promoting access to knowledge and literacy in her area?

**I. B. Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in about 150 words. (3x10=30)**

1. Is reading a good way of empowering marginalized communities? Why? Why not? Explain your stance.

2. Would you say it is important for students in the city to learn about the struggles of people living in rural areas? How does this awareness change your idea of education?

3. Have you encountered anyone practicing an ‘unusual’ occupation? Why do you think it is unusual?

4. “Some members feel that I should be paid an additional amount for walking to their houses, but the excitement on the faces of readers when they see me with my books are my rewards.” Do you think Radhamani should be paid an additional amount? If so, why?

**I. C. Answer ANY ONE of the following questions in about 150-200 words. (15 marks)**

1. Reflect on the image of Radhamani reading to her father. What can we make of it? How does it impact our understanding of first-generation learners?

2. Radhamani wrote this piece in Malayalam. Do you think we would have lost out on something valuable had it not been translated? What does this tell you about the importance of translation?