

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

October/November 2020

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. Blank pages are indicated.

Passage 1

Sport

- 1 The range of sports depicted in ancient art shows that sport began when people became interested in pushing the human body to its limits. Furthermore, there are beautiful rock paintings in Libya from 8000 years ago depicting swimming and archery contests, and 1500-year-old cave paintings in France of sprinting and wrestling contests show that sport began to evolve from the desire for competition. 5
- 2 It was in Greece that sport was formalised into recognisable tournaments in the Olympic Games, held every four years and originally devised as a religious festival to honour the god Zeus. In ancient times, the best sportsmen were selected for military duties as only the fittest soldiers were given the honour of serving in battle. Initially, playing sport in civilisations like Egypt and Greece was a privilege confined to the elite and wealthy and was an expensive venture for those who could afford it. However, through time training areas were created which offered non-aristocratic young men the opportunity to play sport. Gradually, sport became more and more accessible, so that by medieval times both rich and poor had access to some kind of sport and it became an inexpensive pastime available to all. The number of ball games existing in very many parts of the world today – young people playing football in the park or cricket on the beach – is testimony to this. 10
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- 3 The emergence of professional sport in more recent times, which has resulted in records being smashed on a regular basis, has led to investment in players who are trained to a very high level, and who often require special equipment and clothing. Technology means that sporting events have gone global because they can be televised and viewed at home by sports enthusiasts; although people have always watched sport, nowadays there are more spectators than ever before. We all love watching spectator sports, but that doesn't keep you fit! 20
- 4 In the present day, people are increasingly aware that playing sport brings many proven benefits. It leads to people growing in self-confidence in all aspects of their lives, not simply on the pitch or in the gym. Physical exercise burns up calories and helps people to maintain a healthy weight or, if they are overweight, to shed some extra kilos. For example, playing cricket or golf for an hour burns up around 300 calories, and walking about 200; compare this to sitting watching television which, unsurprisingly, burns up virtually no calories at all! Our greatest gift is our health, and there are multiple health benefits for those who play sports or take other regular exercise, including a reduction in the chance of developing heart disease, stroke or diabetes, as well as an improvement in the balance of the body's cholesterol. 25
30
- 5 Playing sport produces endorphins, chemicals in the brain which trigger a positive feeling in the body. These endorphins have a short-term positive effect which is experienced immediately after playing the sport; this is commonly described as 'euphoria' or 'runner's high'. But endorphins can also have a long-term beneficial effect which leads to people having a more positive outlook on life. This is why many studies show that people who exercise regularly benefit from a long-term boost in mood and lower rates of depression. 35
- 6 Playing sports has other benefits too. In team sports, sometimes a better result is achieved if a player sacrifices his own chance of glory for the greater good of the team; this might happen if, say, a football player gives up his opportunity to score a goal by passing the ball to a more skilled player. In this way, playing team sports fosters selflessness, which might be valuable in other walks of life. Participation in sports also gives players the opportunity to learn how to lose. This might be particularly useful for young people who have never experienced failure in any aspect of their lives such as in academic studies or friendships. Additionally, in playing sports, people learn to respect the decisions of referees, umpires and coaches, which is useful both on and off the sports field in that it instils respect for other legitimate authority. When someone takes part in an individual sport, such as running or cycling, a sense of well-being may come from achieving one's personal best. 40
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Passage 2

Michele

- 1 The wheat was particularly high that summer when I was nine years old. In April it had rained a lot, and by mid-June the stalks were taller and more luxuriant than ever. They grew densely packed, ready to be harvested. In the distance, the low hills rolled away like the waves of a golden ocean. Degrees centigrade didn't mean much to me at that age. I had no idea how hot it was but I knew it wasn't normal. 5
- 2 That summer was one of the hottest of the century. The heat had got into the stones, crumbled the earth and scorched the plants in previous years but it had never before killed the cattle. However, this year was different. The sun took away your breath, your strength, everything. And it was just as unbearable at night. The adults didn't leave their houses until six in the evening. They shut themselves up indoors with the blinds drawn. But the heat was not enough to deter us children from venturing out into the fiery, deserted countryside. 10
- 3 One day my friends and I challenged each other to a bicycle race, straight up the nearest hill, which rose like a huge round cake in front of us. The last one to reach the top would have to pay a penalty, or a forfeit. I was at a disadvantage because I had to take my little sister with me. In the lead was Antonio, then Salvatore, then me. I had been going well but suddenly I was at a standstill. Further down the hill my sister had fallen off her bicycle and I could hear my mother's voice playing in my head – 'Are you or are you not her older brother?' – while I tried to decide whether or not to go back to look after her. 15
- 4 There was my sister, small and unhappy, rubbing her ankle with one hand. As soon as she saw me, she exploded into a wail, holding her glasses in the other hand. 'My glasses! My glasses are broken!' I was angry. It was the third time she had broken her glasses since school had finished for the holidays. And every time, who did my mother blame? I put the glasses in my pocket, thinking of the others who must have reached the top of the hill ages before. My sister was upset because her ankle was sore. I dug my hands into the hot earth. I picked up a small amount, spat on it and spread it on her ankle. I knew my ruse wouldn't have any effect but thought my sister might be fooled by it. 20 25
- 5 We set off on foot up the slope towards the top of the hill. All I had in front of my eyes was wheat, but when I saw a slice of sky I realised that we didn't have far to go and soon we were standing on the summit. We discovered that the hill wasn't round at all; I was startled to find it had lost its faultless perfection. On the other side we saw an abandoned house with a ramshackle roof. That was where the other boys were waiting for us. 30
- 6 'What took you so long?' asked Antonio. 'You have to pay the forfeit.' He pointed at me, and then at the abandoned house. 'You have to get up onto the balcony on the first floor, go in, then go right across and jump out of the window at the other side.' I was feigning a courage I did not feel as I tried to work my way to the balcony by holding onto the branches of a tree, and from there I found a path through the doorway leading from the balcony into the house. There was a great fluttering of wings as a flock of pigeons took off. I was in a big room, at the other end of which was a closed red door. I decided that was the way to go but I had to struggle through a forest of wild plants which had sprung up through the tiled floor. But in the second room the floor had completely collapsed and only a single beam connected me to the door on the other side. I was paralysed in the doorway. I couldn't turn back, as my friends would guarantee I never forgot that day. Then I recalled reading that lizards can climb up walls because they have perfect weight distribution as they spread their weight evenly over legs, stomach and tail. I knelt down, lay flat and started to crawl along the beam. At every move I made, bits of masonry and tiles fell down. I felt the beam quiver and the floor below lurched towards me. It took me a full five minutes to manoeuvre my way to safety. 35 40 45

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