



BRANCHE	SECTIONS	ÉPREUVE ÉCRITE
Anglais	B, C, D, E, F, G	Durée de l'épreuve 2 h 30
		Date de l'épreuve 18 septembre 2019

A cure for loneliness?

Nicolas Dezeure drives his yellow post van up the winding single-track road to an isolated stone house at the top of a hill. An elderly woman **raking**¹ fallen leaves welcomes him like a long-lost friend. "It's lovely to see the postman as I don't usually see anyone else all week," says Janine, 81, and **ushers**² him into her kitchen for a chat.

A rural postman politely checking on a lonely elderly person might seem a natural part of French countryside life. But Dezeure's carefully planned visits to Janine each Monday morning are part of a new strategy for the French post office as it tries to find a joint solution to two very different challenges; the growing number of elderly people living alone; and a decline in letter-writing in the digital era, which means France is looking for new ways to make a profit from its 73,000 postal workers. In 1990, delivering letters accounted for 70% of the state post service's turnover; in 2020 it will be less than 20%.

The new service, *Watch over my parents*, in which customers pay for postal workers to check on their elderly relatives during morning rounds has been hailed as a clever solution to the modern epidemic of loneliness. Customers – often in their 50s and living in major cities – pay from €20 (£18) a month for postal workers to visit their parents living alone far away. Visits can be weekly or more regular, with a report delivered to the family and an option of a 24-hour helpline and alert system.

Dezeure, 37, who has been a postal worker for 16 years, has got to know Janine quite well in their 15-minute chats each Monday. After the chat, he sends a message straight to Janine's two daughters, who live more than 370 miles away in the Paris area, telling them she is OK. "I agreed to do this for my daughters," Janine says. "They worry that I'm on my own in the middle of nowhere." She has lived for 40 years in the same house, built by her husband, and never wants to move away from the secluded spot.

Eric Baudrillard, in charge of developing a new strategy at the French postal service, is convinced of the benefits of the project. "People are living longer, and more of them want to stay in their own homes as long as they can. We know there will be more need for social links like this as mobility grows and adult children move far from their ageing parents. Despite all the digital tools that we have, there is still a need for human connection." Other schemes have already been rolled out – postal workers in France can deliver elderly customers supplies from shops, basic prescriptions, books from libraries and hot meals.

¹ collect, gather, or move with a rake or similar tool

² show or guide someone somewhere

Pascal Frémont, from the Sud trade union, said he had reservations about the post office capitalising on the silver economy³. “For us, it’s not a problem for postal workers to keep an eye on older people, because many of us already did that. But if it is a paid-for service, that excludes some people who can’t afford it, it affects the notion of public service. We would prefer partnerships, such as with the health ministry. Postal workers aren’t healthcare staff, so we should be cautious about that.”

As Dezeure leaves to continue his morning’s round, Janine says: “I appreciate my adult children want to know I’m OK and it’s pleasant to see the postman for a regular chat. Besides, what choice do I have? It’s this or leave my home.”

adapted from an article by Angelique Chrisafis, published in The Guardian, on 23rd November 2018

594 words

Comprehension (20m)

Answer the following questions in your own words.

1. Explain the new system offered by the French post! What problems does it claim to solve? (8)
2. How are Mr Baudrillard and Mr Frémont’s opinions on the *Watch over my parents* programme different? (8)
3. How does Janine feel about the service which is being offered to her? (4)

Personal opinion (10m)

React to the question below. Indicate your word count. Your answer must not exceed 150 words.

Who should be responsible for elderly people?

Essay (30m)

Write a well-structured essay of between 300 and 400 words on one of the topics below. Do not forget to copy the title and to indicate your word count.

1. Mass tourism has become a threat to local culture. Discuss.
2. Education should focus more on digital skills as a means of preparing students for the professional world. Discuss.
3. As a result of the political shift to the right in many countries, democracy is at risk. Discuss.

³ Goods and services targeting the elderly