Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/33**

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

The writer of this passage has a daughter, Isabelle, aged 8. The family has recently relocated to the area and Isabelle has been at her new school for six weeks.

Friendship Contracts

I search my daughter's schoolbag for the much-anticipated party invitation from that 'nice-little-girl-she-sits-by-in-class'. I'm relieved to discover an invitation to the latest, coolest activity. However, the form clipped to the invitation is a shock. A chatty note from the birthday girl's parents explains that their daughter mentioned Isabelle was new to the area, so they (thoughtfully) popped in a copy of a Friendship Contract for her to fill in and send back with her acceptance slip before the party.

What?

The contract for Isabelle to complete and sign begins, 'Hi (child's name), I'd love to be your friend. I agree to always be there when I say I will, to invite you to my parties and share nicely with you. I'll always keep a secret and never be mean or hurt your feelings...'.

The gist of it seems to be, 'Be nice to me, or else. Oh and by the way, if you don't turn up to my party after I've booked your place, we'll send your parents the bill.'.

Other parents don't seem to have a problem with the idea – responsibility, not letting each other down, they nod wisely. Even Isabelle's teacher insists that learning about friendship is part of the curriculum in schools. 'Drawing up a 'job description' for a friend might even be lesson one,' she smiles.

Websites promoting this whole crazy idea of Friendship Contracts explain their relevance in the grown-up world. 'All successful partnerships have rules and expectations. Setting these out in a document makes friendships easier. Signing the contract means you both agree to the same terms, objectives and desired outcomes for the friendship.'

Am I the only person to think this is weird? Surely friendship evolves organically, not by written agreement? Anyway, what's the birthday girl going to do if we don't sign – never play with Isabelle in the playground again? Gulp. And if we do sign? I don't want to be threatened with legal action if on the day Isabelle's too shy to attend that party after all.

'You can choose your friends, not your family,' my gran would say. It's precisely this lack of obligation that's at the heart of true friendship, reinforcing a positive view of ourselves. Friends are proof we're desirable, connected, fun to be around.

Then again, making friends is no more a free choice than other life decisions. We buy property according to where we are and what happens to be available when we're looking. Making friends can be just as affected by market values. Membership of friendship groups for youngsters often depends on their taste in music or proficiency at sport. Some friendships tail off without explanation and others end with more spectacular, public fallings-out. Might a contract beforehand help it all to be more ... civilised?

Many of us idealise friendship – friends are the new family, we argue. We're so keen on the idea we haven't stopped to consider what it might really involve, what it means to us, and our friends, to be friends. Perhaps the idea of friendship itself has changed. For some, in a world where family is less cohesive, the value of friendship has increased, making it something to invest in more wisely. Others argue that instant online access devalues that currency – put simply, friends aren't what they used to be.

Possibly friendships were different in the past. My parents still visit friends in hospital and deliver birthday gifts in person. Friendship to them has its own set of unspoken obligations. Meanwhile, I've a fairly wide portfolio of friends, if not the time or inclination to see them more regularly. These include

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business friends from earlier jobs, current-special-interest friends, as well as neighbours willing to drop off my offspring in return for watering their plants. Perhaps we do need to think harder about what we mean when we call someone a friend and what we expect of them?

Few of us, according to research, are really happy with our friendships. Many would like more friends, or more reliable ones, than they have now. Humans, though, can't cope with social circles larger than 150. This makes the 1000 'friends' my teenage stepson boasts about on social networks look faintly ridiculous and strengthens the case for adding a pre-selection interview to this whole friendship-contract process.

I'm tempted to check terms and conditions before deciding whether to sign. Is there a time limit specified or the possibility of a temporary position – a month perhaps, until Isabelle finds a more suitable long-term option?

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