



Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

May/June 2020

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

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.



This document has 4 pages. Blank pages are indicated.

Passage 1

Coconuts

- 1 Coconut trees are grown in more than 90 countries in the world, with 61 million tonnes of coconuts being produced every year. There is a long tradition in coconut-producing countries of using them to make food. For example, coconut oil is used for frying and making margarine, while desiccated coconut or coconut milk is added to curries and other savoury dishes, and the fleshy part of the coconut is used in confectionery and desserts. Drink, as well as food, is manufactured from coconuts; sap is taken from the tree's flowers and made into a drink called toddy, which can be either alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Coconut oil added to shower gels and shampoos, as well as shells ground down and added to skin products, are only two ways in which coconuts are used in the beauty industry. 5
- 2 The leaves of the coconut tree are woven together to thatch roofs and provide a cheap alternative to other types of material. Additionally, timber from coconut trees is utilised to make houses and boats, and whole tree trunks are used to build small bridges and huts, being preferred to other wood because the coconut trunk is straighter and stronger than many other trees. Moreover, coconut trees are ecologically sound alternatives to other wood which may be endangered. A strong fibre called coir, which comes from coconut husks, is ideal for manufacturing use; it also has the advantage of being waterproof and is one of the few natural fibres resistant to damage by sea water. Brown coir, which comes from ripe coconuts, is used in the manufacture of upholstery and sacking, while white coir, which comes from unripe coconuts, is made into string, rope and fishing nets. 10 15
- 3 Coconuts have particular significance in some societies, where they are used in certain religious ceremonies. In Hinduism they are sometimes decorated with symbols of good fortune; in various places fishermen may offer coconuts to a sea god at the start of a fishing season. Coconuts have cultural importance in some countries where they appear in coats of arms or are displayed as national emblems, for example in The Maldives. 20
- 4 However, although demand for coconuts has reached an unprecedented level in some parts of the world, there are problems associated with their production. In some countries, a new kind of bacteria is wiping out coconut trees and, although this isn't happening in the biggest coconut-producing countries, it is an ominous sign for the rest of the world. Seeds of various fruits can be stored in vaults in case of future disease or shortage, but seed vaults are less successful with coconut seeds than with other fruits as their water content is much higher. Coconut trees take around five years to mature, which means at least five years between each generation of trees. This slows down coconut production compared to a crop like corn which matures in just a few months. Coconut trees grow to over 25 metres high, which makes harvesting them by hand very dangerous; in some plantations monkeys have been trained to perform this task because of their speed and agility, although using animals in this way is undoubtedly cruel. 25 30 35
- 5 Most coconut growers are small-time farmers, so they don't have money to invest in seed vaults. In other industries, for example palm oil production, big companies usually pay for this and other research, but this is not the case with coconuts. Fairtrade programmes ensure a fair wage for those engaged in the tea, coffee and chocolate industries. However, initiatives designed to help workers in the coconut industry are slow to filter through. Obviously, everyone hopes this situation will change in the near future. 40
- 6 Much is made of the health benefits of coconut products with advertisers claiming that they are good sources of antioxidants. However, it is clear that some people are being taken in by clever marketing because in fact coconut products contain lower levels of antioxidants than vegetables and other fruit. Dieticians warn that coconut oil contains even higher levels of saturated fats than butter, and this is likely to increase 'bad' cholesterol, the kind which causes heart disease and stroke. One cup of unsweetened coconut contains many calories which means that too much coconut consumption is likely to result in weight gain. 45

Passage 2

Leaving Home

- 1 As a little girl I used to run, scarpers and dash off, whenever I had the chance. I hated to be held by the hand or expected to walk in an orderly fashion. I wanted nothing more than to be on the move, with the street or the garden or the field reeling past. I was perhaps four or five years old when I first got lost, which was my mother's constant prediction every time I ran off or struggled to be free. We once visited a ruined castle on an uninhabited island, a boat ride away from the coast near our home. I had lagged behind, running up and down in zigzag formations, until I found myself alone, fearsomely but thrillingly alone, on a track in the middle of a remote island. 5

- 2 I wandered, awestruck by this sudden turn of events, convinced that my family would have got the ferry back to the mainland without me and I would have to look after myself on this wind-battered slice of land. The world was suddenly still; I could stand in the quiet of my own skin. I could hear only the crunch of my sandals on the grit and the whirring of the wind in the trees at the side of the path. Where would I sleep? Who would tell me when to go to bed? Left to my own devices, what would I eat? Then some ladies found me and took me back to the quay where my family had been frantically looking for me. 10 15

- 3 Later in childhood, I ran away from home. It was a move to which I had given a great deal of consideration, especially as to what I would take with me – a sandwich and the cat. The cause of my departure was a meal I didn't want and a disagreement about clothing. I remember rushing to the cupboard, unhooking my coat from its peg, shoving my hands with some difficulty into its unyielding woollen sleeves and fastening the brown buttons, one by one, decisive one. This is it, I was thinking; I am leaving. 20

- 4 I yanked open the door, with its frosted glass, through which I had first seen my younger sister approaching up the front path, held in my mother's arms – a small, misty, white bundle topped with fiery red, which turned out to be a baby with auburn hair the closer to the house they got. I stepped through that door, letting it slam with a satisfying thud, and I was off, down the path, through the rickety white gate and along the pavement, my legs racing under me, my shoes scuffed – always scuffed no matter how often they were polished – clattering past the neighbours' gardens and slumbering kerb-side cats. 25

- 5 Ironically, I stopped at the crossroads, watching the cars go by; this was the limit of my solitary world, and as far as I was permitted to go alone. My older sister and I would loiter here on occasion, longing for my father to come home from work if we had important news to impart: the death of a pet fish, the arrival of a visitor, my sister leaping off the sofa and hitting her nose on the side of the bookcase. I was standing here, wondering whether my leaving home would mean that I was now no longer bound by my family's rules, when my mother caught up with me. She had run from the house in her bare feet. For a moment, as I saw her bearing down on me, I thought she was angry, that I was in terrible trouble. However, her face was wet with tears. Unexpectedly, she caught me in a close, enveloping embrace, and murmured, 'Don't go, don't go,' into my hair. 30 35

- 6 I was reminded of this moment when, almost two decades later, I said goodbye to her as I was leaving to work on the other side of the world. We were on the station platform and my train was approaching. I was about to get on it, and I wouldn't be back for a long, long time. My mother didn't tell me not to go, but her grip on my shoulder transmitted her awareness that I was always going to leave, that we both knew that the urge had always been in me. 40

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