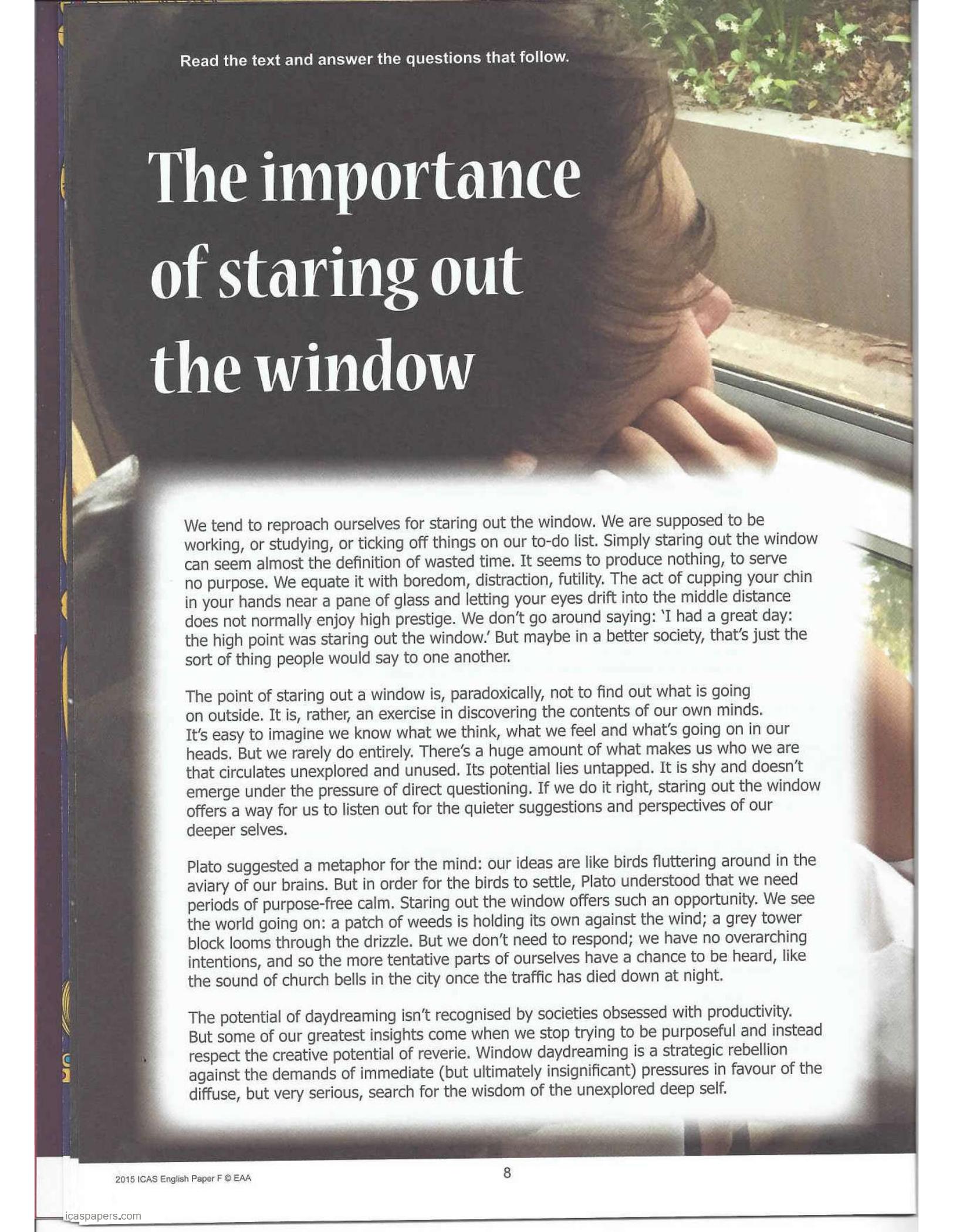


Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

The importance of staring out the window

A photograph of a person with long dark hair, seen from the side, looking out a window. Their chin is resting on their hand, which is propped up on the windowsill. The background shows some greenery and a concrete ledge outside the window.

We tend to reproach ourselves for staring out the window. We are supposed to be working, or studying, or ticking off things on our to-do list. Simply staring out the window can seem almost the definition of wasted time. It seems to produce nothing, to serve no purpose. We equate it with boredom, distraction, futility. The act of cupping your chin in your hands near a pane of glass and letting your eyes drift into the middle distance does not normally enjoy high prestige. We don't go around saying: 'I had a great day: the high point was staring out the window.' But maybe in a better society, that's just the sort of thing people would say to one another.

The point of staring out a window is, paradoxically, not to find out what is going on outside. It is, rather, an exercise in discovering the contents of our own minds. It's easy to imagine we know what we think, what we feel and what's going on in our heads. But we rarely do entirely. There's a huge amount of what makes us who we are that circulates unexplored and unused. Its potential lies untapped. It is shy and doesn't emerge under the pressure of direct questioning. If we do it right, staring out the window offers a way for us to listen out for the quieter suggestions and perspectives of our deeper selves.

Plato suggested a metaphor for the mind: our ideas are like birds fluttering around in the aviary of our brains. But in order for the birds to settle, Plato understood that we need periods of purpose-free calm. Staring out the window offers such an opportunity. We see the world going on: a patch of weeds is holding its own against the wind; a grey tower block looms through the drizzle. But we don't need to respond; we have no overarching intentions, and so the more tentative parts of ourselves have a chance to be heard, like the sound of church bells in the city once the traffic has died down at night.

The potential of daydreaming isn't recognised by societies obsessed with productivity. But some of our greatest insights come when we stop trying to be purposeful and instead respect the creative potential of reverie. Window daydreaming is a strategic rebellion against the demands of immediate (but ultimately insignificant) pressures in favour of the diffuse, but very serious, search for the wisdom of the unexplored deep self.

23. When the writer says 'We tend to reproach ourselves', he means that
- (A) people are apt to engage in criticism of themselves.
 - (B) people can misunderstand their own feelings.
 - (C) people are often unable to forgive themselves.
 - (D) people frequently compare themselves to others.
24. What is the effect of the words 'seem' and 'seems' in the first paragraph?
- (A) They show the resolve of the writer.
 - (B) They highlight the misconception that the writer is describing.
 - (C) They reinforce the uncertainty the writer is feeling.
 - (D) They focus on the writer's helplessness.
25. What is the main purpose of the first paragraph?
- (A) to propose an unusual way of gaining prestige
 - (B) to suggest some alternatives for times when people are bored
 - (C) to criticise the usual excuses for staring into space
 - (D) to challenge a stereotypical viewpoint
26. What does the simile about 'the sound of church bells' suggest about our minds?
- (A) Truly profound thought can only begin after our minds have been completely stilled.
 - (B) The mind responds to certain kinds of sounds by generating more useful and important thoughts.
 - (C) The restless nature of the mind becomes most obvious when we try to quiet it.
 - (D) Our minds are always filled with subtle riches that simply need an opportunity to become apparent.
27. According to the text, daydreaming should be viewed as
- (A) an experience best managed by ignoring it.
 - (B) an activity for achieving understanding.
 - (C) a chance to rest and relax.
 - (D) a chance to control our thoughts for greater productivity.
28. Which of these statements would the writer most likely agree with?
- (A) Idle moments are never simply idleness.
 - (B) Being busy helps thoughts to form.
 - (C) Insights revealed under pressure are the best.
 - (D) Better societies encourage individuals not to waste time.