

A

AQA 

GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and
perspectives**

8700/2

Insert

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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.

10 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

unharmmed, but the driver was
15 gambling on the assumption that I
would not, for example, hit a sudden
pothole and swerve or wobble.

Inevitably the congested traffic
meant I caught up with the driver at
20 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
25 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
30 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
35 injury.

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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.

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.

60 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
65 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
70 last car I owned, a relatively tiny
Nissan Micra, doing 30mph, you're
suddenly at 100,000 joules. It's a
very different impact.

It's why police should take incidents
75 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
80 look out for and protect vulnerable

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road users, those not cocooned within a tonne of metal.

85 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.

90 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
95 rutted and potholed; it might even be to stop drivers squeezing past when it would be clearly unsafe to do so.

100 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
105 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
110 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
5 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
10 cycling in the streets would be
nicer, to use a mild expression, if
he'd not try to kill me.**

**13 Riding on a track began to bore me
as soon as I had learnt to balance,
15 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
20 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**

[Turn over]

25 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
30 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
35 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
40 encourage others who may have
had the same experience as myself,
but who may not have tried to
43 conquer their nervousness.



45 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
50 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
55 business. I found that my
experience in driving an
exceedingly naughty pony and cart

[Turn over]

in town stood me here in very good
stead, my eye being well-educated
60 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
65 '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
70 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
75 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

80 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
85 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
90 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
95 kindness have I received at a
difficult crossroads from hard-
worked men, to whom pulling up
their horses must have been a
serious inconvenience. Indeed, on
100 one occasion, I might have been
killed but for the consideration of a
driver. I found myself wedged in

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between an omnibus and a large
cart. They had both been standing,
105 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
110 hysterics, I thought it best to catch
the nearest 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
115 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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