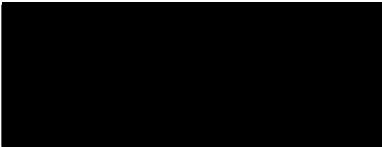


9EN0 04

GCE English Language
Coursework

Folder 2

Text Title	Genre	Audience	Function	Text Description
<i>Barcelona Break</i>	Travel Writing	Targeted at young adults and potentially students taking a gap year.	To entertain and inform	An account of a young woman's short trip to Barcelona with her friends, written for an online competition.
<i>Gaudi, Geese & Gazpacho</i>	Travel Writing	Aimed at pensioners and the over sixties age bracket.	To entertain and inform	A retired couple visit Barcelona and are impressed by the culture and architecture. The article is intended for a magazine.



5th March 2016 4:57PM

[REDACTED] wins our weekly travel writing competition - and £250 - for this account of her short break in Barcelona.

Just Back: A Break in Barcelona

As my friends and I stepped onto the chaotic stretch of pedestrian boulevard, joining the parade of people, we were plunged into a pure sensory overload. The street mapped out in front of us, lined with regal, historical buildings, and boasting countless tapas bars and souvenir kiosks selling typical tat, was teeming with tourists. Many sat, sipping from their humungous glasses that were brimming with extortionately priced exotic cocktails.

Hassling hawkers, pavement artists, mimes and buskers enlivened the ceaselessly changing street scene before us. Human statues, painted head-to-toe in gold paint, competed one another, vying for the attention of the passers-by. We had arrived at the Las Ramblas, coined by some as the throbbing heart of Barcelona!

We strolled down the walkway, absorbing the quintessential Catalan experience, whilst our skin soaked up the rays of sunlight, which poured through the canopy of trees above us.

Weaving through the lively, jostling crowds I made sure to keep a tight clasp on my purse, conscious that the area is plagued by pickpockets in the heated hustle and bustle. Scattered with over-priced eateries and food chains alike, the Las Ramblas was home to a dense concentration of hotels and bars. I could sense an excited energy and buzz in the atmosphere.



Las Ramblas teeming with people

My friends and I then browsed our way round the Mercat de la Boqueria indoor market hall, eyeing up the pungent produce. A colourful explosion of fruit, vibrant vegetables, seafood, rows upon rows of cured meat and mind-boggling butchers' displays greeted our eyes and noses.

Slurping our freshly-squeezed smoothies, we found ourselves in the Encants flea market. It met us with an intriguing mix of trash and treasure; odd shoes; outdated electronic devices and oddities of all description.

We then lazily meandered to the end of the walkway, and onto Barceloneta beach. It's sweep of golden sand and vast promenade, backed with shops and restaurants, was the perfect opportunity to rest our aching feet. Lanky palm trees swayed in the beach breeze, casting a zebra-crossing-like shadow onto the strip of pavement in front of us, providing a moment of cool.

Strollers, cyclists and skaters paraded on the broad beachside boulevard, where many bathers dozed, their scantily clad flesh exposed.

We basked on the beach, our shirts clinging onto our backs in a sticky, sweaty embrace. Rubbing her sore feet, my friend suddenly cried out "isn't that man naked, over there?". And to our utter confusion we found he was. But he wasn't alone. The other 4,000 people lulling and lounging on the beachfront were too! "This must be a nudist beach!" another of my friends chimed, laughing, covering her eyes. We made the wise decision to retire, having seen enough for the day!



Barceloneta beach (don't look too closely!)

Barcelona is most famously known as a city bursting with culture and rich in history, so we opted to go sight-seeing the following day. Architect Antoni Gaudi's Park Güell sounded like the perfect destination, and indeed it was.

We endured a tiring trek up a mountainous track, in the prickling heat, to Park Güell. But it was worth the walk. We had entered a majestic forest of fluted columns, flamboyant figures and stunning, stone structures. Catching our breath back, we surveyed the eccentric lizard fountain which was at the entrance of the park. The surface of the dragon-like creature was adorned in beautifully intricate designs, made from thousands of fragments and shards of colourful ceramics.

I was completely awestruck by the amazing architecture and the truly breathtaking terrace view of the city. Hordes of visitors milled around, gazing and gasping at the gingerbread gatehouses, hypnotized by the multi-coloured tiled mosaic seating, which snaked its way around the park. Many of the visitors,

myself included, were snapping photographs on their mobile phones and cameras, dumbfounded by the unusual shapes and forms surrounding them.



