

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction

All cyclists fear bad drivers

An article published in *The Guardian* newspaper in 2016

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction

ON A BICYCLE IN THE STREETS OF LONDON

An article published in a magazine in 1896

Please turn the page over to see the sources

Source A

Source A was published in *The Guardian* newspaper in 2016. In this article, the writer, Peter Walker, explores how people who cycle in the city are at risk from other road users.

All cyclists fear bad drivers

1 Ask most people who ride a bike regularly in the UK and they'll happily recount a list of terrifying or alarming incidents caused by the deliberate actions of another road user, usually someone in a motor vehicle.

5 My last such incident happened just under a week ago, when a driver decided to overtake my bike very closely and at speed on a narrow residential street near my home in south-east London. I was unharmed, but the driver was gambling on the assumption that I would not, for example, hit a sudden pothole and swerve or wobble.

10 Inevitably the congested traffic meant I caught up with the driver at the next junction. His relatively minor, but nonetheless very real, roll of the dice with my chances of making it home safely that evening had all been for nothing. That's appallingly common.

A couple of things must be noted. First, however distressing such incidents can be – and there is evidence they help keep levels of cycling in Britain as pathetically low as they are – riding a bike is still safer than many people think. The average Briton would ride 2 million miles before they suffered a serious injury.

15 Secondly, while some are tempted to characterise such events as part of a 'war on the roads' it's nothing of the sort, not least as the majority of cyclists also drive, and would thus be somehow waging war on themselves.

20 The thing to grasp is that it's about the person, not the mode of transport they happen to be using at that particular time. As well as cycling, I walk, use buses and trains, sometimes drive, occasionally get planes. My personality is not changed, or defined, by any of those. I get the sense that all these forms of transport are populated by roughly similar proportions of idiots. They might push on to a train, barge past you on an escalator at an Underground station, recline their plane seat just as the meals are being served.

25 Driving is, however, different in one way. It is the sole event in most people's everyday lives where there is a plausible chance they could kill another human being. It's not about morals, it's simple physics. If I hit someone at 12mph even on my solid, heavy everyday bike it would impart something like 1,200 joules of kinetic energy. If I were in the last car I owned, a relatively tiny Nissan Micra, doing 30mph, you're suddenly at 100,000 joules. It's a very different impact.

30 It's why police should take incidents more seriously than they generally do. It's why the driving tuition and testing system should be revamped to place far more stress on drivers' vast, overriding responsibility to look out for and protect vulnerable road users, those not cocooned within a tonne of metal.

35 Next time you're in a car and you think a cyclist in front is holding you up, I'd urge you to hold two very clear thoughts in your mind.

40 The first is this: despite the apparent belief of many drivers, cyclists are not obliged or even advised to ride in the gutter. If a rider is in the middle of the lane it could be to stay clear of opened doors on parked cars; it could be because the edge of the road is rutted and potholed; it might even be to stop drivers squeezing past when it would be clearly unsafe to do so.

45 Also bear this in mind: even if you're absolutely convinced the cyclist is in the wrong, hold back and be cautious anyway. In the majority of urban traffic situations, your overtake will be a very brief victory – they'll pedal past again in the queue for the next red light or junction. But most of all, remember that these are human beings, unprotected flesh and bone seeking to get to work, to see their friends, to return to their loved ones. However much of a rush you think you're in, it never, ever, justifies putting them at risk.

Turn over for Source B

Source B

In this extract, the Countess of Malmesbury describes her experience of riding a bicycle in the streets of London. She wrote the magazine article in 1896, at a time when city streets were full of horse-drawn vehicles. Cycling was becoming a popular means of transport, for women as well as for men.

ON A BICYCLE IN THE STREETS OF LONDON BY SUSAN, COUNTESS OF MALMESBURY

1 A new sport has lately been devised by the drivers of hansom cabs.* It consists of chasing the lady who rides her bicycle in the streets of the metropolis. Having now been the prey of the hansom cabman for nearly a year, and having given him several exciting runs, I cannot help feeling that cycling in the streets would be nicer, to use a mild expression, if he'd not try to kill me.



8 Riding on a track began to bore me as soon as I had learnt to balance, but I remained steadily practising until I could turn easily, cut figures of eight, get on and off quickly on either side and stop without charging into unwelcome obstacles. This done, burning to try my fate in traffic, and yet as nervous as a hare that feels the greyhound's breath, I launched my little bicycle early one Sunday morning in July into the stormy oceans of Sloane Street, on my way to visit a sick friend who lived about four miles off. The streets were really very clear, but I shall never forget my terror. I arrived in about two hours, streaming and exhausted, much more in need of assistance than the invalid I went to visit. Coming home it was just as bad; I reached my house about three o'clock and went straight to bed, where I had my lunch, in a state bordering on collapse. I only recount this adventure in order to encourage others who may have had the same experience as myself, but who may not have tried to conquer their nervousness.

20  What cured my fear was the purchase of a little book called 'Guide to Cycling', where it is written that I had an actual legal existence on the roadway. Yes, I had as good a right to my life as even my arch-enemy the hansom. Cautious and alert, I merrily proceeded on my way, using my bicycle as a means of doing my morning shopping or other business. I found that my experience in driving an exceedingly naughty pony and cart in town stood me here in very good stead, my eye being well-educated to pace and distance.

Drivers of hansoms have various ways of inflicting torture on a fellow-creature, one of which is suddenly and loudly to shout out 'Hi!' when they have ample room to pass, or when you are only occupying your lawful position in a string of vehicles. Also, they love to share your handle-bars and wheels, passing so close that if you swerve in the slightest it must bring you to serious grief. They are also fond of cutting in just in front of you, or deliberately checking you at a crossroads, well knowing that by so doing they risk your life.

I myself always ride peaceably about seven or eight miles an hour, and keep a good look-out some way ahead, as by that means you can often slip through a tight place or avoid being made into a sandwich composed of a pedestrian who will not, and an omnibus* which cannot, stop.

Many a time when I first began to ride in traffic have I meekly escorted an omnibus in a crowded street, thankful for the shelter it afforded from the wild and skirmishing jungle round me, and feeling like what I may perhaps describe as a dolphin playing round an ocean liner. Many acts of kindness have I received at a difficult crossroads from hard-worked men, to whom
40 pulling up their horses must have been a serious inconvenience. Indeed, on one occasion, I might have been killed but for the consideration of a driver. I found myself wedged in between an omnibus and a large cart. They had both been standing, and at the moment of my appearance each pulled out from the kerb in a slanting direction. I was thus fairly caught in a trap; but, not having time to faint or go into hysterics, I thought it best to catch the nearest
45 omnibus horse by the harness and try to stop him.

My life was safe, it is true; but what is life if your new white gloves are ruined?

Glossary

* hansom cab – a taxi carriage pulled by a horse

* omnibus – a large horse-drawn vehicle used for carrying passengers

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