Cambridge International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/22**

Paper 2 Reading **October/November 2023**

INSERT **1 hour 45 minutes**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Passage 1

Salt

1 Salt is obtained from salt mines or by the evaporation of sea water. It became an essential commodity in former times as it could preserve food, in particular meat, meaning that people did not need to depend on seasonal variations. Areas which produced salt became centres of civilisation. For example, what is thought to be the first city in Europe, Solnitsata, meaning 'salt works', had a salt mine more than 7000 years ago. With the spread of civilisation, salt became an important article of trade among peoples like the Ancient Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans; it was transported across deserts by camel, across seas by boat, and along specially built salt roads. In Ancient Egypt, salt was so important that salted birds and fish were placed in tombs as food for the afterlife.

2 The need for salt, and its scarcity, meant that at various times and in various places it was the cause of bitter warfare; for instance, the Venetians fought with the people of Genoa over it. Salt was used in rituals in warfare; one particular ritual involved salt being scattered over defeated cities as a symbolic gesture to prevent future plant growth. The Roman general Scipio ploughed over the city of Carthage with salt after he conquered it. Centuries later, during the American War of Independence, the British cut off the revolutionaries' shipments of salt to interfere with their ability to preserve food, and threatening them with starvation, showing that salt has been used as a weapon of war too.

3 A significant development was the introduction of a salt tax. These taxes were unpopular and sometimes the cause of civil unrest in countries such as China and India. In France, salt taxes were thought to have played a role in starting the French Revolution. Salt was also used as money; in the thirteenth century, Marco Polo reported that, in Tibet, salt cakes stamped with images of the emperor were used as currency.

4 In modern times, salt continues to be important in our lives. Salt is a necessary requirement in our diets. The human body cannot make salt, which our nerves and muscles need in order to function properly, although health professionals urge us to keep our intake of salt to no more than five grams a day. When shopping, it is good practice to look at packaging to check the amount of salt the food contains. Salt is found in some skincare creams and can be a thickening agent in shampoos, indicating that it is important for beauty and health too. Adding special salts to our bathwater is often recommended as an effective way to relax, while swimming in sea water is said to have health benefits.

5 By far the most extensive use of salt nowadays is in the production of chlorine in industry; chlorine is a highly effective disinfectant and is an essential component in the manufacture of thousands of products used every day, including plastic, textiles and paper. Salt is widely used as a cleaning agent for, among other things, stained metal, glassware, carpets and clothing, and it is softer and cheaper than chemical cleaners. And we should all be on the lookout for non-chemical, eco-friendly products. In countries where temperatures can drop below freezing in winter, people rely on salt to keep roads safe and free of ice. In Scandinavia, approximately 500 000 tonnes of salt are used annually in de-icing. When scattered over frozen highways, it lowers the freezing temperature of ice and therefore melts it. However, we need to listen to critics who say salt damages vehicles. These critics say that we should look to alternatives to salt such as corn and sugar-beet products to de-ice our roads.

6 As in former times, salt is a huge source of income in many countries, with one of the largest salt mining operations in the world being the Khewra Salt Mine in Pakistan. The word 'salt' has made its way into many languages. For example, the city of Salzburg takes its name from the German word for salt; the word 'salary' means 'salt', as it is sometimes thought that Roman soldiers were paid in salt.

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Passage 2

A Summer Job

1 When the long school summer holidays came round, to satisfy my mother, I had to find a summer job. Naturally I went to the doctor's wife as I had worked for her the previous summer looking after her three little girls. When I mentioned that I was looking for a job again, the doctor's wife asked if I would take her daughters to the beach every day, and if I could start the next day so that they could spend more time with a good, intelligent girl like me. She called her daughters and they embraced me affectionately, eager for me to play with them. She informed me that she would give me a little more money than the previous year. I went home keen to tell my mother my good news and my mood didn't change even when she said, as I knew she would, that I was lucky – swimming and sitting in the sun wasn't a real job.

2 Every day, I took the little girls to the beach where the lazy sea shimmered under the scorching sun. In a canvas bag I brought all the thousand things that the children might need, along with the books that I would be reading in school the next year. They were small volumes that examined the world as it was, the present day, and the world as it ought to become. I went home exhausted every evening. The books resembled textbooks, but the writing was more interesting, even though it was more difficult to understand. I wasn't used to the intellectual demands of that sort of reading. And, of course, the girls required a lot of attention.

3 One Sunday I felt someone putting a hand over my eyes and a voice asked: 'Guess who?' It was my friend Marisa. 'You're so good at looking after those children,' she said. 'But me, I wasn't born with that gift.' Pointing to the doctor's daughters who were playing a little distance away, I tried to reassure her: 'Sit with them for a while. Talk to them.' Marisa laughed but then, uneasily, she ventured to say a few words to the girls before beginning to talk to me again. I urged her to take care of the youngest daughter, Linda. 'Go on, let her play her favourite game – drinking from the water fountain, or spraying the water by putting her thumb over it.'

4 Rather unwillingly, Marisa led Linda away, holding her hand. I watched as she lifted the child over the jet of water, letting her drink it or spray it. Seeing the fun, the two other sisters joined them as I sat on the beach in a place where I could keep an eye on all four and at the same time do some reading. When I looked up, I saw that something was wrong. Marisa was holding Linda who was crying. Maybe Linda had leaned over too far; maybe one of her sisters had pushed her; certainly, she had escaped Marisa's reluctant grasp and hurt her chin on the edge of the basin. Her sisters were looking elsewhere with fake smiles, as if all this had nothing to do with them.

5 Running over, I tore the child from Marisa's arms and tilted her head towards the jet of water to wash her face. There was a tiny, horizontal cut under her chin, which was in no way worthy of the commotion she was making. I'll lose the job with the doctor's wife, I thought, and my mother will be angry. Meanwhile I ran for the beach attendant, who somehow got Linda to calm down by applying antiseptic lotion to the cut and then sticking a small plaster over it. To put it simply, it was nothing serious. I bought ice cream for all three girls and went back to my place on the beach. Marisa had left.

6 The doctor's wife didn't seem particularly upset by Linda's injury. However, when I asked if I should come the next day at the customary time to pick up the girls, she said that her daughters had had too much swimming that summer and there was no need for me anymore.

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