

Александр Павленко

**Английский язык. Темы
для экзаменов. Уровень В2**



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Павленко А. В.

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При подготовке к устному экзамену по английскому языку, мы ищем образцы экзаменационных ответов. Отличные советы дают опытные преподаватели английского языка - они составляют тексты по экзаменационным темам. А хотели бы вы почитать экзаменационные темы, которые составлены носителем английского языка? Перед носителем языка было поставлено условие: никакой предварительной подготовки - только спонтанная речь, непрерывно, в течение трех часов, говорить по девятнадцати экзаменационным темам. В результате после специальной обработки (по методу Речевой плазмы) был получен учебный материал, который является одним из самых эффективных при подготовке к устному экзамену по английскому языку. Если вы тщательно поработаете с учебным материалом пособия, то ваш ответ на экзамене будет очень похож на речь носителя английского языка.

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SCHOOLING

Vivien

School in England usually starts at the age of five, but some children go to nursery school before that. I went to one for three days, when I was three, but I got really bored there and told my mum that I didn't want to go, so before I went to a real school, she taught me at home. Some people send their children to a crèche, where they're looked after during the day while their parents are out at work, but she got some books and taught me how to read and write, so when I went to school at the age of five, I had quite an advantage over the other children.

Anyway, my schooling really started when I was five, and from the age of five until I was nine, I went to a private school, which is quite unusual in England. It was an all-girls' school run by two old women, Miss and Ms McNamara. The standard was generally very high, and there were subjects like French, Maths and English Literature. I also took subjects like Ballet and Elocution, where we learnt how to speak correctly, and we had to memorise and recite poems.

Then my parents moved, and I went to a village school, in the countryside. This was a primary school, which children usually go to from the ages of five to eleven. And then, at eleven we took an exam called the eleven plus. If we passed that we could go to grammar school, and if we failed, we had to go to secondary school, which wasn't usually of such good quality. I think the system's changed a bit now. Fortunately, I passed my eleven plus. There were all kinds of general knowledge questions and things that, basically, you can work out if you've got any common sense.

Then I went to a grammar school. This was an all-girls' school as well, and it was called *Bishop Foxes*. There was also an equivalent, all-boys' grammar school on the other side of town. So, they kept us apart.

That was also quite a good school. It was good for languages. So from the age of eleven until say sixteen when we took our “O” levels, which were Ordinary level exams, we studied about, maybe, nine subjects. First of all we had English Language and English Literature, History, Geography, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Art, and then other subjects like Cooking (they called it Domestic Science) and Technology (just woodwork in fact) which wasn’t very popular, it being an all-girls’ school. There was also French, and then another language – I studied Russian. You could choose from Russian, Spanish, Latin, or German.

My favourite teacher was in fact my Russian teacher. She was a French teacher who was married to a very old Russian émigré. I was the only one studying Russian, so everyone used to call me “Vivien the communist”, but it was good because it meant I had private classes. However, this made it more demanding because I always had to do my homework and there was no excuse.

I had some other very good teachers, but I’ve noticed that teachers are really different in Hungary. In England they’re not nearly as tactile, or affectionate with the students. They’re very formal and quite strict. When I was sixteen, we went on an exchange trip to the States for a month. We went to a high school in Massachusetts, and it was interesting. In fact, it was quite an eye-opener. It was quite amazing for me really, as there were signs all around saying things like “No guns” and “No drugs”, and it was quite violent. Also, I noticed that the students didn’t have any respect for the teachers and would just shout at them and, coming from a strict school that was quite a shock. They would shout back at the teachers, call them names and hurl abuse at them, and they rarely listened to anything the teacher said. They weren’t very interested in learning.

So, at the age of sixteen we took “O” level exams, and then some people left after that. That was one option, or we could go on to a technical college or “Tech”, and maybe study some kind of vocational subject like nursing, or some kind of technical or computer studies, or we could stay on for another two years, as I did, and take “A” levels, which are

Advanced level exams. I took “A” levels in English Literature, Russian and Spanish, which, in retrospect, wasn’t a very good idea, because I had to read so many books. I had to sit and read Tolstoy, Dickens and Cervantes.

At the age of about eighteen, in August, everybody in my year was waiting for their “A” level results to see if they got high enough grades to go on to university. We had to apply for five universities, which we put on a list, with the best one at the top. If you want to go to Oxford or Cambridge, of course, you have to put that as number one, and then it goes down, so Oxford and Cambridge would have to be first, and then maybe Bristol, Manchester, Leeds and the rest.

The Scottish universities are very good. The universities require a certain grade – ‘A’ to ‘C’ are passes. ‘A’ is the best, followed by ‘B’, then ‘C’. Usually, they ask for three ‘C’s or above. I passed, fortunately, and I went to Leeds University, which was my first choice because it had a very good Russian department, and I studied Russian and Spanish. University usually lasts for three or four years.

We were lucky, as when I was at university, we were given a grant, or a lump sum of money to live on, and we didn’t have to pay it back. The amount you got was graded according to your parents’ income. So, if your parents didn’t have very much money you got a full grant, which was not a lot of money, but you could live on it. So you could pay your rent, get food and go out quite a lot, as well as buy your books. Going to live in Leeds in the North was better, because things were much cheaper than, say, if I had been in London, where I imagine it’s very difficult for a student to survive, especially these days.

At university, it’s quite different from being at school because you have to rely on your own motivation. I know a lot of people who just didn’t go to any of their classes because they weren’t compulsory.

