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La leçon se déroule en anglais. Elle est suivie d'un entretien en français.

SUBJECT:

"Adjectives and adverbs whose meanings are inherently superlative such as *unique* and *perfect* are prescriptively banned from comparative and superlative marking. They are sometimes heard in conversation however, and intensified by 'absolute' *most*: a **most perfect** example."

Angela Downing and Philip Locke, *English Grammar: A University Course* (2nd ed.), London & New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 486.

Discuss.

Candidates will use relevant excerpts from the following corpus to address the above topic.

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Excerpt 1

Perfect or absolute Truth, which is known by faith, is beyond our empirical grasp which means that we must act in the knowledge that we are holding on to such truth as we are able to apprehend in this world.

Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, 1991, BNC

Excerpt 2

'A print of the right kind is not simply something that is worth money. It is more like actual currency. The reason is that while it may be in limited supply, it isn't unique. When other, identical examples exist, it is easy to establish what the value should be.'

Independent, electronic edition, 1989, BNC

Excerpt 3

So, when I found I wanted to write a book that would reflect a little on whether we should strive to be perfect or settle for the second-best but practical, I realised I would have to have a murder that was in some way imperfect.

H.R.F. Keating, *Writing Crime Fiction*, 1986, BNC

Excerpt 4

"The drawing would be a joke on the theme of the angel," he says. "Personally I consider it distasteful. I think it is ugly and perhaps one of the worst examples of Leonardo's draughtsmanship. However, it does provide a unique guide to Leonardo's inner self."

Daily Telegraph, electronic edition, 1992, BNC

Excerpt 5

"No, but I did want to be a good wife to you and mother said men didn't like weaklings. If I keep doing this you won't want me." "You'll be a most excellent wife and I shall fatten you up so that you never swoon again. You look as if you need a good meal. Have you had anything to eat to-night?"

Pamela Bennetts, *Topaz*, 1988, BNC

Excerpt 6

As is well known, Dick Crossman, who did not always conform to the rules, had maintained a most complete – if not invariably accurate – account of the Cabinet meetings that he attended and the discussions with his colleagues.

Arnold Goodman, *Tell Them I'm on My Way*, 1993, BNC

Excerpt 7

There can be no enterprise more uniquely American than to refine and update the goals and mechanisms of the food system.

Ricardo Salvador, University of California at Santa Barbara, 2013, Webcorp

Excerpt 8

Grundrisse consists of a series of notebooks which were never finally prepared for publication and are therefore somewhat untidy and unsystematic. They contain much expansion, however, of the ideas found in the more finished work of that period: the three volumes of Capital and the short Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy.

Maurice Bloch, *Marxism and Anthropology: the History of a Relationship*, 1984, BNC

Excerpt 9

America had, said the paper, just launched a new submarine torpedo boat, declared (by the Americans, I hope) "to be the most unique vessel of that character ever invented".

New Scientist, 1991, BNC

Excerpt 10

"I am married to the most perfectly lovely thing in the world. It isn't strange to be madly in love at the age of fifty-one. It's bloody marvellous."

Esquire, 1991, BNC

Excerpt 11

When he thought of her (when didn't he?) his mouth was dry and his palms were wet; he sighed; he shook. She was in his mind's eye now, like a fugitive from some more perfect place.

Clive Barker, *Imajica*, 1992, BNC

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Excerpt 12

True, there is a general drift through time towards more complex plants, more perfectly adapted to life away from water, but primitive species have persisted alongside the innovations.

Richard Fortey, *Fossils: the Key to the Past*, 1991, BNC

Excerpt 13

Marie Helvin was the daughter of a Japanese mother and an American father. Growing up in Hawaii, she saw herself as a "gawky, flat-chested string bean with a fizzy mass of hair". But to Bailey, Helvin had the most perfect body in the world: "She was so exotic, like an orchid."

Esquire, 1991, BNC

Excerpt 14

It was part of my planning to use this day to catch up with the vast mound of paperwork, documentation of seizures and reports, which always accumulates after a successful revenue operation. Surely no civil servant had more unique or peaceful surroundings in which to work than we did on this day. Nothing seemed to disturb the tranquillity of that Sabbath in the hearts of the Highlands, with the scent of warm conifers and the distant shimmer of sun on the calm waters of Loch Lochy.

R. G. Bayly, *Patrol*, 1989, BNC

Excerpt 15

For centuries we have marveled at the diversity of snowflakes and told our children that each snowflake is unique (just like our little darlings!). But although each snowflake may be unique on a molecular level ("purely because there are differences in the atomic structure of the atoms making up a water molecule," explains Penn State meteorology professor Hans Verlinde) there is new evidence that in structural terms they may be less unique than we previously thought.

Anthony Wing Kosner, *Winter Wonderland*, *Forbes.com*, 2013, Webcorp

Excerpt 16

With no daylight at all penetrating to the interior of the foundry, it looked more hellish than ever, its furnaces glowing fiercely in the smoky gloom.

David Lodge, *Nice Work*, 1988

Excerpt 17

"Violette has even advised me as to what you might like. You'll find a pile of novels, a record player, and an assortment of Elvis Presley and Dave Brubeck records..." She pronounced the names as if they were utterly outlandish.

Lisa Appignanesi, *Memory and Desire*, 1992

Excerpt 18

"It's sounding bad," Private Charlie Weller spoke of the distant gun-fire, which did not really sound so very awful yet, but Weller was feeling a flicker of nervousness and wanted the relief of conversation.

Bernard Cornwell, *Sharpe's Waterloo*, 1990

Excerpt 19

He suddenly got up. "Get the bus after me. See you at the station." And he made off. I got up and shouted, "What -? Vern! Wait! What d' you mean?" - and ran hell-for-leather after him. He stopped and turned round just before the drive. "Station. See you. I'm off, you get next bus." Turned round and off. Loony. He's an absolute utter loony.

Alison Leonard, *Gate-Crashing the Dream Party*, 1990