Let alone

HSK 5 Grammar

Original teaching practice. Read one pattern, cover its model and try the questions before checking the separate answer section. Examples adapted from Chinese Grammar Wiki (AllSet Learning, CC BY-NC-SA) retain the course-reference provenance.

别说 … ，就是 … 也 … (let alone)

Tired on the stairs

- A friend suggests climbing Mount Huashan. You get tired walking upstairs.
- **别说爬山了，就是走楼梯我也觉得累。** – “Forget climbing mountains – even walking upstairs tires me.”

别说 A，就是 B 也 / 都 …

- **别说 A，就是 / 连 B 也 …** = “let alone A, even B …”: B is the easier case, and even that fails (or succeeds), so A obviously does.
- The harder case A comes first, after 别说.

别说一百块，就是一块我也没有。
bié shuō yì bǎi kuài jiù shì yí kuài wǒ yě méi yǒu
Word guide: 别说 – let alone; 一百 – a hundred; 块 – yuan; 就是 – even; 一块 – one yuan; 我 – I; 也 – (even); 没有 – don’t have.



Positive too

- **这道题，别说老师，就是小学生也会做。** – “This question – never mind the teacher, even a primary-school pupil could do it.”
- 连 can replace 就是: 别说外国人，连中国人也不一定知道.

别说外国人，连中国人也不一定知道。
bié shuō wài guó rén lián Zhōng guó rén yě bù yí dìng zhī dào
Word guide: 别说 – never mind; 外国人 – foreigners; 连 – even; 中国人 – Chinese people; 也 – also; 不一定 – not necessarily; 知道 – know.

Which item goes where

- The item after 别说 is the more extreme one; the item after 就是 / 连 is the easier test.
- Keep 也 / 都 in the second clause: 就是 … 也 …, 连 … 都 ….

别说 versus 更不用说

- 别说 A，就是 B 也 …: the extreme case A comes first.
- B…，更不用说 A 了: the easier case first, then the extreme: 走楼梯都累，更不用说爬山了.

走楼梯都累，更不用说爬山了。
zǒu lóu tī dōu lèi gèng bú yòng shuō pá shān le
Word guide: 走 – walking; 楼梯 – stairs; 都 – even; 累 – tires me; 更不用说 – let alone; 爬山 – climbing mountains.

Recap

- **别说 A，就是 / 连 B 也 / 都 …** = let alone A, even B ….
- A (extreme) after 别说; 更不用说 puts the extreme case last.

Practise this pattern step by step.

更不用说 (let alone / not to mention)

Not even the basics

- Your nephew is two years old and is learning to talk.
- **他连话都说不清楚，更不用说写字了。** – “He can’t even speak clearly, let alone write.”

B …，更不用说 A (了)

- **更不用说 A** = “let alone A, not to mention A”: the easier case B comes first; A is even more obviously true or false.
- 了 often ends the clause: 更不用说 … 了.

我连自行车都不会骑，更不用说开车了。
wǒ lián zì xíng chē dōu bú huì qí gèng bú yòng shuō kāi chē le
Word guide: 我 – I; 连 – even; 自行车 – a bike; 都 – (even); 不 – not; 会 – can; 骑 – ride; 更不用说 – let alone; 开车 – drive.

连 A 都 …，更不用说 B: let alone



Positive: not to mention

- **这里的夏天很热，更不用说八月了。** – “Summers here are hot, not to mention August.”
- **他会说英语、法语，更不用说中文了。** – “He speaks English and French, not to mention Chinese.”

这里的夏天很热，更不用说八月了。
zhè lǐ de xià tiān hěn rè gèng bú yòng shuō bā yuè le
Word guide: 这里 – here; 夏天 – summers; 很 – very; 热 – hot; 更不用说 – not to mention; 八月 – August.

Easier case first

- The clause before 更不用说 is the easier or more basic case; A after it is the extreme.
- Do not put 更不用说 at the start of the first clause: B…，更不用说 A.

