

**Tuesday 1 November 2016 – Morning**

**GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (NI)**

**A633/01/RBI** Information and Ideas (Foundation Tier)

**READING BOOKLET INSERT**

**Duration: 2 hours**



**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES**

- The materials in this Reading Booklet Insert are for use with the questions in Section A of the Question Paper.

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## The men who built the railways in Britain



The navvies – the men who built the railways – were an elite workforce who prided themselves on their strength, their appetite, and their ability to consume alcohol.

They were not simply ordinary labourers, drawn to railway construction as it paid better than work on the land. The word ‘navvy’ comes from navigator, a term used for the canal builders of the eighteenth century, but not everyone who worked on the railways automatically became a navvy. The nature of the work, such as excavating and tunnelling, was particularly challenging. The navvies developed fantastic friendships, as most had to live on, or very near, their worksites, often deep in the countryside.

The navvies placed great importance on their appearance despite the dirty nature of the work, and their distinctive dress included moleskin trousers, velvet coats, hobnail boots, white felt hats with the brims turned up, and flashy handkerchiefs. All were known only by their nicknames, such as Gipsy Joe, Fisherman or One-eyed Ern.

They were often paid partly in beer and once they had money tended not to work until the cash ran out. To qualify as a navvy, a man had to be able to eat two pounds of beef and drink a gallon of beer a day. It took a year for an agricultural labourer to qualify as a navvy since, at first, they would not be strong enough to work all day, collapsing by mid-afternoon. It was only through hard work and copious eating that they built up their strength.

They lived in atrocious conditions, often 12 or 14 to a room with only one small fire, forcing them to wear clothes which could not be properly dried after being washed. Many had permanent coughs as a result. They were cheated frequently by their employers, the contractors, who made them buy their food from the company shop for up to 50 per cent more than the prices in the towns.

Not surprisingly, their life expectancy was low, and few lived beyond their forties. Thousands died on the job, many because of the harsh conditions, but often through their own carelessness. For example, three were killed in succession in the Kilsby Tunnel on the London and Birmingham Railway; they had been dared to jump across a shaft and all three had failed. The hardest railway to build was one of the last, the Carlisle and Settle, which cut through particularly harsh territory. The local cemeteries were full of navvies by the time it was completed in 1875.

At one point, at the height of the railway boom of the 1840s, there were 200000 navvies working on railways around the country. The navvies might have been a wild bunch, but their work, in which they took great pride, cannot be faulted and they left a fantastic legacy, a railway network of 20000 miles, over half of which survives today.

# NETWORK FAIL



*Festive misery as thousands hit by rail chaos and snow hell*  
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Time	Destination		
Continued.....			Cancelled
09:28	Peterborough		Cancelled
	Service cancelled due to over-running engineering works		
09:32	Hertford North	7	09:48
	Service delayed due to over-running engineering works		
09:39	Moorgate		Cancelled
09:41	Peterborough	7	On time
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Departures			



*Stations shut, thousands stranded as rail track maintenance overruns*

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