



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/21

Paper 2 Reading

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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 – Mobile Phones

- 1 One of the most obvious results of our exciting technological age has been the invention of the mobile phone. Many people – even children as young as seven or eight – have one. But are mobile phones necessarily beneficial to society?
- 2 Mobiles can be seen as a way for young people to keep in touch with their parents if they are out with friends and, as newspapers make increasing reports of violence, particularly in inner city areas, this must be an advantage. If students are on a school outing and have to be met by parents on their return to school, they can phone at short notice from, say, the bus to give details of exact timings. Mobiles encourage friendships and some students speak to their friends several times a day. Parents may be happy that their children are not using the house telephone and incurring charges which they, as parents, have to meet – an issue which, in the past, was often a source of family conflict. Most young people have ‘pay as you go’ mobiles, and this encourages budgeting, surely a useful skill to have in later life. 5 10
- 3 Because a mobile is the personal property of its owner, direct contact can be made, and there is less risk of disturbing an entire household engaged in some family activity, such as having dinner. Another obvious advantage is that people can be contacted wherever they are, clearly a benefit if a friend or spouse wishes to communicate that he is stuck in traffic, or that the train is running late. In situations where it is impossible for either the caller or the recipient to speak, mobiles can be used to send short text messages, which are both convenient and relatively cheap. Many mobiles are also able to take photographs; this multi-tasking means that there is no need to purchase a camera, and thus a saving is made. Sophisticated mobiles even allow their owners to send and receive e-mails, thus providing an alternative means of communication. Small businesses flourish because of mobile phones. A plumber, for example, can receive bookings for future work while he is working on another job; there is no need to sit at home waiting for phone calls or to employ a secretary in an office. 15 20
- 4 However, there are downsides to mobile phones. People are discouraged from planning ahead. It is a rather pathetic sight to see a wife phoning from the supermarket to ask her husband what he would like for dinner. People might also stop making simple decisions for themselves with, say, a teenager phoning his mother to ask if he may take a drink out of the fridge. Then there is the general disturbance which can be caused: there is nothing worse than people on public transport conducting loud and animated conversations on their mobiles with scant regard for their fellow passengers. Some countries, for example France, have tackled this problem by insisting that mobiles are switched off on trains; all countries should follow this example. Unfortunately, owning a mobile phone prevents some people from concentrating on the present moment. Picture the scene: a young couple are dining in a fine restaurant but, instead of being absorbed in each other’s company, each of them is speaking to someone else via a mobile phone. 25 30 35
- 5 In schools, there can be regrettable competition among students to have the most up-to-date mobile. Some students are distracted into texting friends in class, which clearly hinders their education. In cases where mobiles are confiscated because of such misuse, there are security issues for teachers – who is responsible for this expensive equipment once it has been confiscated? And, of course, teachers complain vociferously about text message spelling and grammar which, they say, encourage sloppy use of language: ‘CU’ is enough to raise the blood pressure of an English teacher to dangerous levels. Furthermore, they complain that mobile phones, along with e-mails, have destroyed the art of letter writing. Parents complain that their children contact their friends – with whom they have been all day in school – several times during the evening via text or call instead of doing their homework. ‘What do they have to talk about?’ is the perceived mystery. 40 45
- 6 Is the mobile phone a blessing or a curse? Perhaps there is no clear cut answer to this and, as with many issues, moderation is essential.

Passage 2 – An Otter in the Air

(The writer describes his experience of taking an animal with him on a plane in the days when this was permitted.)

- 1 The plane was waiting to take off; as I rushed through the airport, carrying the box which was Mij's temporary home, my mind boggled at the thought of the next few hours. I was trying to hold down the lid of the box with one hand and, with the other, to force back the screw into the splintered wood.
- 2 The other passengers stared at me inquisitively as I struggled onto the plane with my horrifyingly vocal box. I was anxious to see who would be my immediate neighbour and was dismayed to find an elegantly dressed middle-aged woman. Such a person, I thought, would have little tolerance and certainly no sympathy for the scruffy otter cub that would so soon be her travelling companion. For the moment the lid held, and there was a brief silence from within the box. 5 10
- 3 Worried about how I would keep Mij under control throughout the flight, I had brought a bottle of water and a parcel of fish, and with these scant resources I prepared to withstand a siege. Aware of the fact that I could not keep Mij's presence a secret for long, and of the need to keep the fish in a cool place, I spoke to the stewardess; I daresay I was not too coherent but she took it all in her graceful stride and received the mundane parcel of fish as though I were travelling royalty depositing a jewel case into her safe keeping. When the stewardess suggested I remove my pet from its box and have it on my knee, my neighbour, surprisingly, had no objection. 15
- 4 For the first hour or so Mij slept in my lap. However, otters are extremely bad at doing nothing. There is, I am convinced, something positively provoking to an otter about order in any form and, the greater the state of confusion they can create, the more contented they feel. A room is not properly habitable until they have turned everything in it upside down. One of these moods descended on Mij. It began comparatively innocuously when he jumped down from my lap – inertia was not for him. Then he turned his attention to the box, which was on the floor, filled with wood shavings for him to sleep on. He put his head into the box and began to throw the wood shavings out backwards at enormous speed; then he got in bodily and lay on his back, using all four feet in a pedalling motion to hoist out the remainder. With his teeth, he yanked back the zip on my neighbour's bag and was in head first, throwing out all the personal paraphernalia of air travel. But there was worse to come. 20 25
- 5 With a rebellious and eel-like wriggle, Mij disappeared at high speed. I could follow his progress by the wave of disturbance down the passageway. There were squawks and shrieks; then a woman halfway down the plane stood up on her seat screaming, 'A rat! A rat!' The stewardess reached her and, within a matter of seconds, the woman was seated again, smiling benignly. That goddess, I believe, could have controlled a panic-stricken crowd single-handedly. 30
- 6 By now I was in the passageway myself and, catching sight of Mij's tail disappearing beneath the legs of a portly gentleman, I tried a flying tackle, landing flat on my face. I missed Mij's tail, but found myself grasping the foot of the gentleman's female companion. The gentleman gave me a long silent stare. I staggered up, babbling my apology; the man was so utterly expressionless that even in my hypersensitive mood I could deduce no meaning from him whatsoever. 35
- 7 The stewardess came to my assistance once again. 'Perhaps,' she said with her charming smile, 'you should return to your seat and I will bring the animal to you.' I heard the ripple of flight and pursuit passing up and down the body of the plane, but I could see little. I was craning my neck trying to follow the hunt when suddenly I heard from my feet a distressed chitter of recognition and welcome. In all the strange world of the aircraft I was the only familiar thing to be found, and in that spontaneous return was sown the seed of the absolute trust that Mij accorded me for the rest of his life. 40 45

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