

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

**LITERATURE (ENGLISH)**

**0486/03**

Paper 3 Alternative to Coursework (Unseen)

May/June 2006

**1 hour**

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.  
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.  
Write in dark blue or black pen.  
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer the question.  
At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

In this story, Conrad has left his car near the 'red zone' – a no-parking area – of the city works. He comes back to find that some people are enjoying watching it being towed away.

**Read the passage below carefully and then explore how the writing makes you feel sympathy for Conrad and how it is amusing at the same time.**

**You should include in your answer a response to:**

- **Conrad's situation**
- **the characters and the words they use**
- **the way the incident is narrated.**

It occurred to Conrad, with a start, that whatever was going on, it was in the red zone in front of where he had parked the Hyundai. The gawkers<sup>1</sup> blocked his view. He hurried forward and joined them. He found himself staring at the broad beam<sup>2</sup> of a giant in a cowboy hat, who was leaning over, attaching a tow chain to a car that had both front wheels up on the curb, right in the middle of the red zone, barely a foot from the fire hydrant –

– and in that instant Conrad realised it was *his* car, his little Hyundai Excel. In the middle of the red zone! Up on the curb! Impossible! – and yet there it was. There was a ticket under the windshield wiper.

Standing on the sidewalk, right beside the car, following the tow truck operator's progress, was a meter maid,<sup>3</sup> easily identifiable by her uniform, a short-sleeved powder-blue shirt and navy-blue pants. She was probably in early middle age, so stout that the flesh of her upper arms stretched the hems of her sleeves. She held a walkie-talkie radio up to her mouth. She had a terrific set of Chinese-red press-on nails on her fingers.

Conrad approached from the side. He was scarcely eighteen inches from her, but she didn't give him so much as a flicker of an eye.

"Excuse me!" he said. No response. Much louder: "Excuse me!"

The walkie-talkie still at her ear, she cut him a glance that said *Don't bother me.*

"Miss!" said Conrad.

She gave him a withering look and said, "Can't you see I'm *transmitting?*"

The terribly official-sounding word, *transmitting*, brought him up short, and he turned toward the tow truck driver. By now the big man had secured the tow chain beneath the Hyundai and was standing up, and you could see just how enormous he really was. He was a mountain of flesh with the sun-beaten, lard-grilled look of a roustabout,<sup>4</sup> clear down to the immense ring of keys hanging from a belt loop beneath the bulge of his belly on one side of his jeans and the cluster of novelty key fobs on the other: a tiny wrench, a disposable butane lighter, a pair of dice, a plastic figurine of Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse doing the tango, a miniature duelling pistol, and a little silvery skull with fangs instead of eyeteeth.

Conrad jumped between the fire hydrant and the fender of the Hyundai and over the tow chain and rushed up to him. "Hey! – sir! – this is *my* car! Whattaya *doing?*"

Scarcely looking at him, not even pausing, the giant said, "Towin' it outta the red zone."

He said it in a bored way that made it clear he had said the same thing, something very close to it, a thousand times before, to a thousand other frantic, befuddled, and above all, helpless automobile owners. He was now heading for the driver's-side front door with the shaft of metal he had taken from the truck. It was a length of spring steel. Conrad recognised it immediately. It was a device known as a Slim Jim, used to slip through the window seals of locked cars to release the lock mechanisms from the inside.

"Wait a minute! Please!" But the giant was already inserting the Slim Jim between the glass and the frame.

"You're gonna break the glass! I've got the keys right here! I can open the door!"

"Nobody's breakin' any glass," said the giant in the same bored voice, without looking at him. In no time he had sprung the lock, opened the door, and was reaching inside, doing something with the steering wheel.

"Please!" said Conrad. "It's my car! I've got the keys! I can move it!"

The giant didn't even look at him. Utterly nonplussed, Conrad swung back toward the sidewalk to appeal to the meter maid. She wasn't looking at him, either. She was writing something in her summons book. By now the knot of gawkers had grown into a real crowd. They were revved up, ready for some action, eager for the *beano*,<sup>5</sup> now that the hapless owner of the automobile had materialized and was acting suitably dismayed, frightened, anguished, and frustrated.

This time Conrad yelled at the meter maid: "*Hey! Miss!*"

She looked up and he jumped back over the tow chain and went straight to her. "Please – you gotta tell me what's going on! This is *my car!*"

She began studying the summons pad and gestured towards the Hyundai without looking at Conrad. "Car's in the red zone – *and* up on the sidewalk."

Conrad raised his hands in frustration. "But I didn't *park* in the red zone! I swear! Look, miss, listen – I was all the way back there, on the other side of the line!"

"Well, exactly the way it's sittin' right now, that's exactly the way it was sittin' when I called the dispatcher." She said this in a reasonable enough tone, but it inspired a couple of *unh-hunnnhs* and *heghheggghhs* among the gawkers, and she became aware she had an audience. So she added, "And I never seen a car drive *itself* into a red zone yet."

"Woooo-eeee," said one of the gawkers and another said, "Ohhhh yeah," all in the eternal spirit of 'Let's You and Him Fight'.

<sup>1</sup> *gawkers*: people staring mindlessly

<sup>2</sup> *beam*: bottom

<sup>3</sup> *meter maid*: traffic warden

<sup>4</sup> *roustabout*: a labourer

<sup>5</sup> *beano*: entertainment, fun

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