Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/33**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **October/November 2016**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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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 Insert and use the blank spaces for planning. This Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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

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

In this magazine article, the writer has agreed to take part in a TV reality series named 'Workplace Choirs'. This TV series follows the experiences of all the staff in an organisation who learn to sing together under the guidance of professional musicians. Viewers vote for their favourite choir.

Workplace Choirs

'Anyone can join,' reads the recruitment poster in the office canteen. 'No experience required, just come along.' That isn't entirely correct. There are 'Auditions'. Does that mean I have to sing in front of people? My plan in agreeing to be a choir member at all involved lurking anonymously in the back row.

We're all under pressure to audition – no excuses accepted. Afterwards, we'll be told who's made it and who hasn't. Those selected will then be rehearsed mercilessly and sent to battle with choirs from other workplaces to see which one triumphs. The 'highs and lows' will be broadcast live to the nation as we go – yes, the whole thing will be televised!

This is now series six of the show worldwide, so it seems workplace choirs are here to stay. People apparently enjoy singing in groups and the health benefits are indisputable. With big business in on the act though, aren't these choirs really just free advertising for their companies?

That's not what the promotional video we watch before auditions claims. Hilary Queen, head of retail giant Canco which won the last series, explains: 'Choirs are popping up everywhere, in schools and hospitals too. Modern managers understand they rely on teamwork. Choirs need people to do different things together, without losing focus. Choirs develop a workforce's confidence and resilience.'

I'll need resilience to stand the shame of revealing my dulcet tones in front of Abi-from-Accounts. Her target is the solo spot. She's been practising loudly at the water-cooler for weeks.

Having auditions seems a bit much if you're trying to encourage people to sing. A choir isn't a sports team, is it? I don't mind admitting I'm rubbish at football, but I'll feel rejected if my bathroom baritone turns out to make everyone's toes curl. It's personal when someone says you can't sing.

'It's great seeing people's faces when you say they're in,' chirps the choirmaster. 'It really boosts their confidence being part of the team.' He's genuinely enthusiastic, but missing my point.

For those who are 'in' there'll be endless hours of rehearsing, shift-swopping to be there, bickering when no-one can agree which song to sing or who gets the best bits. There may be no 'I' in 'team': there is, it seems, in 'choir'.

'I love singing. Being on TV's a great opportunity. I couldn't believe I'd been selected to sing the opening solo on a world-famous stage,' gushes series-one-finalist Carie. 'It's the breakthrough I needed to get into the music industry. I'm not in insurance anymore.'

What if we all sound awful though, and people don't turn up for rehearsals?

'Sticking at it when things aren't working out is something I teach my staff. Every workforce needs discipline,' scolds Queen in the video. 'Employers also need to commit time and resources, by providing spaces for rehearsal, and being flexible with rotas.'

But is it necessary to be on TV while you're struggling to learn the music? Aren't producers going to smell any whiff of drama, behind-the-scenes sob stories, frictions? What's a workplace choir supposed to be for anyway? The motivational video describes harmonious days spent bonding, laughing and singing together. I find myself drawn, moth-like. My company needs me. I'm determined not to let them down, though my football coach might be less impressed when I miss practices at weekends for rehearsals.

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‘It’s been a journey,’ reflects tenor Dan in the next clip of the video, his long-suffering family in the background. ‘From initial terror to a sense of achievement when you hear the applause – I didn’t think I had it in me. I can’t imagine my life without the choir.’

Unsurprisingly, small-business-owner Bob, doesn’t feature in the promotional footage. ‘I can’t afford time off for my employees to have a sing-along,’ he grumbles. ‘They should sort out their own hobbies.’

Overwhelmed with the demands of running their businesses, many other employers claim neither the time nor resources for workplace choirs. Some bosses worry they’ll be misrepresented by TV producers, keen to catch conflict on camera. Meanwhile, producers defend the series. ‘In many workplaces staff at different levels of the workforce rarely meet, whereas in a choir they all need to work together. That difference makes for interesting viewing.’

‘I got to know colleagues I’d never even spoken to,’ Dan continues. ‘We had a list of all the choir members. There were loads of emails going back and forth every day. Sometimes it was hard to get any work done!’

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