

Section B- Sample answer: Speech

Good morning, everyone! It feels so good to see your familiar faces and warm smiles once again. Never did I imagine last year when I stood on this very spot giving my graduation speech that I would return a year later with my passport full of stamps, several languages on my tongue and quite literally, a world of experiences.

For those of you who are wondering, no, I'm not referring to the first year of university life- for as exciting as that may be, it cannot, in my eyes at least, compare to a year of marking my presence across the globe. So, this is exactly what I did. I took a gap year after finishing my A-Levels and hopped on to the next flight out of here.

Just kidding, it was not that dramatic. What is dramatic, is the number of spell-binding, enchanting, secret little places on our planet. When I planned my tour, I included world-famous destinations like Paris as well as undiscovered, small towns like Georgia in Texas which are just as captivating.

Simply planning such a long and complicated journey which includes jumping continents is an educational experience on its own. There are enough things to consider that it can make your head spin- budget, costs, climate, food and drink, entertainment, flight bookings and communication just to name a few. It is certainly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity because you will never be this age again and you will never again be trying this for the first time. After you have organised something so huge on your own, come university life, come work life- you can handle them all with ease!

Of course, it sounds all roses but you must keep in mind that roses have thorns and one of those thorns could cause a nasty tear in your pocket. If not calculated to the last coin, your budget could cause you to get stranded in the middle of the Atacama Desert. A world tour is no joke which is probably why it is usually attempted only by popstars and their like. Beware, despite careful calculation, I returned home to a bank balance of two digits.

But then I think it was worth it. Someday I'll get a job and earn that money back but my experiences and memories and all the friends I've made in Prague and Quebec and Melbourne are irreplaceable and worth more than the entire world's treasures. Where else, if not in Spain, do you get the chance to throw tomatoes at people without being arrested? Where else would you get free samples of the best cheese and wine if not in Verona, Italy? Where else would you zoom about in a bullet train if not in Tokyo? Yes, my friends, I did all that and sky-dived in Cape Town.

Although experiencing myriad cultures and traditions was an amazing experience to say the least, I do realise that I have missed out on a lot. I returned to find my friends off to university, almost done with their first year. When I met a group of them recently, I could not join in their conversations of student unions, societies and lectures. I suddenly felt very isolated and alone. That was when I realised I will never be the same with them again; they will always be one step ahead.

I suppose you can say 'something lost, something gained' and it is true. I have gained a lot in the last twelve months. While there are numerous advantages of taking a gap year to travel around, here is

one that stands out: it looks fantastic on your resume. Who would not want to employ a graduate with such international experiences?

So friends, as you can tell, there are many advantages as well as disadvantages of travelling by taking a gap year and it is up to you to decide what you prefer and what you are ready to sacrifice. All I can say is had I to make the same decision again, I would not choose differently. Research well, plan well, budget well and just go for it! Thank you for listening, it has been wonderful sharing my experience with you.

Teacher's comments: Band 1. 23/25. I like your speech! You could have touched upon languages and more problems.