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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **9093/12**

Paper 1 Reading **February/March 2024**

2 hours 15 minutes

You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

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INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [ ].

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Section A: Directed response

Question 1

Read the following text, which is an article promoting 'forest bathing' from *National Geographic* website.

(a) You have recently been on a trip that involved time spent forest bathing. Write a blog post describing your experience and the benefits of forest bathing. Use 150–200 words. [10]

(b) Compare your blog post with the article, analysing form, structure and language. [15]

The secret to mindful travel? A walk in the woods

Visit these four destinations to practice the Japanese art of forest bathing.

Whether you call it a fitness trend or a mindfulness practice (or a bit of both), what exactly is forest bathing?

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Guided forest walks from Kitich Forest Camp are led by local Samburu trackers with intimate knowledge of the sounds, scents, and sights of the forest.

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Section B: Text analysis

Question 2

Read the following text, which is a review of a memoir.

Analyse the text, focusing on form, structure and language. [25]

Soundings by Doreen Cunningham review – a whale of a journey

A mother and her young son follow pods of whales from Mexico to Alaska in this brave, lyrical memoir

Almost a decade ago a group of Canadian and British scientists made a remarkable observation about the social lives of sperm whales in the Sargasso and Caribbean seas. While mother whales dived deep to hunt for squid, others assumed the role of 'allomothers', caring for the calf at the water's surface (the popular press referred to these whales as 'babysitters'). The paper by the scientists was part of a growing body of eye-opening research into whales' social behaviour, which centres on those close-knit groups called pods.

Pods, human as well as cetacean, come up repeatedly in Doreen Cunningham's debut, *Soundings*, a striking, brave and often lyrical book that defies easy interpretation. It's the story of a single mother and her two-year-old son, Max, and their journey to follow the whales that migrate from Baja California to the Arctic. But this is not really a work of natural history. Mother and son are in a state of turmoil and, like the whales they pursue, must navigate an environment that appears callous, if not hostile, and rely on friendship to get by. The experiences of the alienated pair are inseparable from their literary quarry, and as they travel up the Pacific coast, whale and human cultures seem to converge, eroding the gap between ourselves and our distant mammalian cousins.

An engineering graduate, Cunningham had a busy career as a London-based climate journalist, covering stories all around the world, including in Alaska (her time with Iñupiat whalers provides a key thread in the book as well as a wealth of fascinating ethnographic material). After a painful custody dispute with her son's father, she returns with the boy to Jersey, the island where she grew up. Depleted, insolvent and isolated, she takes refuge in a hostel for single mothers and it is here that she conceives her plan to follow whales with her young son.

Cunningham adroitly sidesteps much of the male-dominated narratives about whales and whaling, and clearly takes inspiration more from Inuit mythology than from Herman Melville[1]. She and her son make for an unconventionally heroic pair, travelling by plane, train, bus and boat, and incurring disapproving looks and small humiliations in their quest to spot grey whales. Initially it seems that nothing fits, including lifejackets, and at times the landscape seems irredeemably hostile. Whale mothers and their calves, meanwhile, surface and dive alongside the pair, and Cunningham movingly describes their bonds of cooperation, which find pointed echoes and contrasts in her travelling companions and personal relationships. Her sensuous descriptions of grey whales and humpbacks provide some of the book's richest passages; she looks at the whales and then looks at her son, looking at whales which look back.

What could she hope to gain by taking her two-year-old on such a long journey, one that might catapult her further into debt and distance her from family? Early on this question

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is lodged in the writer's and reader's mind alike, and it simmers, tantalisingly, throughout the book. At times the narrator seems fixated on obtaining a transformative encounter with the whale, almost betraying a desire to jump the species barrier. Yet she is no Ahab[2]; it is not a single whale to which she is drawn, but the collective, and in the end the whales act as stepping-stones, bridges to human relationships on her journey, notably with other women and mothers. What at first seems a reckless, near-mystical pursuit of an imagined being leads her to find a human pod of her own. *40* *45*

[1]*Herman Melville*: author who wrote the novel *Moby Dick*, about whales
[2]*Ahab*: character in *Moby Dick* who captained a ship

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