

H1 English Sample Answer | Descriptive Essay

‘Write a descriptive essay in which you take your readers on an urban journey’ (2016)

A bicycle whizzes past, bumping on the rough cobblestone path. The unmistakable sound of the cool breeze cutting through the spokes of a wheel from behind is indicative of another cyclist in pursuit. He turns around and is forced to spin ninety degrees as the predicted peddler flies by. He lets out a nervous laugh and looks around. All around him on this narrow pedestrian street are sunburned tourists with concerned faces. What they see is pandemonium, what they hear is a cacophony of shouts and ship horns, what they smell is the idiosyncratic aroma of fresh fish being gutted on the side of the street. But this man senses something else, what he sees, hears and smells is something he has longed for desperately since the day he left. This man is home.

He ventures onwards and becomes one of the infinite faces bustling through the crowded town. He takes it all in; the sea breeze running through his buttoned-down shirt, the barking dogs are music to his ears. On one side of this market street is a tall row of terraced houses. One of the second-floor windows is left open and a patio curtain peacefully flaps in and out. The ‘two-for-one’ repetitive shout from the enthusiastic butcher never seems too worn out. He can’t believe how little this sea-side town has changed in the past seven years. Each step forward brings him one step back memory lane. ‘That was where I... and this is where we...’ he reminisces as he turns the corner onto the adjacent street.

It is as if something else is leading him. Perhaps it is the flowing crowd of people; the bobbing heads make it difficult to tell where he is now. Then, out of nowhere, a seagull swoops by, holding a half-eaten crepe in its beak. He hears the laughable shout from

the crepe's probable owner. A few of the tourists laugh at his misfortune but tighten their grip on the cardboard wrappers anyway. The seagull tells him more than a signpost ever could. He is near his destination.

The looming terraced houses disappear, and the scuttling sightseers are left exposed to the mercy of the scorching sun. He passes by the crepe shop, a little building recessed in between two gable ends. The glass pane affords him a view of what used to be his childhood-hangout. Before he can ponder much more the perpetual movement pushes him forward. Fifty meters onward he spots a convoy of ice-cream trucks and is impressed by their ability to sell essentially the same product under a dozen different names.

The roaring sun burns brighter as the town clock rings for midday. And as if it were a sign, the ringing bell synchronises with the dividing crowd. In the opening he sees what he came here for. The stone pier stretches about a hundred yards out into the rising and falling waves. If you could capture serenity, he thinks, this would be it. His patience for walking behind the mid-paced holidaymakers rapidly dissipates just like it would when he was a boy. He might be lacking swimming shorts and a towel, but the temptation stirs a giddy excitement in him. Seven years away from this sea-side reserve in the lands of Lebanon should have annihilated these childish impulses, but as they reemerge, he laughs to himself in some sort of inexplicable defiance.

He moves further down the pier, closer to the edge. The fine-day sailors and dedicated fishermen have taken their boats out to sea so the absolute majesty of this view can be fully appreciated. He steps over a fallen ice-cream melting into the cracks of the stonework. He gazes out onto the horizon. He pauses for a moment and considers taking a photograph like everybody else, but he decides against it, he can take a picture tomorrow or the day after. He is not leaving anytime soon. For now, he is going to take it all in. Every glistening part of it. This man is home.