Park Güell

My football fanatic friend, James, insisted that we spent our last few hours visiting Barcelona football club's training ground, Camp Nou. Following much persuasion and bribery, we agreed with reluctance. After all, how could we argue with one of the world's largest stadiums, which holds 99,000 people, and was built in 1957 to host the Olympics?

Whilst we trudged round the museum on our guided tour, he rushed round frantically, posing for pictures with paraphernalia and golden boots of great goal scorers; taking selfies with stacks of trophies and signed t-shirts. Let's just say, I found our visit an enlightening experience...that I would only recommend for those who are keen football fans!

To our disappointment, our short break in Barcelona had come to an end. The next day we lugged our suitcases towards the airport terminal, already missing the unique city of culture.



Mesmerising mosaics

Gaudi, Geese & Gazpacho

Hola Amigos!

Turn the clock back to July 2014: my wife, Barbara, and I were celebrating our Ruby wedding anniversary with a short trip to Barcelona, hoping to escape the monotony of everyday life and enrich our cultural palettes.

Catalonian Culture Craze

Upon our arrival, we avoided the bustling Las Ramblas, knowing that the hive of activity from the buskers, peddlers, tourists and con artists mingling amid the sunlit cafes and shops would be overwhelming. Instead, we strolled down a warren of winding streets, through a maze of narrow, uneven alleyways into the cultural hub of the city: The Gothic Quarter.

The adjoining Barri Gotic was a labyrinth of historical treasures, relics of ancient Rome, 14th century churches and atmospheric cobblestone lanes.

We spent the afternoon exploring the well-preserved, quiet lanes and secluded squares of the Old City, admiring the blend of medieval and renaissance styles; and the remnants of its glorious past.

In the heart of the district was the colossal Cathedral La Seu, its façade illuminating a pomegranate pink in the warm afternoon.

Cathedral La Seu

We entered the cloister, greeted by an angelic choir hymn, luscious greenery and a beautiful stone fountain which spouted clear drinking water, offering welcome refreshment. A gaggle of thirteen white geese wandered freely, wagging their feathered tails, eagerly eating the bread crumbs tossed by tourists in their direction.

A monk, clothed in brown robes, complete with bald head, told me in broken English that the geese warn against intruders and thieves with their honks!

The geese supposedly represent the age of Saint Eulalia, the patron saint of Barcelona and a Christian martyr, who was murdered by the Romans.



Tasty Tapas

We then found a snug tapas bar on the outskirts of the Gothic Quarter and spent the hours that followed feasting on an array of Spanish cuisine.

This included paella, omelette, fried chorizo, patatas bravas (spicy potatoes), gazpacho soup, padron peppers and many other dishes I couldn't possibly pronounce.

My taste buds were hit with a delicious explosion of exotic and unusual flavours that I had never experienced before. Barbara could learn a thing or two from the Spanish when it comes to cooking!

After several large glasses of sangria, swimming with lemons and oranges, no less, we merrily made our way back to the hotel. Simply stuffed!

Antoni Gaudi

The next day, we caught a tram to Gaudi's Sagrada Familia.

As soon as I set my eyes upon the extravagant cathedral, I felt an immediate emotional punch from the sheer scale and dizzying magnificence of the structure.

My wife and I joined the endless queue, which snaked its way round the building. We didn't mind the long line, spending the hour's wait admiring the astonishing architecture from all angles.

Once inside, my eyes darted from the heavenly stars which dotted the ceiling; to the greens, blues, oranges and yellows of the stained glass windows.

The light cast a glow over the interior, creating a dappled effect, its constantly shifting patterns illuminating the pale stone.

The bone-like column branches, twisting and spiralling their way to the ceiling, created the impression of a fantastical forest. It was truly stunning.

House of Yawns

Using our map, we managed to navigate ourselves through the packed streets towards another of Gaudi's crazy creations, the Casa Batlló.

Its façade was sprinkled with turquoise, mauve, coral and green tiles and studded with wave-shaped window frames. It rose to a jagged roof marked with emerald shimmering scales and crowned by a solitary tower with a rounded turret.

It is said to represent the lance of Saint George, the patron Saint of Catalonia, being plunged into the back of a dragon.

The face of the Casa Batlló was lined with a number of elegantly curved protruding balconies, resembling Venetian masks or skulls.

The building was a canvas of marine life, glittering brazenly in the sunlight. The centre of the façade was decorated in a floral, water lily design, evoking the surface of a lake.

