

Cambridge
O Level

Cambridge Assessment International Education
Cambridge Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

October/November 2019

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the two reading passages.



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

Passage 1
Silk

- 1 Silk is an exceptionally beautiful material that silkworms produce when they are making their cocoons. Legend gives credit for the discovery of silk to Leizu, a Chinese Empress who, having seen a cocoon fall into her tea, watched it unravel and realised the cocoon was made from a long thread, both soft and strong, that came to be known as silk. There soon followed – perhaps by the same Empress – the invention of silk reels and the silk looms which made the silk threads and enabled them to be spun into fabric. It would be fascinating to know if the legend is true, but what is certainly known is that silk became a valued commodity reserved for clothing for Emperors or as gifts to be given to his court guests. Obviously, all visitors to the royal court who were given gifts of silk would be entranced by its exclusivity. Through time sericulture – the manufacture of silk – spread, so that ordinary people were allowed to wear it. The use of silk was not confined to clothing: it had many other diverse uses in manufacturing processes, such as for paper, fishing lines and bows for musical instruments. At one point it was considered so valuable that it was even used as money in some Chinese dynasties. 5
- 2 The Chinese managed to keep silk-making methods a secret for about 1000 years; its manufacture was shrouded in myths, and smuggling silkworms out of China was punishable by death. However, some smugglers were successful, and the secret spread quickly to other parts of the world, such as Korea, Egypt, India, the Middle East and, eventually, Europe. Early evidence of long-distance silk trade was the discovery of silk in a 3000 year-old Egyptian mummy, and an ancient religious text describes how silk was used in purification ceremonies following an outbreak of disease such as leprosy. Although many other goods, such as gold and jade, were also exchanged, through time the trade in silk became so extensive that the major trade route between Asia and Europe actually became known as the Silk Road. 10
- 3 Silk continues to be a valued commodity in modern times. It takes dye well and can be made in brilliant, luminous colours. Silk has a smooth, soft texture and, because it is neither stiff nor limp, it hangs well, and is ideal for elegant clothing. This elegance is enhanced by the attractive shimmering appearance of silk, caused by its structure, which allows it to reflect light at different angles. It blends well with fibres such as wool, camel hair or cotton, and can also be combined with other fibres to produce, for example, chiffon, crepe de chine and taffeta. As it is absorbent, silk is comfortable to wear in hot climates; however, because it does not easily conduct heat, it keeps warm air close to the skin during cold weather, making it suitable for all temperatures. Silk is also excellent in the manufacturing of clothing to protect wearers against bites from insects such as mosquitoes and horseflies. 25
- 4 Wool and cotton are made of short lengths of fibre woven together; by comparison, silk is made from long, continuous fibres which can bend or stretch without breaking, making it very strong. This strength is particularly valuable in the manufacture of equipment such as parachutes, medical stitches and other life-saving devices used by emergency services. The durability of silk was shown when a sunken ship was brought to the sea's surface after being submerged for many years; silk clothing on board was intact, whereas the crew's uniforms, made of wool and cotton, had disappeared without trace. Silk is sometimes worn today to show status or professional standing; in the legal profession in many parts of the world, for example, top-ranking lawyers wear silk gowns. 35
- 5 The manufacture of silk also has its critics who argue that, because harvesting silkworm cocoons involves the killing of larvae, sericulture is cruel. Mahatma Gandhi was critical of silk-making and advocated the production of other fabrics, notably cotton. Nevertheless, the demand for silk continues. The rearing of silkworms and the reeling of silk are labour-intensive processes which are reflected in the price, meaning that many people will always be anxious to own silk as an exclusive symbol of wealth. 45

Passage 2

Albert the lion

- 1 I had recently achieved my dream of getting a job in a zoo, but was shocked to be told that I had to start by looking after the lion. I was determined to show no outward sign of uneasiness when I was given this assignment, but I did feel my boss might have let me start on less dangerous animals. However, I plucked up my courage and displayed an indifference that I did not truly feel and set off through the zoo in search of my work area. 5
- 2 On arrival there, I met my colleague, Joe, who took me along the narrow path which led to the lion's enclosure, which was spread over three acres and was surrounded by a tall barred fence. Moving alongside the fence, Joe and I came to an area of long, lush grass bordering a pool, where the lion, Albert, lay picturesquely under a tree. Joe rattled a stick along the fence. Albert merely gave us a withering look. He did not look fierce and wild to me but Joe must have read my thoughts because he fixed me with an intense stare. 'Now you listen to me, young man,' he said. 'He may look tame, but he's not. Understand?' He surveyed me to see if I had absorbed this lesson. 10
- 3 My first few days were fully occupied with memorising the daily chores of feeding and cleaning, but this work was fairly basic and, once I had mastered it, I had more time for trying to learn something about lions. Joe was amused that I carried an enormous notebook in my pocket and that I would – at the slightest provocation – write down something I had noticed about Albert's behaviour. There is probably no other animal in folklore that has been endowed with as many imaginary virtues as the lion has; I discovered this when I decided to read all I could and see how it matched my own observations. Ever since someone, in a moment of un-zoological enthusiasm, called it the King of Beasts, writers have vied with each other to produce evidence of the lion's right to this title, although, notably, no scientist has ever done so. Some writers have praised the lion for its kindness, wisdom and courage. I soon realised these virtues certainly did not fit Albert; he did not have an ounce of pity in his character. On that very first morning, I was walking past his enclosure. Albert had concealed himself in a thick bed of grass; suddenly and mercilessly he jumped out against the bars with a hair-raising roar at me. He did this again on the second day, after which he squatted on his haunches and fixed me with eyes full of ferocious amusement at my panic. 15 20 25
- 4 Once a week we had to move Albert so that we could enter the enclosure and clean it. Built into the side of the enclosure was a large, iron-barred cage accessed by two sliding doors, one into the enclosure and one to the outside world. Looking radiantly innocent, we would place a huge piece of meat inside the cage, where Albert could both see and smell it. Then, closing the outer door, we would raise the inner door to the enclosure so that Albert could get to the meat, while we stood chatting outside as if there was nothing further from our minds than trapping a lion. In defence of Albert's intelligence, he was not fooled by any of this for one minute, but it had become a sort of ritual which had to be respected or the whole procedure would become disorganised. 30 35
- 5 While Albert studied the meat from a distance, we would speak in childish voices to him, saying: 'Would you like some meat, Albert?' We would repeat this endlessly, and the whole performance was made doubly ridiculous by the fact that Albert understood none of it. The theory was that Albert would obligingly go into the cage to eat the meat; while he feasted we cleaned the enclosure in safety. If Albert wasn't taken in by any of our tricks after ten minutes, we tried another ruse: we would saunter off down the path. But occasionally Albert would make a sudden dash into the cage, grab his trophy, and escape with it before we had time to slam the door on him. When that happened we just had to wait till the next day when Albert would be hungry again. 40 45

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