



Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

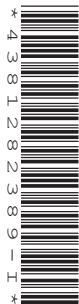
May/June 2015

INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the two reading passages.



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

Passage 1 – Gold

- 1 Throughout the history of our planet, gold has been valued; almost every established culture has used gold to symbolise power, beauty and happiness. Over 6000 years ago, pieces of gold were exchanged as a system of payment which replaced bartering. Much later, the first gold coins were minted: they were an innovative way to conduct transactions because they were both portable and easy to count. The Venetians introduced the gold ducat in 1284 and it became the most popular coin in the world for more than 500 years. 5
- 2 Gold was considered by ancient peoples to have medicinal properties: the Ancient Chinese treated diseases such as smallpox and measles with medicines containing gold, and in traditional Indian medicine drinks sprinkled with gold were thought to have healing effects. As early as 700 BC, Etruscan ‘dentists’ worked with gold, simply for aesthetic purposes rather than for repair work, by using it to fasten replacement teeth into patients’ mouths. In fourteenth-century Europe molten gold mixed with crushed emeralds was seen as a cure for bubonic plague, although this remedy was obviously limited to the wealthy. 10
- 3 In former times, gold was associated with religion. Because of the Egyptians’ belief that gold was the skin of their sun god, Ra, it was unavailable in Egypt to all except the pharaoh. The Incas of Peru saw gold as representing the glory of their own sun god and called it ‘tears of the sun’. However, although there are more than 400 references to gold in the books of the Jewish Old Testament, one of the worst betrayals recorded was the decision by some people to worship a golden calf instead of their own god. In all of these contexts, gold was not seen as having a monetary value, so its attraction was purely aesthetic. 15 20
- 4 Gold is a beautiful bright yellow colour and, because it does not tarnish in air or water, it has been used since ancient times to make jewellery in the form of rings, bracelets, earrings and necklaces for both men and women, depending on local custom. Everybody loves gold jewellery. So important was gold to people that, around 300 BC, the Greeks began the practice of alchemy, an attempt to turn cheap metals into gold. Although it was never successful, alchemy continued for almost 2000 years and is seen as the foundation of modern chemistry. 25
- 5 In more recent times, gold has continued to have its attractions. Because it is malleable and therefore easy to work with, as well as having aesthetic properties, it is still used in dentistry. Replacing teeth with iron would be possible, but who wants a rusty smile? As a drug which can alleviate swelling caused by arthritis, gold is used in modern medicine, and particles of gold implanted in human tissue can serve as radiation therapy in the treatment of certain cancers. Many surgical instruments are made of gold because, again, it does not corrode and it can be easily sterilised, thereby reducing the risk of infection during and after surgery. 30
- 6 Because it conducts electricity and is easy to work with, gold is invaluable in modern electronics. In fact, a small amount is used in all sophisticated electronic gadgets such as cell phones and computers. The importance of high quality and reliable performance justifies the relatively high cost. Space travel requires vehicles that travel without the possibility of maintenance or repair, which is why gold, as a highly dependable material, has been used in many ways in the manufacture of every spacecraft ever launched. 35
- 7 Gold leaf – gold hammered into thin sheets – is used for decorating, or gilding, objects such as picture frames and furniture. It is used in luxury cooking in, for example, desserts and confectionery, such as Mithai, unique confectionery made in Eastern Asia for auspicious occasions. Highly skilled craftsmen use gold to adorn buildings: the splendid Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque in Brunei and the Golden Temple of Amritsar in India are decorated with gold, ranking them among the most magnificent buildings in the world. Beautiful glass can be manufactured with gold: suspending a small amount in glass produces a rich, ruby colour, as in the famous glass from Murano, near Venice. A more practical application for adding gold to glass is in the use of gold as a coating on windows to reflect the sun’s rays, thus keeping buildings cool in summer. 40 45

Passage 2 – Griet

- 1 My mother did not tell me they were coming. Afterwards she said she did not want me to appear nervous. She need not have worried. Only she would notice the tightness along my jaw, the widening of my eyes. I was chopping vegetables in the kitchen when I heard voices outside, the kind of voices heard rarely in our house. I could hear luxurious carpets in them, books and pearls and plenty of fine food. I was glad that earlier I had scrubbed the front step so hard. My mother's voice approached from the front room; they were coming to the kitchen. I pushed the leeks I had been chopping into place, then set the knife on the table and wiped my hands on my apron. My mother appeared in the doorway, her eyes flashing a warning. Behind her, the woman had to duck her head because she was so tall, as tall as the man following her. All our family, including my father and brother, were small. 5 10
- 2 The woman wore a hat from which tiny curls escaped and hung about her forehead like a swarm of bees. She made an elaborate show of watching me hard, but could not fix her attention on me. 'This is the girl, then,' she said abruptly. 'This is my daughter, Griet,' my mother replied, icily. Realising she had been corrected, the woman turned to look at her husband. A fold of her coat caught the handle of the knife I had been using, knocking it off the table so that it spun across the floor. The woman cried out, swatting impatiently at her curls several times. 15
- 3 'Catharina,' the man said calmly. He spoke her name as though he held honey in his mouth. I stepped over and picked up the knife, placing it back on the table and setting a piece of carrot back in its place. They both looked at me, his eyes grey like the sea and his expression steady, in contrast to his wife's, which flickered like a candle. He looked at the chopped vegetables, each type in its own section; as I always did, I had laid them out in a circle, like a pie. 'Do you spend much time setting out the vegetables in a pattern before you make the soup?' he asked. Thrown, I said that I did not. I did not want him to think I was idle. From the corner of my eye I saw my sister, who was peering round the doorpost and had shaken her head at my response. I did not often lie. I looked down. 20 25
- 4 After the guests left, my mother returned to where I was sitting by the vegetable wheel. She was hunching her shoulders as if against a winter chill, though it was summer and the kitchen was hot. 'You are to start tomorrow as their maid,' she said. 'You will live with them. Don't look at me like that. You know we have to do this now that your father has lost his trade.' I climbed the stairs to see my father. He was sitting near the window, where the light touched his face. It was the closest he came now to seeing. He had been a tile painter, painting blue soldiers, ships and children onto white tiles. One day the kiln had exploded, taking his eyes and his trade. He had heard everything; his hearing had taken the strength from his missing eyes. I could not think of anything to say that would not sound reproachful. 30 35
- 5 When I was ready to leave the next morning, my father shuffled out to the front step. I hugged my mother and my sister before walking away from our house, carrying my few possessions tied up in an apron. Neighbours nodded to me and watched as I passed; they knew what happened to families when a man lost his trade. I knew they were compassionate people – and here was young Griet working as a maid because her father had made the family destitute. They would not gloat, however. They could easily find themselves in a similar position. 40

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