Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2017**

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.
This Reading Booklet Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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

On behalf of your school, you attend a lecture in which a medical researcher considers the effects of noise on young people's lives.

Noise: a Modern Menace

Everybody knows that children from poor families struggle more at school than their wealthier counterparts. Other factors such as illness or a lack of parental support also seriously affect students' prospects of success. But now, as well as these well-known factors, there is increasing evidence that constant exposure to noise damages children's health and prevents them from learning at school. An Austrian study, for example, concluded that children who lived on busy main roads had shorter concentration spans than others and research in the UK found that exposure to aircraft noise is linked with reading impairment in children.

Constant noise contributes to high blood pressure, strokes and heart attacks in adults. It disturbs sleep which in turn affects the immune system, and raises levels of aggression and anxiety. Anti-noise organisations have sprung up in many countries in recent years to draw attention to the need to mitigate the effects of noise in people's homes and workplaces. Half a million people in Britain in one year cited noisy roads, aircraft noise, loud neighbours or barking dogs as reasons why they moved house. Workers in open-plan offices, exposed to constant noise from machinery, telephones and office chatter, had higher levels of adrenaline in their bodies than those who worked in quiet, self-contained work stations. Those in quiet offices were also more productive at work, slept better at night, had better digestion and were less irritable.

Children and young people, however, don't make the big decisions in their own lives. They are exposed to higher levels of noise in the modern world than their parents' or grandparents' generations. Teenagers can't just 'up sticks' and move to a quieter area, they can't force their school authorities to provide expensive protection against traffic noise for pupils or insist on silence in the classroom when work needs to be done. They are also often unaware of how their own behaviour can make matters worse. For example, many young people use loud music to drown out unwanted noise from other sources, risking a range of different hearing problems. Homework, for many students, is completed to an accompaniment of music, radio or TV. For young people who have grown up in modern, noisy environments and live constantly with intrusive noise, silence is actually disturbing. Their waking hours are filled with loud music, TV shows in which excitable presenters shout at their audience and conversations with friends which seem unnecessarily loud to their teachers and the older people around them. The shopping malls and fast food restaurants favoured by young people aren't just noisy, busy places; they often have background music pumped into them as well. Young people seem to crave the noise which, if all the research is to be believed, harms their health and their chances of success in later life.

There is computer software which can neutralise office chatter and ear plugs which muffle unwanted noise so that music can be listened to at lower volumes. It is also probably possible to protect young people from the worst effects of their noisy lives, at least at school. Measures to reduce external noise from air and road traffic are expensive but necessary and overcrowded dining halls and classrooms can be fitted with noise-reducing insulation. Some improvements need a change of heart, however, rather than physical barriers to noise. Some schools need to discourage students from simply adding to the noise by shouting over the din around them! Students who are used to countering one racket with another will resist the benefits of peace and quiet. Only the most old-fashioned of us adults will want to see a return to deathly silent classrooms where only the teacher's voice can be heard, but the evidence is stacking up that noisy schools are stressful and ineffective learning environments. Some schools are beginning to educate students about the dangers of noise for their academic attainment as well as their health and well-being. Young people who have grown up with the increasing levels of noise associated with modern life may have to be persuaded that silence is, indeed, golden.

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