



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/02

Paper 2 Reading

For Examination from 2011

SPECIMEN PAPER INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains two reading passages.

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



Passage 1

Television

- 1 ***We are content to take television for granted as a fact of life in the twenty-first century. But does television bring us nothing but good?*** 1
- 2 It is clear that television has brought advantages which could never have been envisaged by our great-grandparents. World news is relayed to us within minutes. Think of the horror of the tsunami on 26 December 2004 – the whole world was able, by watching television, to know of it immediately. Television also enabled people to respond to the tragedy with practical support, as they were encouraged through the medium of television to send donations to help the victims. Furthermore, television gives ordinary people knowledge of a wide range of topics which would have been inaccessible to them before. Wildlife programmes, for example, might allow us to look for probiscus monkeys along the Brunei River, or to explore the marine life around Mauritius. Often it is easier to absorb such information through watching television than it is to learn it from books, because the pictorial nature of television is easier for people who find the written word daunting. Through watching foreign television programmes, we can also learn other languages. This can be of great assistance to students, who can improve their skills in a language which might not be spoken in the home but which is used in school. 5 10 15
- 3 On a more mundane level, watching television is the greatest way to relax. What could be better after a hard day at the office, factory or school, than to sink into a chair and watch an episode of our favourite drama or game show? It also provides a ready-made opportunity for entertainment at the push of a button, and this form of entertainment can be cheaper than a night out at the cinema. In the highly competitive world of work, television might help to prevent all stress-related illnesses. Sometimes television enhances family life as it offers an opportunity for parents and children to spend time together watching a favourite programme. 20
- 4 However, although the image of the twenty-first century family gathered companionably around the television is an attractive one, the reality is often very different. Indeed, television is sometimes blamed for being partially responsible for the breakdown of family life in some countries. Instead of chatting round the dinner table, some families sit in a stupefied silence watching programmes which can often best be described as banal. Thus, the experience of eating together as a family, that tradition beloved of so many cultures, is lost. Worse, sometimes the family members disperse to separate rooms with their meals on trays to watch television programmes of their choice. The ready-made ‘TV dinner’ has come to represent solitude and anti-social behaviour (as well as unpalatable food lacking in real nutritional value). The modern expression ‘couch potato’, which conjures up the image of an inactive, usually overweight individual sprawling in front of some dreadful imported soap opera, is far from complimentary. And although television brings us knowledge of world events almost as they happen, there is worrying evidence to suggest that over-exposure to tragedy can make us insensitive to it. 25 30 35
- 5 Television is sometimes criticised for the adverse effect it has on young people. Football pitches and games halls are not always fully utilised because young people are engrossed in television. How can countries produce athletes able to compete in international competitions if they prefer television to training? Research shows that physical activity improves mental alertness; therefore, if young people are inactive because of too much television viewing, this might have a detrimental effect on their academic performance. The subject matter of some television programmes is often criticised as inappropriate, especially for vulnerable young people, whose values can be warped by watching such programmes. In extreme cases, screen violence has been linked to some real-life ‘copycat’ crimes. 40 45
- 6 At the end of the day, we all have to make our own judgement on the role of television in the world and in our own lives. What we do with it – whether we choose to be dominated by it or regulate it to be a force for good in the world – is very much in our own hands. 50

Passage 2

A New Beginning

- 1 Sitting in the airport departure lounge, Fatimah tried to distract herself from the waves of nervousness washing over her. She looked around at the very many people who, like her, were waiting for flights, and wondered which of them would be joining her on her long-haul journey to Perth, Western Australia. She hoped that it would not be the couple with the two squabbling young sons; the parents' repeated but clearly idle threat that their flight would be cancelled unless the boys' behaviour improved only increased their noise levels. The handsome young man with the backpack looked like someone she could talk to, although, when he looked up from the book he was reading and caught her eye, she looked away, her cheeks burning at the realisation that he might somehow have been reading her thoughts. By this time, the two disobedient children were down on the floor, grappling with each other; their parents looked studiously in the opposite direction, models of detachment. 1 5
- 2 Fatimah reminded herself that this flight, much as she dreaded it, was the only way she could get to see her sister, Rashidah, who had emigrated to Perth some three years earlier; the high salary she was earning there as a newly qualified doctor gave her opportunities for globe-trotting. On the first of Rashidah's visits home, a battle of words had taken place as Rashidah tried to persuade her sister to overcome her fear of flying and make the trip to Perth – the sandy beaches, the restaurants, the relaxed lifestyle had been much recommended. But Rashidah's main weapon had been the airline. 10 15
- 3 'Asia Express is the best airline there is, Fatimah,' she had argued emphatically. 'The seats are spacious, and everyone is given a blanket and pillow. Individual televisions are provided on the back of the seat in front of you – I don't sleep well on planes, as you know, so it's a real boon to me to be able to watch the best television Channel there is, Channel Zero. At dinner you get real cutlery, not that plastic stuff provided by some airlines, and there is a choice of three hot dishes.' Remembering her sister's words, Fatimah thought how sure of herself Rashidah invariably was. And she was much less irritable – Rashidah would not have let those horrible boys annoy her as much as she had done. Why couldn't she be more like Rashidah? 20
- 4 From time to time Fatimah checked the departure board – a huge electronic notice board which kept passengers updated with flight details. There was a sudden flurry of activity as passengers responded to the instruction to move to Gate 22, from where the flight to Perth would be leaving. Fatimah assumed a composure which she in no way felt, picking up her bag and starting to move towards Gate 22. She almost tripped over the badly behaved boys, who were charging in front of their ineffectual parents, apparently also with Gate 22 in mind. This discovery dismayed her, as did the thought that their seats on the plane might be close to hers. 25
- 5 After yet another passport check at Gate 22, and a relatively short wait, Fatimah found herself boarding the plane. Rashidah's words came back to her. 'With 'Asia Express' you are greeted by your cabin crew as you board the aircraft, and you know they are dedicated to ensuring that you enjoy the flight. Throughout your journey they will circulate to check on your comfort, making sure, for example, that you are kept hydrated.' Fatimah put her bag in the overhead locker, sat down and fastened her seatbelt. A few minutes later, a steward made his way up the aisle, carrying a tray of glasses of water. Fatimah could not help thinking of her sister. She then studied the Airline magazine which had been waiting for her on her seat. 'Our cabin crew are multi-lingual and will offer you the best of Asian hospitality,' was its proud boast. She flicked through the pages to find details of the in-flight entertainment and could hardly believe her eyes. Could it really be that one of the films on offer was one she had intended seeing in the cinema but had never quite managed to do so? 30 35
- 6 She sipped her water and settled down to enjoy the film. Just then the two naughty boys charged noisily down the aisle on their way, presumably, to the toilet, pulling each other's arms and continuing some argument that seemed to have begun before they had even left home. Fatimah took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and smiled. 40

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