Six fine columns, stretched up the side of the building resembled bones.

Whilst the lip-like edges carved into the stone surrounding them created the image of an open mouth, for which the Casa Batlló had been nicknamed the "house of yawns" by the locals.

In awe of Gaudi's imaginative and elaborate designs, I captured several photographs of the building and its unique details.

Chocolate Churros

Having left Casa Batlló, we stumbled across a charming café where we decided to try the sweet Spanish snack: churros. We were not disappointed!

The churros were dusted with sugar and cinnamon, and accompanied by a mug of rich hot chocolate.

We dipped our fritters of fried dough into the delightfully decadent mug of liquid chocolate, before devouring.



Once we had finished the Spanish delicacy we retired for the evening.

Cosmo Caixa

On our last day (after a lot of persuasion on my part) we chose to visit Cosmo Caixa, a science museum on the edge of the city. In our guide book it had been hailed the 'hidden jewel' of Barcelona. Indeed, it was! We spent the day on an enthralling journey through the evolution of matter and life on planet Earth, trying out experiments, exhibitions and activities.

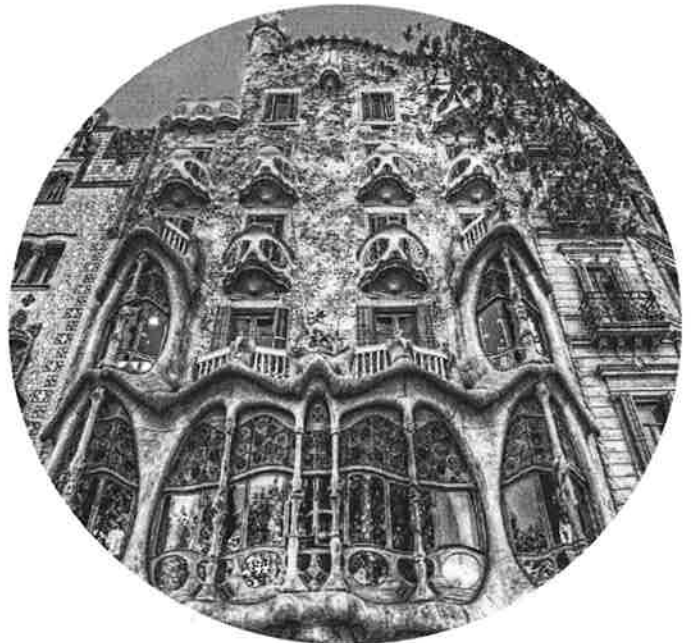
We watched the Amazonian rainforest ecosystem exhibit through a thick wall of glass. It was complete with real piranhas, crocodiles and capybaras (which are very large guinea pigs) that roamed freely through the jungle surroundings.

The Geological Wall, which comprised seven spectacular sections of real rock, was another of the museums fascinating exhibits.

Lastly, we entered the Planetarium, where we gained an insight into space, time, the stars and planets.

It was a very interesting experience for keen physicists, like myself, however I can't say Barbara was as enthusiastic!

That being said, I would definitely recommend visiting Barcelona to anyone who enjoys history, culture (and science!) and can handle all the liveliness and excitement that comes with it! Our trip to Barcelona was unforgettable, so I strongly suggest you visit.



Commentary

For my coursework I have written two pieces of travel writing for different audiences. The first, called *Barcelona Break* is an account of a young woman's short trip to Barcelona with her friends, written for an online competition. The audience I have chosen is young adults and potentially students taking a gap year.

As part of my research I read and annotated several competition entries from Just Back, a travel writing segment on The Guardian newspaper website. Many of these accounts were written from the perspective of young adults, who take on a light-hearted and slightly informal approach to their writing, for instance in Rebecca Russell's entry of her trip to Venice she comments on other tourists comically '(anoraks in flaming June?)'.

I tried to adopt this casual and entertaining tone, by incorporating elements of humour into my writing. An example would be my use of sarcasm 'after all, how could we argue with one of the world's largest stadiums?'. Also, I chose to caption the beach photograph '(don't look too closely!)' to provide comedy for the reader. This is also evident where I have written 'we made the wise decision to retire, having seen enough for the day!'.

Additionally, I mirrored their use of informal and modern vocabulary in this piece of writing to appear friendly and relatable for the audience, for example I wrote 'taking selfies with stacks of trophies and signed t-shirts'.

