



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**1123/21**

Paper 2 Comprehension

**May/June 2010**

INSERT

**1 hour 30 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This insert contains the passage for comprehension.

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## Music

- 1 Music is a universal form of communication, cutting across all periods of history and all regions of the planet. Human beings were probably inspired to produce music by the sounds they heard in the world of nature, like birdsong and animal cries, which formed the background of their daily existence. Even in primitive times, music played an important part in the social life of the community – events like birth, marriage and death had their own individual and appropriate music. The earliest written representations of musical sound are found in India, providing a beginning for a study of the history of music, and instruments such as flutes and various types of stringed instruments have been recovered from archaeological sites there. Because it has the power to touch individuals according to the moods and situations in which they find themselves, people have also always found music to be useful on a personal level. 5 10
- 2 A particularly poignant story which demonstrates the power of music is told about the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1914. Many European countries had been engaged for four months in a war which was to continue for almost another four years, but the soldiers in one part of the battlefield, remembering that this was the night before Christmas, turned their thoughts away from war towards a celebration of this important Christian festival. Imagine the astonishment of the British soldiers when the sound of Christmas songs being sung by enemy German soldiers drifted towards them on the clear night air. Moved by the music, although fearful at first, men who had earlier in the day been fighting against each other stepped from their hiding places. The language barrier was somehow broken down, enabling limited conversations to take place. The soldiers spontaneously put down their weapons, exchanging food gifts and even playing football together. The Christmas Truce, as it came to be called, has come to represent the endurance of human beings in the face of adversity, and music played an important role. 15 20
- 3 Perhaps the most important turning point in the history of music was the invention of recorded sound. In 1877 Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, and this was the beginning of the recording industry as we know it today. The phonograph – a machine which played back sounds – was hailed as a great scientific breakthrough and there was a chaotic rush to invent other recording devices. These inventions often overlapped. It is hard to imagine the interest which was aroused in improving the recording of sound, and Edison was seen as one of the great scientific figures of the century. Inventors were frequently involved in angry disputes to be acknowledged as the official inventor of some improvement or other. Nowadays, a mere one hundred and fifty years or so after its invention, recorded music affects millions of people and involves vast amounts of money per year. It employs thousands of people, including musicians, sound engineers and salespeople. Thomas Edison began a technology boom which he could not even have begun to imagine. 25 30
- 4 Recorded sound brings a wide range of music to ordinary people who, in the past, would have been confined to the one or two sorts of music which characterised their tribe or their region. Recorded music crosses boundaries and cultures – if you want to investigate the music of, say, Sri Lanka or Kenya, it is easy to do so by a trip to your music shop or even by surfing the internet. Moreover, air travel has become more frequent and its inexpensiveness means that people can attend cultural shows in far-flung holiday destinations and buy recordings of the music of the countries they visit. Before the invention of recorded music, people might have played or listened to live music in their own homes, but in families without either musical instruments or the skill to play them, this would clearly not have been possible. However, access to recordings enables ordinary people nowadays to hear music as often as they like, without needing to own or be able to play an instrument. The fact that buying recorded music is generally cheaper than attending live performances is another attraction. 35 40 45

- 5 As far as musicians themselves are concerned, recorded music has brought about a revolution. In the past, musicians played only in live performances, where wrong notes might be played, but now that recordings can be corrected a perfect version of the original can be achieved. Furthermore, although members of a live audience may spoil a performance with, say, a fit of uncontrollable coughing or their mobile phone ringing, this cannot happen in a recording studio. In cultures where music was not written down, it could be forgotten and consequently lost, along with its capacity to give pleasure to many people. Now a recording captures it for ever; moreover, the efficiency of recording studios means that this can be done in a single afternoon. 50 55
- 6 However, Thomas Edison, were he to come back to our planet as a time traveller, might not agree that the invention of recorded sound has brought nothing but good to music. It could be argued that people have become so used to listening to recorded sound in the privacy of their own homes that they have no motivation to attend concerts of live music. Why should you buy a concert ticket and trudge out in the rain to the venue when you can listen to a perfect version of your favourite music in your own living room? When people do attend live performances, they are so used to the 'flick of a switch' approach to music that they have lost any sense of wonder at its creation. At many concerts of popular music, the audience wanders in and out of the auditorium, returning at times to listen to a favourite song or instrumental piece. The easy availability of high-quality recorded music may also discourage some people, especially the young, from learning to play musical instruments. Is it not likely that potential talent will be left undiscovered because of the invention of recorded music? 60 65
- 7 Often, when music is recorded, the focus becomes the musician and not the music. This is particularly true of popular music aimed at young audiences. When disproportionate attention is directed towards the musician, this can result in pop stars commanding outrageously high incomes. Because the world of pop music is usually more about image than talent, recording stars are not necessarily the best musicians, although the young people who buy their recorded music might be deluded into thinking that they are. How many times are we bombarded by images of glamorous pop idols staring at us from magazines or the pages of national newspapers? Their spouses, their holidays, their homes, their clothes, their hairstyles ... greedy editors decide that we have to be told about these, whether we like it or not. And often we don't! Young people are frequently under pressure to purchase not only recordings of their music, but expensive merchandise such as posters, DVDs and T-shirts. In addition, sometimes these pop stars have a negative effect on their young audiences by being poor role models for them in the kind of lives that they lead, often at odds with the lifestyles advocated by the young people's parents. 70 75 80
- 8 Throughout history, music has had many functions, ranging from providing aesthetic pleasure to religious or ceremonial purposes. In our own time, the advent of the internet has transformed our experience of music, because it affords us both increased access and increased choice. Think of such diverse activities as primitive man sounding a horn while hunting his prey, a mother soothing her baby with a lullaby, or the school orchestra at the end-of-term concert, and you have a glimpse of the importance of music down through the ages. 85

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