Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/33**

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

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

0919660202-I

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.

This magazine article is about the issues involved in keeping up with technological changes in the modern world.

The Cost of Keeping Up

One of the most obvious features of modern life is the hectic pace of change in technology. Young people seem to relish this heady race towards ever better/faster/sleeker gadgets, machines and household appliances. Some older people, however, look back nostalgically to days gone by when a TV would last decades, a washing machine would service a whole family until the children had children of their own, and even phones would last a lot longer than a year or two. These older people are, after all, the ones who pay the bills.

It's true that ingenious designers and manufacturers give us plenty of incentives to upgrade. We can purchase TVs that have internet connectivity, high definition, 3-D functions, applications and all manner of improvements which are made to sound essential for modern living. New models of last year's cars appear with fancier dashboard electronics and a slightly more refined, 'cooler' look. The other day I heard an eleven-year-old lamenting how 'old' and 'slow' his phone was compared to those of his friends, as if his parents were guilty of the most grotesque neglect of their offspring by not updating such a vital piece of equipment.

It is true that young people are always attracted to ever-changing fashions in clothes, music and technology. It's part of being young. Even their parents often want what their neighbours have in their homes and spend their hard-earned cash on new appliances when the old ones are still reasonably serviceable. But it's not just that. Those same ingenious manufacturers who create the wondrously designed 'must have' products of today, already have their eye on your next purchase. They can, and often do, design or program products with a limited life span to make sure they'll need replacing sooner rather than later. A printer, for example, can be designed to send an error message once it's copied a certain number of papers, even if it's still working perfectly, and the battery life of a phone can be deliberately made short. Expensive software is often programmed to disable its online connectivity after a while, and then its users are directed to the latest version. They have to pay for it, and relearn how to use it, whether they want to or not. Many laptop users have experienced a sudden deterioration in the speed and reliability of their machines – just as the new model appears on the market.

The practice isn't new. It's even got a name – planned obsolescence – and has been used by manufacturers for decades to create a steady stream of demand for all kinds of everyday things from the light bulb to the latest smart phone or sports car. Technology industries make us buy things more often than we need to, both by making them stop working sooner than they would anyway, and by enticing us with ever more glitzy and fashionable updates so that we can gloat over our friends. That's why there's such a thriving recycling industry for these goods in some communities.

It might seem a cynical and manipulative practice, but the economies of some very big countries depend on it. Hundreds of thousands of jobs world-wide rely on people throwing away and replacing computers, TVs, phones, cars, satnavs and all the rest on a very regular basis. It is, however, an expensive practice in other ways. Environmentalists are quick to point out that it takes a thousand times more energy to make a thousand more gadgets than are really necessary – multiplied many more times globally – and in a world where resources are running out fast this level of waste is immoral. These unwanted products are also dumped in poorer countries where desperate people risk their health by burning plastics in order to retrieve the working parts or the rare minerals used in the manufacture of things the richer world has discarded after a year or so.

Many older people in the world know, or at least remember, how to 'make do and mend' – to live with things which aren't the latest and best and to repair them rather than replace them. The poor of the world have never had a choice, of course. But isn't it about time that young people realised how much their wasteful pursuit of all things new is really costing them, their families and the planet?

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