Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2016**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passage for use with **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

You may annotate this Reading Booklet Insert and use the blank spaces for planning.
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This document consists of **2** printed pages and **2** blank pages.

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Read the passage carefully, and then answer **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

Read the article below, written by Paul Lifschultz, a retired teacher who lives in England, for an international magazine.

Whatever happened to common courtesy?

I was reminded only yesterday, by two seemingly insignificant incidents while out shopping in a nearby town, that politeness and good manners just aren't what they used to be. In one shop, the two young shop assistants behind the counter carried on their conversation, including some lurid details about a recent night out, while I handed over my goods to be processed through the till. Not one word was addressed to me, the customer who presumably helps to keep these two employed, and there was barely a pause in their discussion as they took my money and shoved my purchases unceremoniously into a bag. Only half an hour later, I stood behind another customer in a supermarket queue who conducted a discussion on her mobile phone throughout the whole transaction, ignoring the smile and greeting of the checkout assistant completely. You see, it isn't just another 'customer care' course for shop staff that is needed – neither staff nor their customers show each other the polite consideration that keep the wheels of civilised life in motion.

Perhaps I live in a particularly discourteous part of the world, or maybe life in big towns and cities is too frenetic these days for the niceties of polite behaviour. From my experience in many countries across the globe, people living in fast-moving, over-crowded cosmopolitan cities no longer observe the everyday courtesies that their many and various cultures would have expected of them just a decade ago. Nobody offers their seat on a train or bus to an older person these days and I pity any frail or elderly person unfortunate enough to get in the way of the busy go-getters on city streets. Nobody even says 'Excuse me' before pushing their way past others any more and a polite 'Good morning' to a fellow passenger on a commuter train is met with suspicion in many big cities. Maybe it's these same city manners (or complete lack of them!) that have leaked into smaller towns and villages like mine, turning an ordinary shopping trip into a depressing experience.

Adults are as guilty as young people of discourteous behaviour, if the increasing number of 'road rage' incidents is anything to go by, for example. However, if we don't expect children to behave courteously as a matter of course we can hardly expect them to become civilised adults. My teenage grandchildren, as delightful as they are, rarely find themselves reprimanded for rudeness although they constantly interrupt others, even adults, and talk over them. They seem to have the utmost confidence that their views count for much more than anyone else's and are incapable of hearing an opposing view without shouting it down. The rowdiness of young people we see so often in public these days isn't really the outrageous, almost criminal behaviour older people often claim it is – it's merely a failure to understand the rules of common courtesy. Young children are routinely allowed to dictate to their parents the meals they're prepared to eat, teenagers think nothing of answering their phones during family occasions and parents don't even expect a 'please' or 'thank you' once a child's age reaches double figures. Teachers report that the constant incivility of pupils towards each other, and especially towards the adults in the classroom, is very dispiriting. It seems that individual self-expression and the pursuit of one's own goals are considered far more important than small kindnesses which simply make the world go round more smoothly.

Of course, in some sectors of society, politeness is considered a valuable business skill. Perhaps it's true that we buy more from polite salespeople or we complain less when confronted with a skilfully courteous Complaints Manager. Even in personal matters, we are likely to be much more easily duped by a cheat with good manners. In a world where ordinary, everyday courtesy seems to have disappeared, there's power in politeness. However, this kind of fake sincerity, taught in countless business seminars the world over and deployed as a tactic, is not what I consider real courtesy. Having said that, for the rude shop assistants I encountered yesterday, it might be a start!

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