



Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca

PL0A - ESAME DI STATO DI LICEO LINGUISTICO

Tema di: LINGUA STRANIERA

TESTO DI ATTUALITÀ – LINGUA INGLESE

(comprensione e produzione in lingua straniera)

Couples Adorn Bridges With Weighty Tokens of the Heart
'Lovelocks' Excite Passions in Paris: Symbol of Romance or Graffiti?

PARIS—Among the must-dos for visitors to the French capital: ride to the top of the Eiffel Tower, pay homage at the Louvre and seal your love with a Master Lock.

Paris's picturesque bridges over the Seine are heaving with padlocks, bike locks, handcuffs and other talismans of amour. Enamored visitors write their names on a lock, attach it to a bridge and throw the key into the river. (...) But, many Parisians are asking: What's love got to do with it?

The public displays of affection have unchained loathing among cold-hearted locals. Some gripe that the locks are no better than graffiti, defacing the city's landmarks. Rust and pollution are concerns, too. (...) Others argue that the symbolism is all wrong. "The lock is a negative symbol of enclosure and imprisonment, the exact opposite of what love should be," says Esther Pawloff, a 48-year-old executive assistant here in Paris.

The locks have been turned into expensive contemporary art and melted down for the value of their brass. When thousands of locks were mysteriously removed one night in 2010, cynics suspected a spurned lover—or a padlock manufacturer looking for new business.

In recent months, the two original padlock bridges have become so overloaded that locks have spread to any bridge with a small grate. Couples have attached their love tokens to statues and monuments, causing damage that the city has had to repair.

The lovelock phenomenon came to Paris five years ago. Most observers date the phenomenon to an Italian teen novel titled "I Want You," published in 2006, featuring two Roman lovers who immortalized their bond on a bridge in the Eternal City and threw the key in the Tiber.

Readers copied the romantic gesture—until one of the bridge's lamp posts was so junked up with locks that officials worried that it would collapse. Padlocks have since sprouted from the Great Wall in China to the Brooklyn Bridge to the fence of a freeway overpass in Silicon Valley.

Paris, however, seems to have fallen for lovelocks more than any other city. They are entwined with its image as a romantic destination, fueling the tourist trade. For Valentine's Day, several hotels are advertising romantic getaways offering the possibility to partake in the padlock custom.

Some suspect tourism is the reason city hall backed down from a plan to remove and ban the locks to preserve Paris's architectural heritage. (...)

The Pont des Arts and the Pont de l'Archevêché, with the Notre Dame cathedral in the background, were the first two bridges to serve as padlock canvasses. (...) The two bridges became a destination for seekers of eternal love because their chain-link grates are small enough to get a lock around. Enterprising souvenir hawkers peddle padlocks along the bridges. Personalized padlocks sell for as much as €20, or about \$27.

Paris's tourism industry perpetuated the fad. The bateaux mouches barge-like boats that carry tourists up and down the Seine quickly added mention of lovelocks to their commentaries. (...)

However, artists and scavengers see other value in love on the bridges. (...) French contemporary artist Loris Gréaud had plenty of choice when he made his installation "Tainted Love" from Pont des Arts locks last year. (...)



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Mr. Gréaud melted and molded the locks into 15 sculptural shards, priced at €675,000. He was exploring the paradox of transforming metal that was imbued with love into an unemotional geometric object, he said. François Pinault, a French art collector, bought all of them.

In fact, the weight of love is becoming dangerous. Last week, it was the city's turn to clip locks. A cleanup crew removed five damaged grates from the Pont des Arts. (...) The city worries that the weight of the locks, as much as 330 pounds on a single grate, is making the bridge unsafe. Officials also attribute the danger to metal-resellers who cut the grates instead of the locks because the metal is thinner.

There is one possible solution that causes no pollution or damage to public property.

Master Lock, part of *Fortune Brands Home & Security Inc.*, last year began offering "virtual" locks that it displays in an online gallery. In front of a shot of the Pont des Arts plastered with padlocks, the company advertises "no travel necessary."

(Adapted from Christina Passariello, *The Wall Street Journal*, Europe Edition ,
 Monday, February 11, 2013 / U.S. Edition, February 12, 2013)

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323511804578297832498983360.html>

Comprehension

Answer the following questions:

1. What must visitors to Paris do?
2. What do Parisians think of "lovelocks"?
3. What happened one night in 2010?
4. When and why did the phenomenon start in Paris?
5. Why did the authorities abandon the plan to remove and ban the locks?
6. What did Mr Gréaud do with those locks last year?
7. Why is "the weight of love" becoming dangerous?
8. What solution did Master Lock offer last year?

Summarize the content of the passage in about 150 words.

Composition:

Have you ever sealed your love with a lock? What do you think of the phenomenon? Is a lovelock a symbol of romance or a sort of graffiti? Write your views on the topic in a 300-word essay.