

Abiturprüfung 2017

ENGLISCH

– Textteil –

Arbeitszeit: 240 Minuten

Der Prüfling hat **e i n e** Textaufgabe seiner Wahl nach den Arbeitsanweisungen des beiliegenden Aufgabenteils zu bearbeiten.

Textaufgabe I

Superhighway to cycling heaven – or just a hell of a mess?

They are “doing more damage to London,” said the former chancellor Lord Lawson in the House of Lords, “than almost anything since the Blitz.” In the same spirit of absurdist hyperbole, they might be said to be the most transformative public works since Joseph Bazalgette¹ built London’s sewers and river embankments. They are not, but they do have the potential to change the spirit and character of the capital and of other cities that follow the same path, as well as making its transport cleaner, healthier, safer, more efficient and better able to deal with growing pressure of numbers. They might even prove that the city’s former mayor Boris Johnson was capable of doing something right.

“They” are the cycle superhighways, the most conspicuous of several measures promoted under Johnson. They add up to an unprecedented plan, which is to make the sprawling, awkward, inconsistent city of London bike-friendly. The places most often cited for the exemplariness of their cycling provision – Amsterdam, Copenhagen, more recently Manhattan – were already more ordered, compact and coherent in their layout. In London, the street pattern changes moment by moment, straight to winding, leafy to truck-thronged, wide to narrow.

This in turn reflects the politics of the city, in which power is diffused among its 32 boroughs, plus the City of London, each with its own identity and attitudes. The city’s mayors, for all their ability to attract headlines, have limited means to enforce their will. The superhighway network therefore has to deal with the fact that the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea doesn’t want them on its land, meaning there will be a highway-free void in the middle of the capital. In the City, meanwhile, the impatient, assertive people who work for the financial industry won’t wait long for the red man to turn green, which means they don’t take well to the elaborate multi-phase traffic lights, at which bikes, cars and pedestrians must patiently wait their turn.

Andrew Gilligan, the journalist who became Johnson's cycling
30 commissioner in 2013, says that "a lot of councils are really cowardly" and that
while majorities usually support cycling schemes, local politicians are easily
impressed by vocal minorities. In Kensington and Chelsea, he says, it only
needed 15 objections from residents for one proposal to be stopped. It
therefore required Johnson's "leadership" and investment of "significant
35 political capital" to make anything happen. [...]

Cycling infrastructure, as commonsensical and humdrum as it might
seem, is not just about engineering. It is political, cultural and social. It has to
reconcile territorial disputes between people on bikes, people in vehicles and
people on foot and between different kinds of cyclist. It can take on aspects of
40 class conflict, in which drivers sometimes cast themselves, counterintuitively,
as underdog victims of a two-wheeled elite. It obliges choices as to what kind
of city its citizens and politicians want, with what balance of public benefits and
private freedoms and for whom. [...]

The route, called the east-west cycle superhighway, is contentious. Taxi
45 drivers hate it. It affects the car-bound journeys of people of power and
influence [...]: Gilligan says that Boris "kept being harassed by MPs,
colleagues plucking at his sleeve and complaining that their drive from
wherever had got longer by so many minutes". [...]

The logic, says Gilligan, is that London is facing ever more demand for
50 transport and that encouraging bicycle use is the best way to meet this
demand. Building more roads on the congested and high-priced land is
physically and politically unfeasible. Expanding the underground network is
slow and expensive. A cycling commuter takes up much less space than one
in a car, which rather obviously means that they use the existing roads more
55 efficiently. Cycling has the added benefit of reducing pollution and benefiting
the health of participants, at least of those who don't get injured.

PLEASE TURN OVER

What stops more people riding bikes is danger and the perception of danger. [...] The idea of superhighways and allied measures is both to *be* safer and to *feel* safer, so that more cautious cyclists will venture out. Few
60 school runs are made by bike and campaigners want to change this.

In its current state, the incomplete system imperfectly achieves these aims. The Embankment² stretch is mostly glorious – “Just before it opened I had trucks snarling down my back,” says one user. “Afterwards, I could chat to a colleague as we went along” – but it unravels into confusion at its end.
65 Elsewhere, the network can be inconsistent and bewildering. Municipal sphinxes have left riddling signs that have to be interpreted at speed: turn-right-give-way-cross-turn-left, turn right in two phases only, go left in order to go right. Inscrutable numbers and symbols refer to a higher concept that is imperfectly explained.

70 There is a plethora³ of special conditions, works of intellectual ingenuity that as soon as comprehended change into something else. You have to decipher which half-defaced cycle logo on the pavement and which little blue sign is telling you where to go and how to behave in relation to pedestrians. They, also confused, may swear at you in the belief that you are encroaching
75 on their space. At some point on an unfamiliar route you are likely to lose the thread and find yourself discharged into the hostile realm of HGVs⁴. It resembles an old-fashioned board game: go back three spaces, throw a double to avoid the Dark Forest or a six to find the Magic Bridge. [...]

80 There is a strong suspicion that Boris Johnson rushed through his cycling plans in order to claim credit before his mayoralty expired, with the combination of self-aggrandisement and inattention to detail that typified his other grand projects. There are indeed glitches. [...] But, given the blind unreason of Lord Lawson, and the capacity for obstruction offered by the complexities of improving cycling in London, this is an occasion to be grateful
85 for his gung-ho⁵ spirit.

