

Task 1

SAMPLE

Look at the photograph. You will be expected to make some comments. It will also serve as a basis for discussion with the examiner.



1. What does the photograph show?
2. Which present-day issue does it address?
3. What is your opinion about it? Explain and justify your points.
4. Answer any additional questions asked by the examiners.

Task 2

Discuss with the examiner the issue of giving up harmful habits.

Task 3

SAMPLE

Read the article below. You will be asked to say briefly what it is about, then you will discuss it with the examiner.

All aboard: why the houseboat is making waves on the big screen

The houseboat seems like an artefact that's as British as tea and crumpets – a colourful, quaint behemoth ploughing through the sludgy waters of the country's canals and waterways. In a turbulent housing market, more people are now turning to "continuous cruising" as a viable way of living – especially in the capital. According to the Canal & River Trust, there are more than 34,000 licensed boats in the UK today, with more than a third of owners saying their boat's primary purpose was as a full-time residence or second home.

British cinema has embraced the houseboat and its symbolic value, in conjunction with its surge in real-world popularity. This year, a handful of movies have used this unconventional way of life as part of a character's story – and to make a point about contemporary society.

The drama *Anchor and Hope*, from Spanish director Carlos Marques-Marcet, sees *Game of Thrones* alumni Natalia Tena and Oona Chaplin as lesbian couple Kat and Eva, grappling with the notion of whether to have a child, while living on a boat that travels along the canals of London. Eva is determined to become a parent, and suggests Kat's friend as a potential sperm donor, while Kat sees the prospect of bringing a child into their cramped environment as a "selfish" indulgence. It becomes clear through the course of the narrative that Eva adopted the houseboat way of living as a result of her relationship with Kat – a boat enthusiast who repairs them as a part-time job. For Kat, the boat is a symbol of a freewheeling, shackle-free lifestyle whereas, for Eva, it's the titular anchor holding her and their relationship down, preventing any progress from taking place. These characters are in the same boat, as it were, but it means very different things to each of them.

The houseboat movie trend continues in November with the release of the intriguing drama *Tides*, which follows four friends who meet for a reunion on a narrowboat. Written and improvised in a collaborative effort by the cast over the course of a few days, it uses the confined, isolated environment as a crucible to amplify the emotions of the characters.

This duality of the houseboat as a symbol also plays into some of its other appearances this year. Comedy *Swimming With Men* portrays the houseboat occupied by Rupert Graves's middle-aged professional as a sad symbol of his isolated, bachelor lifestyle. When he invites Rob Brydon's character to stay, he looks mournfully at a photo of his kids and admits that he left their mother for a doomed relationship with a younger woman, suggesting that the boat is a miserable compromise for him as a result of bad life choices.

On the opposite – and more pleasant – side of the equation, grey pound romcom *Finding Your Feet* concludes with a standard last-minute dash, as Imelda Staunton's protagonist leaves her life of home counties comfort to live with Timothy Spall on his houseboat. For her, the boat and its untethered existence provide the perfect opportunity for her to escape her love-rat husband and her bland, middle-class life.

Escape is also represented by a houseboat in the British romcom *Patrick*. The course of this particular story sees Beattie Edmondson's permanently exhausted protagonist handed the opportunity to ditch her demanding landlord and pokey flat in order to embrace the freedom of life aboard her own houseboat. In a story that delights in piling as much suffering on Edmondson as possible, the prospect of a life on the water offers a rare oasis of escapism for her. It's a scenario familiar to many of the new millennial cruisers.

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1. What is this article about?
2. What is the author's main argument?
3. To what extent do you (dis)agree with the author? Explain and justify your points.
4. Answer any additional questions asked by the examiners.