Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/12**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2025**

INSERT **2 hours**

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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.

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Read **Text A** and answer **Question 1** and **Question 2** on the question paper.

Text A: ***The Raven***

Rex and his wife Julie run a bird rescue centre in old buildings attached to their family farm. People visit the rescue centre at weekends and during school holidays.

1 The young bird seemed too big for the box in which he'd been transported to our rescue centre.

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Normally he hated being picked up, but on this occasion our indestructible raven was more than willing to be scooped into my arms and taken home.

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Read **Text B** and answer **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text B: *Sneakers*

1 There is one style of footwear which in recent decades has become a global success. Sneakers (also known as trainers or runners in some parts of the world) began life as a rubber-soled sport shoe, then evolved with a bang into everyday footwear for office workers, doctors, students and even presidents – in fact, sneakers made by the big brands are the footwear of choice for people from all walks of life.

2 Currently, over 1.2 billion pairs of sneakers are made each year and the global sneaker market is predicted to reach US$120 billion by 2026. With such huge growth, it's easy to see why they're big business. And competition among the giant sporting brands is fierce. Sporting endorsements became an essential marketing tool for many of the biggest brands, with multi-million dollar contracts being signed with top athletes. 'Who wouldn't want to be seen with the same shoes as their sporting hero?' says 16-year-old Jason Carey who queued overnight to purchase a pair of sneakers advertised by his basketball idol. It doesn't stop there. Famous actors and musicians can be photographed wearing a certain pair of sneakers, and those sneakers immediately become a status symbol, turning them into a 'must have' fashion item costing hundreds, even thousands, of dollars.

3 The original appeal of sneakers was comfort, and cutting-edge technology seeks to maintain this: gas cushioning and midsoles which absorb more shock than ever before provide exceptional levels of comfort. But technical wizardry has taken its development even further, leading to concern that innovation can artificially enhance sporting performance and contribute to world records being smashed, prompting World Athletics to ban certain models.

4 Although there are many who are happy to buy a cheap, unbranded pair of sneakers which they'll eventually throw away and replace, other individuals called 'sneakerheads' collect branded sneakers and actively pursue different models. You'll see them in their thousands at any Sneaker Con, international sneaker conventions where sneakerheads can trade sneakers or simply bond with a community of sneaker enthusiasts. One attendee, Kitty Sullivan, who admits to owning 'a silly number' of sneakers, explains: 'You have the core sneakerheads who love the fascinating history of the footwear through the decades; there are those like me who'll wear a different pair every day; and then there are those driven by the money.' And it's true, a significant personal income can be made from resale of sneakers, particularly limited editions – sneakers produced in small quantity and on sale for a short time – which are exceptionally rare and extremely desirable.

5 Just as fashion and celebrities come and go, so too do sneakers. Many of them made of plastic and nylon, bonded with toxic glue, end up in landfill to be replaced by a constant stream of new designs. Sneakers certainly leave a heavy carbon footprint in their manufacture and disposal. Although the famous big brands are making moves to be more environmentally friendly, they're slow and selective.

6 Meanwhile, smaller more sustainable footwear brands, such as Vida, are edging in and gaining popularity. 'If you really care about the environment, you need to think about what you put on your feet,' states Matthew Chang, director of Vida. Every Vida sneaker is made from 100 per cent recycled material. 'They come with a large price tag, but we expect them to be valued for their quality and durability. That's why we keep our designs simple and classic,' adds Matthew. 'And when their life has expired, they can be returned to the company for recycling.'

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