Annotations:

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| 1 Joseph Bazalgette | 19 th -century English civil engineer |
| 2 Embankment | road and river-walk along the Thames in central London |
| 3 plethora | <i>(formal)</i> very large number |
| 4 HGV | heavy goods vehicle |
| 5 gung-ho | <i>here (informal)</i> : extremely eager to do sth. |

PLEASE TURN OVER

Textaufgabe II

Prospect Park

The following text is taken from Teacher Man, which is set in New York in the 1960s.

Sal Battaglia smiled every morning and said, Hi, teach. Sal sat with his girlfriend, Louise, and looked happy. When they held hands across the aisle everyone walked around them because it was understood this was the real thing. Someday Sal and Louise would be married and that was sacred.

5 Sal's Italian family and Louise's Irish family didn't approve, but at least the wedding would be Catholic and that was OK. Sal joked to the class his family worried he might starve to death with an Irish wife on account of how the Irish can't cook. He said his mother wondered how the Irish survived at all. Louise spoke up, said they could say what they liked, but the Irish had the most
10 beautiful babies in the world. Sal blushed. Cool Italian, nearly eighteen, with the mass of black curly hair, actually blushed. Louise laughed and we all laughed when she reached across the aisle to touch the redness of his face with her delicate white hand.

The class went quiet when Sal took her hand and kept it against his face.
15 You could see his eyes glistening with tears. What came over him? I stood with my back to the blackboard, not knowing what to say or do, not wanting to break the spell. At a time like this how could I go on with our discussion of *The Scarlet Letter*¹?

I went behind my desk, pretended to be busy, silently took the attendance
20 again, filled out a form, waited for the bell to ring in ten minutes, watched Sal and Louise leave, hand in hand, and envied them the way everything was laid out. After graduation there would be an engagement. Sal would become a master plumber, Louise a legal stenographer, the highest you can go in the secretarial world unless you got the crazy notion to become a lawyer. I told
25 Louise she was bright enough to be anything, but she said no no, what would

her family say? She had to earn a living, get ready for her life with Sal. She'd learn Italian cooking so she wouldn't be beholden all the time to Sal's mother. A year after the wedding a baby would appear, a little round well-fed Italian-Irish-American baby and that would bring the two families together forever and who cared what countries their parents came from.

None of that happened because of an Irish kid who went after Sal in a Prospect Park² gang rumble and clobbered him with a two-by-four³. Sal didn't even belong to a gang. He was just passing through delivering an order from the restaurant where he worked nights and weekends. He and Louise knew these gang wars were stupid, especially with the Irish and Italians, who were all Catholic and white. So why? What was it all about? Something called turf, territory, even worse, girls. Hey, get your guinea⁴ hands off my girl. Get your fat mick ass out of our neighborhood. Sal and Louise could understand rumbling with the Puerto Ricans or the Negroes, but not one another, for Christ's sakes.

Sal returned wearing a bandage to cover his stitches. He swung over to the right side of the room, well away from Louise. He ignored the class and no one looked at him or spoke to him. Louise took her old seat, tried to catch his eye. She turned toward me as if I had answers or could fix things. I felt inadequate and indecisive. Should I go back there, squeeze her shoulder, whisper encouraging words about how Sal would get over this? Should I go to Sal, apologize for the Irish race, tell him you can't judge a whole people by the actions of one lout in Prospect Park², remind him Louise was still lovely, still loved him?

How are you supposed to discuss the conclusion of *The Scarlet Letter*¹, the happy end for Hester and Pearl, with Louise sitting a few rows back, her heart broken, Sal staring straight ahead ready to murder the first Irishman to cross his path?

Ray Brown raised his hand. Good old Ray, always stirring the pot. Hey, Mr. McCourt, how come no Negroes in this book?

I must have looked blank. Everyone but Louise and Sal laughed. I don't know, Ray. I don't think they had Negroes in old New England.

Sal jumped from his seat. Yeah, they had Negroes, Ray, but the Irish killed them all. Snuck up behind them and busted their heads.

60 Oh, yeah? said Ray.

Yeah, said Sal. He picked up his bag, walked out, made his way to the guidance office. The counselor told me Sal asked for a transfer to Mr. Campbell's class, who at least wasn't Irish, and didn't have that stupid accent. You could never imagine Mr. Campbell hitting you from behind with a two-by-four³, but, That McCourt. He's Irish and you can never trust those sneaky bastards.

I did not know what to do about Sal. It was three months to graduation and I should have tried to talk to him but I was unsure of what to say. In the school hallways I often saw teachers comforting kids. Arm around the shoulder. The warm hug. Don't worry, everything will be OK. Boy or girl saying thank you, tears, teacher squeezing shoulder one last time. That's what I wanted to do. Should I have told Sal I was not a two-by-four-wielding³ lout? Should I have insisted on telling him how unfair it was to make Louise suffer for the actions of someone who was probably drunk? Oh, you know how the Irish are, Sal. And he would have laughed and said, OK, Irish have that problem, and made up with Louise.

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From: Frank McCourt, *Teacher Man*, New York 2005

Annotations:

- 1 *The Scarlet Letter* novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, set in 17th-century Boston
- 2 Prospect Park public park in Brooklyn
- 3 two-by-four piece of wood cut to be long and straight
- 4 guinea *here*: offensive word for Italian