

DIPLOMA EXAMINATION
ENGLISH LANGUAGE 'A' — Semester One, First Session (2008/ 09)

LISTENING 1

- Man:* Hi, Salma! I wasn't expecting to see you here. I thought you were in the UK, doing your Master's degree.
- Woman:* Oh, hi, Rashid! You're right, I am studying in the UK, but I've just finished my exams, and now I'm on holiday for the winter break.
- Man:* So what are you doing at a conference? Shouldn't you be relaxing at home, spending time with your family?
- Woman:* Well, yes, that's right, but the thing is, I read about this conference, and several of the presentations are related to an education project I'm working on. It's part of my Master's degree.
- Man:* Oh, what's this project about?
- Woman:* It's about teaching science, how to motivate students.
- Man:* That sounds interesting. Who's the supervisor for your project? Is it James Nicholson?
- Woman:* Oh, you know him?
- Man:* Of course, I know him! He was my supervisor as well.
- Woman:* So you studied at Leeds University, too! When was that?
- Man:* Two years ago. In fact, I've applied to go there again to do my Doctorate degree. Hopefully, next year.
- Woman:* Oh, so you must have enjoyed being there.
- Man:* Yes, I had a great time! How about you?
- Woman:* Well, it's OK.
- Man:* You don't sound too sure about that. Is something wrong?
- Woman:* Yes, it's the accommodation. The flat I'm staying in is quite nice, but the problem is, it's so far away from the university. I have to travel by bus every day and it takes me forty minutes to get there.
- Man:* Have you tried looking for another place, somewhere nearer to the university?
- Woman:* Yes, but I didn't find anything that I could afford.
- Man:* I see. My cousin, Amal, is also studying in Leeds, in the Economics faculty, and she's staying in a really nice place, just five minutes' walk from the university, and not too expensive. She's sharing it with a Pakistani girl, and they have an extra bedroom. Shall I tell her that you're looking for somewhere to stay?
- Woman:* Oh, yes, that'd be great! I'll give you my mobile number. Please let me know what your cousin says.
- Man:* Sure. Anyway, apart from that, how are things? How are your studies going?

Woman: Oh, fine, the lectures are interesting and the professors are friendly enough. The only thing is, they expect me to do so much reading.

Man: But they're right to expect that! You can't study at university without reading, can you?

Woman: Yes, I know, and the books are very interesting. It's just that, to be honest, I'm not used to reading.

Man: Yes, I've heard this comment from many other university students. The problem is that people don't get into the habit of reading when they're at school.

Woman: Yes, you're right, and that includes me. Anyway, I am getting better, and luckily I don't have problems with my English.

Man: That's good.

Woman: Anyway, it's time for some more presentations. Which one are you going to? (*fade*)

(For LISTENING 2 script, see page 3)

LISTENING 2

Part One:

Everybody has heard of the Silk Road, but there is another ancient trade route which deserves to be more famous than it actually is. That is the Amber Road, which for centuries connected the Baltic Sea in northern Europe with the Mediterranean Sea in the south. Amber is a material which is both beautiful and easy to work with, so it is not surprising that, from very early times, it was used to make jewellery such as rings, bracelets, necklaces and pendants. These beautiful objects were produced in the north and transported south along the Amber Road. Actually, the word 'road' is rather misleading. In fact, almost all the amber was carried in boats along rivers such as the Elbe and the Dnieper. When this cargo reached its destination, in Italy, Greece, or even Egypt and Arabia, it fetched very high prices and traders were able to make huge profits. No wonder amber became known as 'the gold of the north'! One reason why amber sold so well was its extraordinary colour — or rather colours. Most commonly, it was dark yellow or orange, but a whole range of different colours were available: red, brown, black, white, cream, or even blue. But it wasn't just these gorgeous colours that made amber so popular — it was also believed that if you wore amber, or even just held it in your hand, you would always be healthy and stay young. This idea that amber is somehow connected with long life probably comes from one extraordinary fact. Inside some pieces of amber, you can actually see complete insects, perfectly preserved in their original form! As I shall explain in a moment, these insects are millions of years old!

Part Two:

So what exactly is amber? Well, just like frankincense, it's a natural product, which originally comes from a tree. Thirty to forty million years ago, vast forests covered northern Europe, and one particular kind of pine tree was common in the area now known as Poland. This explains why amber has a slight, but very pleasant, smell. These pine trees used to leak a sticky resin which collected on the ground. Insects which landed on this resin got stuck, and could not escape when more resin fell on them. Then, as the resin became harder and harder, they were trapped inside. Millions of years later, the amber was found by human beings, sometimes in the ground, but usually at the bottom of streams or washed up on the beach after storms. That was the beginning of the trade in amber, which started about ten thousand years ago and still continues today, with Poland and the Baltic coast at its centre. In fact, eighty percent of the world's known supplies of amber can be found in Poland, which is also the world's largest manufacturer of amber jewellery.
