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General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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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 – Time For Tea

- 1 After water, tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world and, by the time you have read this passage, hundreds of thousands of cups of tea will have been drunk globally. But how many of us ever stop to consider the origins of tea or the reasons for its continuing popularity down through the ages?
- 2 There is plenty of evidence to show that tea was popular thousands of years ago in China because it was drunk for its medicinal properties. There were many myths surrounding the origins of tea and, as these myths spread, the popularity of tea increased. For example, one influential myth concerns Emperor Shennong: taking a sip from a bowl of boiling water into which some leaves from a nearby bush had been blown, he was pleasantly surprised by its flavour. This delicious drink began to be drunk as a stimulant because of its restorative powers; there's no better pick-me-up than a good cup of tea. Use of tea for this purpose was supported by another myth about a prince who developed the habit of chewing leaves from the tea shrub in order to keep himself awake for prayer. Tea drinking spread when tea leaves were formed into the shape of bricks because they were easy to trade and transport; they were even used as a form of currency instead of metal coins. A book entitled 'The Tea Classic', written by scholar Lu Yu, was the single greatest influence in developing the popularity of tea in China. 'The Tea Classic' is fascinating to read, describing the weather conditions in which tea should be picked and even the best water to be used to make the drink.
- 3 By the 6th century, tea had spread to Japan, where at first it was the drink of the aristocracy, before becoming widely accessible to ordinary people when production grew. Tea in Japan took on religious significance with the Tea Ceremony, in which the making of tea expresses the quest for greatness in the smallest details of life. Thus, the link in Japan between tea and religious observance increased the importance and popularity of tea. Through time, tea drinking extended to other Asian countries, for example Vietnam, Korea and Taiwan.
- 4 It was not until the 17th century that tea reached the West, when Dutch traders imported it from China. In addition, British merchants had been exporting goods to the East, but their ships returned empty; thus began a vigorous campaign in Britain to popularise tea among the ordinary people there to develop it as a profitable return cargo. In order to evade taxes, it was frequently smuggled into Britain; smuggled tea was cheaper than its legitimately imported equivalent, and its popularity increased.
- 5 There are many reasons for the continuing popularity of tea. The ability of tea plants to replenish their leaves every week during the growing season means that there is always plenty available, which helps keep down the cost to the consumer. In addition, tea is highly receptive to absorbing the aromas of other plants. This may cause problems with transportation and storage, with the true flavour of the tea being adversely affected by other goods, but the advantage of the ability of tea leaves to absorb other aromas allows for an almost endless range of scented and flavoured teas, such as vanilla and caramel. Moreover, the development of mixing different types of tea, called blending, makes it possible to obtain better tasting tea at lower prices. Then came the invention of tea bags, which led to the 'quick cuppa'. Although connoisseurs of tea complain that tea bags contain merely the waste products of high quality tea, and that their small size does not allow the leaves to diffuse properly, it cannot be denied that tea bags have made tea accessible and cheap.
- 6 As well as being a stimulant because of its caffeine content, a cup of tea is considered by millions to be wonderfully relaxing. Perhaps the best explanation of this paradox is that the very act of making tea has a soothing effect on us. Modern medical studies support the claim that tea has a beneficial effect on health, reducing our chances of heart disease, and providing immunity against certain intestinal disorders. Furthermore, because it contains fluoride, tea even prevents dental decay. Such scientific data was beyond the knowledge of Emperor Shennong, but it seems that he was right to have been impressed by what he stumbled upon all those centuries ago.

Passage 2 – Betrayal

(A young boy, Amir, has betrayed the trust of Hassan, who is his friend and one of his father's servants.)

- 1 For a week after I had betrayed him, I barely saw Hassan. I woke up to find tea, toast and a boiled egg already on the kitchen table. My clothes for the day were ironed and folded, left on the seat where Hassan usually did his ironing. He used to wait for me to sit at the breakfast table before he started ironing – that way we could talk. How I had enjoyed that! Now only the folded clothes greeted me. That, and a breakfast I didn't finish any more. 5
- 2 Hassan milled about uncertainly on the periphery of my life. I made sure our paths crossed as little as possible, planning my day that way because, when he was around, the oxygen seeped out of the room. My chest tightened and I'd stand there gasping in my own little bubble of atmosphere. But even when he wasn't around, he was. He was there in the ironed clothes on the chair and in the warm slippers left outside my door at night. Everywhere I turned, I saw signs of his unwavering loyalty. 10
- 3 One day, while my father and I were planting tulips in the garden, I saw a solution to my problem. My father was digging the soil and planting the bulbs I handed to him. He was telling me how most people thought it was best to plant tulips in the autumn and how that wasn't true. 'Father,' I said, 'have you ever thought about getting new servants?' My father dropped the tulip bulb and stared at me angrily. My heart started racing. 'Why would I ever want to do that?' he asked. I was already sorry I'd said it. 'You wouldn't, I guess. It was just a question,' I said, my voice fading away to a murmur. 'I'm sorry, Father.' 15
- 4 I was relieved when school started the next week. Most of the boys walked to school and my father's limousine drew more than one envious look. I should have been beaming with pride when he dropped me off, but all I could muster was embarrassment. That and emptiness. However, school gave me an excuse to stay in my room for long hours. I preoccupied myself with school work instead of thinking about Hassan and how I had betrayed him. 20
- 5 The summer of that year I turned thirteen and my father threw a party for me. For days, the house teemed with my father's hired help. I guess, in the ways that parties are judged, mine was a great success. In the yard, guests mingled under the glow of blue, green and red lights winking in the trees, their faces illuminated by the light of kerosene torches propped everywhere. The house was inundated with people; guests stood or sat where they found space. I had to greet each of the guests personally. I hugged dozens of total strangers, my face aching from the strain of my fixed smile. Fireworks lit up the sky; all the guests stood in the yard, looking up, cheering every time flares sizzled and exploded into bouquets of fire. In one of these brief bursts of light I saw Hassan serving drinks to some of the guests. Then, mercifully, darkness. 25
- 6 Sitting in my room the next morning, I ripped open box after box of presents, giving them a perfunctory glance and pitching them into a corner of the room. The pile was growing there: a radio, a camera, a watch and several sealed envelopes containing cash. My mind was elsewhere. It had become clear to me: one of us had to go. 30
- 7 The next morning, I waited in my room until I saw Hassan leaving to go grocery shopping. Then I took a couple of the envelopes of cash and tiptoed out. I paused before my father's study and listened; I heard him speaking in an animated way on the telephone about a shipment of rugs due to arrive the following week. I went downstairs and entered Hassan's living quarters. I lifted his mattress and planted the envelopes of money under it. I waited another thirty minutes. Then I knocked on the door of my father's study and told him a shameful lie, wondering how and when I'd become capable of causing this kind of anguish. 40

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