



Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/22

Paper 2 Reading

October/November 2021

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Passage 1

Plastic

- 1 Plastic was hailed as a wonder product when it was invented, but nowadays we realise there are problems associated with it. Probably the main problem until recent years was the lack of awareness about the threats it posed to our planet, threats which were unexplored because of plastic's low cost, convenience and durability. Furthermore, there was a lack of knowledge of just how many products would be made of plastic; who would have thought that chewing gum, paper clips, light bulbs and some so-called paper cups contained plastic? 5
- 2 Because most plastic is durable, it disappears, or degrades, very slowly as its chemical ingredients make it resistant to many natural processes of degradation. In the sea, for example, a plastic cup takes 50 years to degrade, and a disposable nappy takes 450, while a plastic fishing line takes an amazing 600 years to degrade. Plastic is very difficult to get rid of: burning it increases carbon emissions, as most burning plastic emits toxic fumes, and burying it in landfill sites takes up space in an already overcrowded planet. 10
- 3 It was estimated in 2019 that, every year, so much plastic flows into the world's oceans that by 2025 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish, in terms of weight. Plastic kills marine life in many ways. Fish become entangled in plastic nets and are choked by plastic bags; other sea creatures die because they mistake plastic for food and swallow it. Endangered species like some types of turtles are particularly vulnerable and risk extinction because of ocean plastic. Incredibly, such plastic has even been found lying on uninhabited Pacific islands and trapped in Arctic ice. Furthermore, although there is currently no real evidence, there is concern that plastic ingested by sea-life might make its way into the human food chain and turn up on our own plates. 15 20
- 4 One solution to the problem of plastic is to recycle it, although recycling has its critics who claim that the best solution is not to create waste in the first place; they say that recycling is no more than an escape route for cowardly governments and lazy consumers. Increasingly, various types of companies are tackling the problem by not using plastic packaging: more and more supermarkets use paper wrappers for food products, and one large multinational technology firm has switched from plastic to paper packaging of its smart phones and tablets. Stores in some countries, for example Germany and the United Kingdom, charge customers for plastic bags, with the money raised being donated to charity. This charging policy has led to a drastic reduction in our use of plastic bags and in fact the number used in UK supermarkets dropped by 80% in the four years after the charge was introduced. Some manufacturing firms are switching from making their products entirely from plastic to using a combination of plastic and other sustainable materials or avoiding plastic altogether. 25 30
- 5 International environmental agencies, for example Greenpeace, target businesses with a poor record in plastic use, and call on governments to act. In turn, some governments – such as those of Canada, the UK and Taiwan – have implemented laws to reduce plastic by, for example, prohibiting the use of microbeads, which are tiny manufactured plastic particles used in personal care products such as shower gels, skin creams and lotions. A single shower can wash 100 000 microbeads down the drain, and these find their way into our oceans. Because it attracts so many tourists, Indonesia, which is a beautiful country, has successfully introduced a tourist tax; the money raised is used to clean up litter, much of it plastic. 35 40
- 6 The battle against plastic is also being fought by individual people, who consciously reduce the amount of plastic coming into their homes. This might be through using soap instead of shower gels in plastic bottles, or bamboo toothbrushes instead of plastic ones, carrying re-usable cloth bags to the shops, or posting their views on social media platforms. In some parts of the world, voluntary groups have sprung up; their aim is to remove plastic and other rubbish which is littering beaches and countryside. Although they achieve little from a global perspective, they make some small impact and, perhaps more importantly, draw attention to the environmental dangers posed by plastic. 45

Passage 2

Sylvia

- 1 As an enthusiastic new college graduate, Sylvia spent a year working as a volunteer in the local library. Then, as her first real job, she took up a post as an assistant librarian. She introduced books by her favourite authors and was disappointed when many of these remained on the shelves, their covers as pristine as on the day she had unpacked them. 'I could have told you that would happen,' said the senior librarian, who had worked there for many years, something which he thought made him an expert in the recreational tastes of the town. 5
- 2 Sylvia stuck it out for a year in that job before successfully applying for the post as children's librarian in another town. She moved to a cottage where the rent was justifiably low, but on a librarian's salary, she couldn't have afforded anything else. The walls bore orange stains of damp and the paint was flaking, but the kitchen window had a lovely view of distant hills; to Sylvia, brought up in an inner city, the cottage seemed picturesque. Outside, the garden was overrun with impenetrable clumps of weeds but the landlord hastily told Sylvia that it would be fine with the minimum of effort. Sylvia's possessions were easily accommodated in the cottage's limited space; there was no bookshelf on which to house her most prized possessions, but after packing out the windowsills she stacked as many as she could on the slanting shelves of the cupboard in the bedroom. For all its apparent inadequacies, her new home offered promise. 10 15
- 3 Sylvia was an only child and long hours spent alone had encouraged in her the habit of reading, often by torchlight under the bedclothes, far into the night. Every single Saturday morning, while her father read the newspapers and her mother made a martyr of herself over household chores, Sylvia walked down to the library. The librarian, Miss Jenkins, would set aside books she thought young girls would enjoy, and it was a shared love of reading that reinforced the special bond between Miss Jenkins and Sylvia. Practice in dealing with her mother's changing moods had made Sylvia easy-going, at least on the surface, and so she was not without friends; but it was Miss Jenkins who introduced her to characters in fiction who became her silent allies, her sometimes more-than-friends, her shaping influences. 20 25
- 4 Although Sylvia had a dreaminess that vexed her teachers, she did well enough to secure a college place to study to be a librarian. 'A job with a proper future,' her mother said approvingly when her daughter revealed her career plan. She was privately relieved that her daughter's unexpected success in the school play had not, as she had at the time feared, led to a request to go to drama school. 30
- 5 Apart from reading, the only other passion in Sylvia's family was her father's love of chess. He had been taught the game by a young soldier, Pavel, with whom he had spent time in the army, and her father had revealed an unexpected flair for it. When they parted company at the end of their army careers together, Pavel said, 'You might as well have this,' handing Sylvia's father the chess set with which he had learned the game. Perhaps out of respect for his former companion, or perhaps in default of anything else to give her, her father had attempted to pass this interest on to his only child. In the evenings, when Sylvia had finished her homework, she and her father sat opposite each other at the kitchen table and played with the inherited chess set. Although she had no real talent for chess, Sylvia guessed an unmet desire in her father which went beyond just playing chess, and out of loyalty did her best to master the game. It was a defining moment for them both, one Sylvia never forgot, when she contrived one evening to beat him. 35 40
- 6 'You might as well have this,' her father said, unconsciously repeating the words with which he had been given the modest wooden box on which the scratched initials of his former colleague were still visible. 'With you gone, I won't have anyone to play with.' 45

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