It was three years of enjoying yourself, basically, studying what you wanted to study, being away from home for the first time, and having some money and being able to go out to parties and concerts. For the first year, I lived in a hall of residence, which was a bit like being in a boarding school. There were lots of eighteen-year olds away from home for the first time, and of course they couldn't cook, and they weren't used to doing their own washing or looking after themselves. It kind of eased you into living on your own. So this was good, because we had to learn to look after ourselves, cooking and cleaning, and at the same time finding time to study for our finals. Final exams at university were based on the whole three years' studies, so there was a lot to learn and it was quite stressful in July when exam time came round.

Some people think that this is not a good idea, and that maybe it would be better if there was some sort of system of continuous assessment, because there are a lot of people who do very well all year, and work very hard, but when it comes to doing exams they just go crazy with stress and can't remember anything when it comes to the three hour exam you have to do. So, I would be more in favour of that because I don't think three hours can fairly represent however much you have learnt in three years.

FAMILY

Vivien

My dad is quite old, he's 81. My mum's about 15 years younger. I have two brothers. Nigel, who is seven years older than me, is a computer programmer, or he does something with computers, I'm not sure what exactly. His main interest is music, and he plays the guitar very well, and the piano. He's married to Nikki, who is an artist. She's half Swiss, and paints pictures for a living. They live in London, and have two children. My other brother, Chris, is a stockbroker, and he lives with his family in Hong Kong because the firm he works for sent him out there. They send him all over the world. He met his wife Leslie in South Africa, when he was working there. Leslie doesn't work – she's a housewife and she brings up the children. They've got four children. So, I have six nieces and nephews, which means I have quite a lot of presents to buy at Christmas! I come from quite a big family. I worked it out once that I've got 25 cousins, because my dad's dad married twice, and my mum's mum married twice, so I would have had three sets of grandparents if they had all been alive at the same time. However, I only remember one grandparent, my grandmother on my mother's side, but she died when I was very young, so I only have very vague memories of her. My mum has two brothers and sisters, and she has three half-sisters. And my dad has four brothers and sisters and two stepbrothers and sisters.

My two brothers are a lot older than me, so I didn't see them much when I was little because they weren't at home that much. There are seven years between each of us, so one brother is seven years older than me and the other is fourteen years older than me. However, my auntie Patty lived with us in the country for a while, and she has four children, and the two girls, Catherine and Sarah, were around my age, so it was like having two sisters. This was nice, because we went to school together and we could play together, and it was nice having people of my age around.

My parents live in the country, in the south-west of England. When I lived in England, I used to go to visit them maybe every month, but now of course it's much more difficult, and now I go about twice a year. Normally I go at Christmas, although not this year, and some time in the summer. They live in the middle of the country and it's really nice. There is a river, and you can go for long walks and get some peace and quiet after living in the city. My brother Nigel who lives in London goes home quite a lot to visit them with his children, but my older brother Chris can't go that often, of course, as he's always very busy working in Hong Kong.

In England, the stereotypical family is husband and wife and 2.4 children, so they say, and a dog and a cat. We have two cats, by the way. They were my cats, but when I left to come and live in Hungary, I took them to my mum, who wasn't overjoyed at the time, but now she quite likes them. We used to have a dog, a big golden labrador, but he had to be put down 'cause he got very sick, so that was quite sad. The English stereotypical family of husband and wife is, I suppose, changing now because there are a lot of one-parent families. A lot of people get divorced now and live on their own and bring up their children on their own. What about my parents? Well, my mother never worked, she was a housewife, and she and my dad lived in Sri Lanka and India for much of their married life, 'cause my dad was a businessman. He's retired now but used to import, I think it was whisky and fertilizer, from England to Sri Lanka. My mum brought up two children there, so both of my brothers were brought up in Sri Lanka and India. They must have had a very idyllic childhood – I heard stories about them swimming in tropical seas and going on expeditions to tea plantations, and it sounded really nice. I was born a year after they moved back to England, near London, so that's a bit different from exotic Asia. I suppose in a way we conformed to the typical stereotype of a family, in that my father was the breadwinner and the head of the family, and my mother was a housewife and brought up children. Nowadays in England, most women seem to want to go out to work, and even if they have children, they send them to a nursery or a crèche at a very early age and go back to work to resume their careers. Also, quite often now just the immediate family live together, and a lot

of old people live on their own, not usually with their children and their grandchildren as used to be the case.

ACCOMMODATION

Vivien

I live in Budapest, in a flat in the centre of town, on the third storey, the third floor, of a building. It's a typical Hungarian building with a courtyard and a big stairwell. There's no lift, unfortunately, which means I have to stagger up three flights of stairs every day, a couple of times a day. It's quite a small flat – I don't remember how many square metres it is but it's pretty small.

There's a living room, where we sleep, which I share with my flatmate, who is a Hungarian student. It's her flat, so that's quite good. I pay her rent, but fortunately I don't have to pay any of the electricity or gas bills, although I pay the phone bill because I'm always calling England, which makes it very expensive. So, in the main room there's a huge old brick stove, which keeps us good and warm and is very efficient, and as the flat's quite small it's not expensive to keep it well-heated in winter. This makes a big change from some other flats I've lived in, like in London where I was freezing cold in the winter with no fires or heating of any sort. Then there is a bed and also a sofa-bed, where I sleep, which you can pull out and change from a sofa into a double-size bed. There're two huge cupboards. One of them is quite modern, and the other one is an old-style white cupboard with a large oval mirror built into it. We also have a desk, where I work. We've got a colour TV, which is nice, with about 29 or 30 different channels. Then we've got about four blocks of shelves, which are mainly full of language books and books on Hungarian literature.

The other room used to be a kitchen, but my flatmate's dad has converted it into a kind of study room. There's a big table in there where we usually eat breakfast and supper. There's quite a strange setup in the room really, because it has tiles on the floor, so it looks like a cross between a bathroom, a kitchen and a living room. It's also got a lot of shelves with books on them, and some plants which I brought from the