

淡江大學八十七學年度碩士班入學考試試題

系別：美國研究所

科目：英文寫作

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PAGE 1, #1, READING COMPREHENSION

PLEASE READ
THIS ESSAY
CAREFULLY AND
ANSWER THE
QUESTIONS ON
THE NEXT PAGE,
PAGE 2.

by Ernest May and Philip Zelikow

You have probably read or heard stories about taped meetings and conversations recorded during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. As authors and editors of *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Harvard University Press, 1997), we have encountered many questions as people realized just how extraordinary this material can be.

• Are these tapes important? Well, imagine a child's fantasy of being able to climb into a time machine and dia! back to important moments in history, to be in the room and listen. The dream can come true, not only for gripping episodes like the missile crisis, but for many other moments, high and low.

We will eventually look back on the years for which there are large numbers of preserved tapes, 1962 to 1973, as a unique period where we have a special window into just how decisions truly were (and are) made at the highest levels of the most powerful country in the world.

• Why were the tapes made? From all the evidence now available, the four presidents who secretly taped substantial numbers of White House meetings did it for their private use, not for posterity. (Eisenhower taped, too, but almost all his tapes were apparently destroyed, though some rough transcripts survive.)

Fascinating Time Machine

Laws and attitudes about such secret taping were different then. Eisenhower and LBJ used the tapes to check what people had said to them, with rough transcripts being dashed off at the time by their secretaries. JFK, with his historian's instincts, was apparently recording material he intended to use as a secret source for his memoirs. Indeed, we think his brother Robert later used some of the tapes in just this way for his memoir of the Cuban missile crisis.

Nixon, with his voice-activated system recording thousands of hours between 1971 and 1973, had purposes that are more obscure, but he certainly did not want the tapes made public. From what they recorded, it seems clear that none of these presidents ever thought the public would hear the tapes in the unedited form now available, if at all.

• Can we rely on transcripts? An archivist at the JFK Library, Stephanie Fawcett, has argued that transcripts are subjective interpretations and are, therefore, "inherently flawed" (*Letters to the Boston Globe*, November 3, 1997).

True. But those who consult the original tapes will find that they have trouble understanding what is said, who is speaking, and what the speakers are talking about; and they cannot tell anyone about what they have learned without transcribing the passage of interest and its relevant context.

In other words, this unique treasury of knowledge about the U.S. government is effectively inaccessible to citizens unless someone attempts the mammoth job of deciphering the words, identifying speakers, researching and explaining the context, and turning the voices into a form of written communication. It seems perfectly obvious to us that interpretations or translations must be attempted, even if all interpretations will be imperfect complements to the original.

• What else is coming? The news you've heard about Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon tapes represents just a small fraction of the knowledge we might gain. Current and forthcoming books on LBJ and Nixon recordings transcribe some exchanges that the editor finds interesting. Our book, instead, picks a particular period of time in October 1962 and presents as complete a record as possible, with explanations and analysis. But with either method no more than 5 percent of the available material is being brought to press.

What is needed is a major effort, like those devoted to editing the papers of great figures from our past, to bring to the American people this unparalleled record of democratic leadership at its worst, and at its best.

Ernest May is Charles Warren professor of history, and Philip Zelikow, a former White House official, is associate professor of public policy at the Kennedy School. Reprinted with permission of the Boston Globe.

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READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS (50%)

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN GOOD ENGLISH AND WITH COMPLETE SENTENCES. BUT AVOID EXCESSIVE COPYING FROM THE ARTICLE.

- a) What exactly do the authors regard as a fascinating time machine?
- b) Which U.S. presidents are discussed in the article?
- c) Which U.S. president, according to the article, was most concerned with history?
- d) Did any of the presidents think their unedited recordings would become available to the public? Give some proof with your answer.
- e) What basic problem will there be for those who listen to the original tapes?
- f) Why aren't the transcripts reliable sources of information?
- g) Which of the two authors is a professor of history?
- h) What is the name of the JFK Library archivist?

#2 ENGLISH COMPOSITION (50%)

Terrible Childhood Crimes

Write a well-developed essay, in good English, explaining what you think should be done to prevent the rising number of horrible crimes committed by young children. Also, please include in your essay your own opinions about how society should punish these youngsters who kill others. You may refer to any recent news items about such crimes.