



ÉPREUVE ÉCRITE	Branche : Anglais
Section(s) : B – G	N° d'ordre du candidat :
Date de l'épreuve : 19 septembre 2016	Durée de l'épreuve : 2 heures

You know you're consuming too much — how to stop before it consumes you too

After five years of writing advertisements to sell everything from toasters to sauces, Greg Foyster just couldn't take it anymore. So he started writing a magazine column about environmental issues, one of his passions, as a part-time job. He spent his working days coming up with perfect tag lines for big brand products, and his weekends writing about the devastating toll overconsumption was taking on our world.

"Disproportionate resource use is linked to climate change," he told the Guardian. "The director of the Princeton Environmental Institute has calculated that the richest 500 million people in the world emit half the world's fossil fuel carbon [...] People who consume the most place the greatest demand on natural resources, and therefore cause the greatest destruction. It's advertising that helps to create desires to drive this overconsumption."

With this knowledge and the crisis of conscience he experienced because of it, Foyster made the decision to quit advertising. He didn't just change jobs, either. Instead, he began a cycling trip up the east coast of Australia to explore the idea of simple living. He eventually wrote a book about his journey.

Foyster left because he was fed up: discouraged by the process of pushing products, horrified by the ecological consequences of constant consumption, and longing for a way to get out of the job he hated to support a lifestyle he wasn't sure he even wanted. Sound familiar?

It should. We all live amid similar contradictions. We tend to think buying leads to contentment. We believe that a new lipstick or a new coat or a new car will make us happier. Better. And, as Foyster explains, this is no accident.

"This is now advertising's role in the economy – to convince people that non-material happiness can be gained through material belongings," he told the Guardian. "Desires for material things have limits – most people really only want or need one dishwasher, or one or two cars – but desire for emotional needs like status, love, acceptance and autonomy are bottomless. Connecting material goods to nonmaterial desires ensures people are never satisfied with what they have. It's how we've convinced some of the most materially rich citizens in history that they don't have enough."

The promise of happiness, connection and privilege convinces us to open our wallets again and again. This message is so effective that we remain perversely determined to consume, even when study after study shows that it leaves us overwhelmed with debt, drowning in our possessions and stressed beyond belief. And, perhaps more troubling, we overconsume because we live in a society that relies upon it.

Our current buying behaviour has very little to do with what we need and everything to do with how having something will make us feel. Advertising points out a problem you never knew you had, makes you feel bad for having it, and then sells you a solution. The end result of this twisted process

35 is lower quality of life, more time spent working, and horrific environmental damage due to overconsumption.

For Foyster, the first step is acknowledging that we're all in this together. He says: "We all live in this consumer capitalist world, we all overconsume, it's totally normal and we shouldn't feel guilty about it. We should just admit that sometimes buying a lot of stuff is a distraction from the things we really want in life, the things that really make us happy."

40 He adds: "The cure to wanting more, more, more is to take great pleasure in the wonderful life you already have."

594 words

adapted version of an article by Madeleine Somerville, published in The Guardian (3rd November 2015)

I) Working with the text

30 marks

A) Comprehension (20 marks)

Use your own words as far as possible to answer the comprehension questions.

- 1) Describe Greg Foyster's job and explain for what reasons he gave it up. (6m)
- 2) What is the role of advertising in our economy, and how does it achieve its goal? (8m)
- 3) According to Foyster, how can we overcome the negative effects of advertising? (6m)

B) Personal opinion (10 marks)

Word limit: 100 – 150 words

According to Tyler Durden, a character in Chuck Palahniuk's novel *Fight Club*, "we buy things we don't need with money we don't have to impress people we don't like." Do you agree with this view?

II) Essay

30 marks

Write an essay (between 300 and 400 words) on ONE of the following topics. Indicate your choice CLEARLY and include the word count.

- 1) "Turning away refugees won't fight terrorism – it might even make it worse." Show how the current attitudes towards refugees in Europe can contribute to terrorism.
- 2) "Science flies you to the moon. Religion flies you into buildings." Discuss to what extent blind religious belief can actually be an obstacle to scientific development.
- 3) Discuss to what extent it is necessary for schools to prepare students for the digital age.