N5 National Qualifications 2016

X724/75/11

English
Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation

THURSDAY, 5 MAY
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Total marks — 30

Attempt ALL questions.

Write your answers clearly in the answer booklet provided. In the answer booklet you must clearly identify the question number you are attempting.

Use **blue** or **black** ink.

Before leaving the examination room you must give your answer booklet to the Invigilator; if you do not you may lose all the marks for this paper.

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Can Idina Menzel ever Let It Go?

When the organisers of the 2015 Super Bowl were looking for someone to follow in the footsteps of Diana Ross and Whitney Houston and belt out *The Star-Spangled Banner* in front of a global audience of 160 million, it's not hard to see why they chose Idina Menzel.

As the voice of Elsa the ice queen in *Frozen*, the most successful animated film of all time, who sang its ubiquitous Oscar-winning *Let It Go* (more than three million copies sold in America alone), she has a more than passing acquaintance with anthems.

The stratospheric success of *Frozen* — with takings of more than £800 million, it's No 5 in the all-time list of highest-grossing films — has elevated her into a new league.

Now she releases hit Christmas albums, has Broadway shows written for her, tours the world's mega-domes and is having a TV sitcom developed.

Frozen isn't going away, either. She's spoken in the past about the much-mooted sequel but she has clearly been reprimanded by the Disney suits: "Apparently I spoke out of turn. I just assumed that because it was so successful there'd be a sequel, but Disney doesn't have sequels, so it would be a first if there was one."

How about the *Frozen* stage show, also much mooted? "I think they're working on that but the Disney people keep things close to their chests." If it happens, would she like to be in it? "Sure, I'd love to. But musicals take years and I'd have to play Elsa's mother, probably!"

What's definitely happening is a six-minute short, *Frozen Fever*, in which Elsa's powers threaten to scupper the birthday of her sister, Anna. "It's fun, really clever," Menzel says. "There's a new song. It's pretty much a group number though." She sounds slightly disappointed.

Frozen Fever did delight both fans and Disney — it was shown in cinemas before Disney's live-action *Cinderella*, which doubtless enjoyed a mighty bump as a result. The studio may be tight-lipped about *Frozen* sequels, but they're certainly happy to milk the commercial opportunities of their icy behemoth.

Whether there is a *Frozen 2* or not, Menzel is now a big star, there to be shot at. When she performed *Let It Go* in Times Square in New York on New Year's Eve she was criticised for failing to hit a high note (to be fair, she was singing in sub-zero temperatures). And though her powerful, stately turn at the Super Bowl received strong reviews, there were still some who noticed the odd flat note.

The unnerving proximity of several dozen hulking American footballers may have had something to do with that. Talking about the time that she sang at the All-Star baseball game, Menzel says: "One thing I underestimated is what a strong presence these athletes have when they're standing on the line right in front of you. They're huge, standing there, and you're this one woman, singing on her own. You forget about the world and the rest of the stadium because they're so . . . daunting."

One woman opposite a squad of men: it's a pertinent image given her associations with *Frozen*, a film that has regularly been touted as a feminist breakthrough. The first Disney animation to be directed (well, co-directed) by a woman, Jennifer Lee, it's quietly revolutionary because, as Menzel says, "the purest love that's being celebrated is between two sisters and not because some Prince Charming is saving the day".

Yes, the two heroines are still doe-eyed and partial to shiny dresses, but their relationship is subtle: Elsa, the conflicted snow sorceress struggling to control her powers; Anna, the devoted younger sister whom she keeps at a distance for fear of turning her into a popsicle. With her grandiose sulks, Elsa has been described as Disney's first emo princess. "She's definitely complicated," Menzel says. "I think that's why it's a successful film, because both women are not stereotypes."

There are parallels with Menzel's own life: she and her younger sister, Cara, had their fair share of "Do you wanna build a snowman?" moments. "She would probably tell you she looks up to me, a lot," Menzel says, rather wincingly.

When *Let It Go* was nominated for Best Song at the Oscars a year ago, it was Cara whom Menzel took as her date. "I didn't think about it — she was the first person I thought of — and then I realised how perfect it was," she says. Sisters representing a film about sisters.

Let It Go won the Oscar for its writers, but that was rather overshadowed by the moment of weirdness earlier in the evening when, introducing Menzel's performance of the song, John Travolta inexplicably referred to her as "Adele Dazeem".

She nevertheless recognises that Travolta's slip was "one of the greatest mistakes ever — it helped my career, that's for sure." It's one of several references Menzel makes to her career: her conversation is a mix of Broadway-speak ("I try to sing from the heart") and battle-hardened ambition.

She is certainly aware of the value of appearing in "several zeitgeist-y things across different generations: from *Rent* to *Wicked*, *Glee* to *Frozen*". There's a 'through line' between those four, she thinks: they all resonate with young people and "people who are trying to find themselves. I'm proud of that. I'm not sure why that's become the pattern for me — maybe it's because I have as much to learn myself".

Our time is almost up. I'm allowed to ask one more (burning) question. Does she have her own Elsa dress, the must-have wardrobe item for girls across the western world? "No I do not!" she laughs.

So she doesn't ever have the urge to indulge her inner ice queen and don the full regalia? "Nah, I don't look that good as a blonde. The waistline, though — that would be fun." Part of me suspects that she'd also quite enjoy ruling over her own wintry kingdom.

Ed Potton, in "The Times"

MARKS

Total marks — 30

Attempt ALL Questions

1. Look at lines 1–6, and then explain **in your own words** why the organisers of the Super Bowl chose Idina Menzel to perform there. **2**

2. Look at lines 7–8, and then, by referring to **one** example, explain fully how the writer's use of language makes it clear that Frozen is successful. **2**

3. Look at lines 11–25, and then identify, **using your own words** as far as possible, **five** things we learn here about the Disney organisation. **5**

4. Look at lines 26–36, and then explain fully how the writer's use of language makes it clear that coping with performing under these circumstances is not easy. You should refer to **two** examples in your answer. **4**

5. By referring to the sentence in lines 37–38, explain how it helps to provide a link between the writer's ideas at this point in the passage. **2**

6. Look at lines 42–47, and then explain fully how **two** examples of the writer's **word choice** make it clear that Elsa is not just "doe-eyed and partial to shiny dresses". **4**

7. Look at lines 51–61, and then explain fully **in your own words** as far as possible why the Oscar evening was so memorable or such a success for Idina Menzel. **2**

8. Look at lines 62–69, by referring to **two** examples, explain fully how the writer makes effective use of contrast in these paragraphs. You could refer to sentence structure, tone or word choice. **4**

9. Throughout the passage, we are given information and clues about Idina Menzel's personality.

Using your own words as far as possible, identify **five** things that we learn about her personality from the passage. **5**

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

OPEN OUT FOR QUESTIONS

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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