更不用说 versus 何况

- 何况 is similar and more literary: 大人都做不到，何况孩子呢? – “Even adults can’t do it, let alone children.”
- 何况 often ends with 呢 as a rhetorical question.

大人都做不到，何况孩子呢?
dà rén dōu zuò bu dào hé kuàng hái zi ne
Word guide: 大人 – adults; 都 – even; 做不到 – can’t do it; 何况 – let alone; 孩子 – children.

Recap

- **B …，更不用说 A (了)** = let alone / not to mention A.
- Easier case first; 何况 … 呢 is the literary relative.

Practise this pattern step by step.

Practice without the models

别说 … ，就是 … 也 … (let alone)

2301.1 Complete: “Let alone a hundred yuan, I don’t even have one.” 别说一百块，…… 一块我也没有。

2301.2 In 别说 A，就是 B 也不会, which is the more extreme case?

- A. Both equal
- B. A
- C. Neither
- D. B

2301.3 Build: “Never mind foreigners, even Chinese people may not know.”
Arrange all chunks: 连中国人 / 也不一定知道。/ 别说外国人 / ，

2301.4 更不用说 puts the extreme case at the end.
True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2301.5 A friend suggests climbing Mount Huashan. You get tired walking upstairs. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.
Write or say your own response before reading the key.

更不用说 (let alone / not to mention)

2302.1 Complete: “I can’t even ride a bike, let alone drive.” 我连自行车都不会骑，…… 开车了。

2302.2 Which order is correct?

- A. 他更不用说跑步，连走路。
- B. 跑步更不用说了，走路他连。
- C. 他连走路都困难，更不用说跑步了。
- D. 更不用说跑步，他连走路都困难。

2302.3 Build: “Summers here are hot, not to mention August.”
Arrange all chunks: 更不用说 / ， / 八月了。/ 这里的夏天很热

2302.4 何况 is more literary than 更不用说.
True or false? Explain or repair the statement.

2302.5 Your nephew is two years old and is learning to talk. Close the examples. Say a Mandarin response, then write it in Chinese. Explain briefly in English what the lesson’s pattern adds. Compare with the model, then change one detail and try again.
Write or say your own response before reading the key.

Answers and explanations

■ 别说 … ，就是 … 也 … (let alone)

2301.1 就是

别说 A，就是 B 也 ….

2301.2 B. A

The extreme case follows 别说.

2301.3 别说外国人，连中国人也不一定知道。

别说 A，连 B 也 ….

2301.4 True.

True. 更不用说 adds the more extreme case at the end: 大人都搬不动，更不用说孩子了 “Even adults can’t move it, let alone children.”

2301.5 One possible response: 别说爬山了，就是走楼梯我也觉得累。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The item after 别说 is the more extreme one; the item after 就是 / 连 is the easier test.
- Keep 也 / 都 in the second clause: 就是 … 也 …, 连 … 都 ….
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.

■ 更不用说 (let alone / not to mention)

2302.1 更不用说

B…，更不用说 A 了.

2302.2 C. 他连走路都困难，更不用说跑步了。

The easier case first, then 更不用说 + the extreme.

2302.3 这里的夏天很热，更不用说八月了。

B…，更不用说 A 了.

2302.4 True.

何况 … 呢 often appears in writing.

2302.5 One possible response: 他连话都说不清楚，更不用说写字了。

Check meaning and form:

- My response conveys a message that fits the opening situation.
- I can explain the meaning of the pattern, rather than only naming it.
- The clause before 更不用说 is the easier or more basic case; A after it is the extreme.
- Do not put 更不用说 at the start of the first clause: B…，更不用说 A.
- I tried a second response with a name, time, place, or description changed.

This is supported productive practice. Compare meaning and structure; your answer need not copy the model. A partner or teacher must hear the spoken response to comment on pronunciation.