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General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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Paper 2 Comprehension

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INSERT

**1 hour 30 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This insert contains the passage for comprehension.

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This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



## Advertising

- 1 The advertising industry is universal, spending vast sums of money, employing many very talented people and operating throughout the world; unfortunately, when we experience its activities we tend to accept them without question, instead of examining them closely.
- 2 A naïve view of advertisements might be to regard them just as ways of relaying necessary information: a sign simply reading 'Golden Lion Café – open 9 a.m. to midnight' is no more sinister than a 'Road Closed' notice to alert us to impending road-works. However, the owner of the café might be tempted to add 'Full three-course lunch only five dollars'. 'Full' and 'three-course' suggest we will get a lot to eat, and the phrase 'only five dollars' seems to assure us of good value. We have entered the persuasive world of advertising – a dangerous world for us because many advertisers are both potent and ruthless. 5 10
- 3 A dictionary will tell us that 'to advertise' means to turn someone towards something; the intention is to encourage us to do something, usually to buy a product or a service. Advertising methods employed range from the obvious to the very subtle, but they are surprisingly similar in all parts of the world, although names and details may vary from place to place.
- 4 At times we seem to receive a direct instruction. Travelling ice-cream sellers for many years cycled along with their loads and paraded a peremptory notice – 'Stop me and buy one!' Similarly, we are often urged – 'Don't miss this bargain'; the almost bullying tone may well be continued by huge notices at the side of the road, often in vivid colours and with striking images, all demanding that we buy, buy, buy... Advertisements on many television channels are broadcast at a higher volume than the entertainment programmes themselves, again seeking to exert pressure on the prospective customer. 15 20
- 5 The actual name of the product being advertised may have a quite subtle effect upon us. A new perfume marketed under the name 'Irresistible' or 'Flirtation' conveys an image, indeed almost a promise, not necessarily closely related to the actual contents of the bottle or spray.
- 6 In various ways the product may be made memorable: a catchy saying or tune may stick in the mind and continually bring back a recollection of the article advertised; vivid, unusual packaging may make an item instantly recognisable and difficult to forget; an exciting or romantic location associated with the product may enhance its appeal. An important weapon in the advertiser's armoury is humour. If it is true that we tend to be drawn towards, and to like, humorous people, is it not very likely that we shall react in a similar way to products presented to us in an amusing fashion? 25 30
- 7 To convince the public that what is offered is credible and effective, a mock-scientific approach will often be used. We are assured that the yoghurt containing a specific ingredient will ensure that we are protected against all common stomach complaints; of course the vital additive has a long, scientific name and the claim is supported by an array of seemingly irrefutable evidence. The inclusion of an effective but invariably 'natural' component in a shampoo will guarantee soft, silky hair. An impressive-sounding chemical resulting from months of research will, when added to our engine oil, allow years of trouble-free motoring. Thus we sometimes allow ourselves to be blinded by supposed statistics, and a cunning advertiser will offer a persuasive comparison between the article offered and similar products from competitors; not surprisingly the competing items are presented as poorer in quality and higher in price. How gullible we are! 35 40
- 8 All advertising seeks to leave us with a favourable image of the product on offer, and one of the most effective ways of achieving this is by the use of famous people or celebrities. There are advantages and disadvantages in this strategy. 45

- 9 Successful advertisers will often manage to establish a link, however weak, between the product and an appropriate celebrity. A famous athlete may well be a convincing ally in selling sportswear; a beautiful female film star may prove to be an effective advocate for various cosmetic products. The advertiser will also benefit from establishing a celebrity as an expert. It is reasonable to assume that a famous racing-car driver will be able to distinguish a good car from inferior models, and buyers are likely to be convinced by an apparently well-informed judgement. Moreover, advertisers take advantage of the fact that ordinary people are likely to admire celebrities and wish to emulate them, if only by wearing or using the same items. Sometimes it is young people who are particularly impressed by celebrities, and advertisers often target them in order to boost sales. By some illogical mental process, the young footballer may, for example, be convinced that wearing the same boots as his celebrity hero will make him a star on the pitch. Fashion is rarely an accident, much more a carefully orchestrated sequence controlled by clever men and women, and advertisers also realise that the link with the celebrity may encourage the notion that a garment or an action is ‘cool’ – a powerful recommendation among young people. Thus we can see at work our ‘celebrity culture’, the insatiable appetite we seem to have for connection with famous people, through a vast range of media outlets. 50
- 10 Using a celebrity in an advertisement is merely the beginning of a process which gathers its own momentum. Once the link is established between a celebrity and a product, advertisers use every appearance or comment by the famous person to trigger an image of the product, perhaps long after the release of the original advertisement. This development can be enhanced by simple devices like emblazoning the manufacturer’s name on items worn or used by the celebrity, such as T-shirts, cricket bats and tennis-racquets. Often advertisers set up appearances of famous people at, say, theatres or football matches, in order to remind the public of the clothes they wear or the bags they carry. Sometimes celebrities’ children are drawn into this strategy too; they can be seen wearing smaller versions of their parents’ clothes, thus increasing sales. There are drawbacks, however. 65
- 11 What happens if the celebrity falls from favour, for example by losing his or her place in the team or producing a number of unsuccessful music albums? The product is then linked with failure – and the effect on sales is entirely predictable. Even worse, the celebrity may be involved in some social or moral disaster – gross rudeness to a vulnerable bystander or a scandalous broken relationship. The celebrity’s sponsorship then might work against, rather than in favour of, the product advertised. 75
- 12 Celebrities often have an inflated sense of their own value or importance and so they may demand vast fees for being linked with particular products; after all they are often accustomed to large financial rewards. Also they are frequently by nature volatile and unreliable. A knock-on effect of this characteristic is that celebrities are often difficult to work with and not always capable of amicable business relationships. Is there not the additional danger that many celebrities will prove more interested in enhancing their own images than in promoting the items for sale? 80
- 13 Advertising is clearly a difficult, complex and often subtle process; it can also become quite threatening. A fairly recent development – often called subliminal advertising – involves repeatedly flashing a message onto, say, a television screen, apparently too fast to be perceived by the human eye. However, there is research evidence to show that the message does reach the human brain, and so the viewer is being unconsciously persuaded to buy or act – a frightening thought. The process is, understandably, illegal in many countries. 85

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