Snippets of conversation have been included in several of my stimulus texts, for example in Graham Mercer's account of his trip in Kathmandu he recalls a conversation "'now he tells us," muttered Anjum', which effectively brings the writing to life. Moreover, I used this technique to make my writing more realistic and humorous in the following section 'my friend suddenly cried out "isn't that man naked over there?"'.

Another stimulus text I used was a snippet from *River Town* written by Peter Hessler, taken from an account of his two years living in China. Hessler has used plenty of adjectives in his writing such as his description of the 'ragged, patchwork landscape' and the 'vast, thoughtless sky'. I have found this to be quite engaging and effective, so I used this same technique in my writing, for example 'extortionately priced exotic cocktails' and 'mind-boggling butchers' displays'.

Alliteration is a technique utilised by Rebecca Russell, for example she refers to 'tipsy tears' and being 'greedily self-stuffed', and I find this device to be particularly effective in their writing. Furthermore, I described an 'excited energy', 'vibrant vegetables' and 'pungent produce'.

I have used standard grammar throughout this piece; however I have also tried to represent some of the patterns of spontaneous spoken discourse and mimic some conversational styles to make the overall tone more relaxed and easy to read. An example of this would be 'James insisted that we spent our last few hours visiting Barcelona's football club's training ground'.

In my second piece of writing, I also wrote using Standard English, without the use of non-standard orthography to represent idiolect so it is accessible to the readers and doesn't exclude readers based on regional dialect and colloquialisms.

I ensured that the people and places were described in vivid detail so that the reader is able to visualise the situation and setting by zooming in and concentrating on small aspects, for example 'our skin soaked up the rays of sunlight, which poured through the canopy of trees above us'.

At the same time, I made sure the writer's thoughts and feelings were made clear, giving the piece of an overall personal tone. I included the writer's own opinion on several occasions for example 'I was completely awestruck'.

My second piece of travel writing, called *Gaudi, Geese & Gazpacho*, is an article from the perspective of a retired man who has visited Barcelona with his wife, Barbara. I thought this would be an interesting contrast to the first piece as it targets a completely different audience. The article is intended for a magazine aimed at pensioners and the over sixties age bracket.

I used *Venice: Mistress of the Seas* as a stimulus text, in which writer, W. Ruth Kozak narrates her holiday in the Venetian city. I found this particularly useful because it is written from the point of view of a retired woman and my piece of writing is intended for the same age group. The older target audience is made clear by the overall tone of the piece, for example it says 'I would definitely recommend visiting Barcelona to anyone that can handle all the liveliness and excitement that comes with it!'. I noticed that descriptive language is used often in this genre of writing.

Additionally, I found *Restoration, Road Trips and Just a Touch of Rain* helpful as a template for my own writing because it is written from an older man's perspective. This helped me to gauge an understanding of 'voice' and how the writer should be presented. In this stimulus text the writer Mark Ritson's identity and humour is conveyed very clearly, for example he writes '(most famous for its whiskies, which, of course, had nothing to do with our visit...)'.

In keeping with my first piece of travel writing, I emphasised my use of alliteration, a device employed often in this genre to paint a picture for the reader of the location, such as 'secluded squares' and 'pomegranate pink'. I also made frequent references to the writer's wife, Barbara, to add to this sense of realism. For instance, I wrote 'I can't say Barbara was as enthusiastic!' which allowed the reader to connect and relate to the writer.

In both of these stimulus texts, the writers have included historical information about the destinations. In Kozak's account of Venice, she includes facts about the Rialto Bridge, such as 'it had been a commercial centre of Venice since the 9th century, where the city's first market was established'. I incorporated several facts to inform and entertain the reader, for example 'these geese supposedly represent the age of Saint Eulalia, the patron saint of Barcelona'. This gives the piece an intellectual and informative tone, which will be appreciated by the target audience of retirees.

I have written using complex and compound sentences, for example 'we entered the cloister, greeted by an angelic choir hymn, luscious greenery and a beautiful stone fountain which spouted clear drinking water, offering welcome refreshment' to further convey this tone. Whereas, in the first piece of writing I used shorter, snappier sentences to engage the younger audience, for example 'we opted to go sight-seeing the next day'.

In terms of graphology, I included photographs and emboldened headings such as 'tasty tapas' to grab the reader's attention and interest. I used this in my first piece of writing for the same effect.

For both pieces I wrote about the same location, Barcelona, so that the focus would be more on the differing audiences and it would be comparable in this sense.

