

Passage 1 – Silver

- 1 Silver is a precious metal, more abundant and more beautiful even than gold. The mining of silver began some 5000 years ago in Anatolia and it was a valuable resource for many flourishing civilisations. By the first century, Spain had become the capital of silver production; Spanish silver mines provided the major supplies for the Roman Empire, and silver was an essential trading component for Asian spices. But no single event in the history of silver rivals Spain's conquest of the so-called New World in the late fifteenth century, resulting in Bolivia, Peru and Mexico accounting for a huge proportion of the world's production. 5
- 2 Because it has a bright whiteness, silver was often used to make jewellery – rings, bracelets and necklaces – by many ancient civilisations; modern silversmiths are linked to centuries of craftsmen, and people with good taste still choose to adorn themselves with silver. There is evidence that silver was being made into coins and used as money for everyday transactions in Asia Minor almost 3000 years ago, and many ancient societies in India, Persia and South America used silver coins. For centuries, silver was used to facilitate international trade; in the nineteenth century, for example, the Chinese asked for silver in exchange for tea, silk and porcelain. In some ancient languages, such as Sanskrit and Hebrew, the same words are used to describe both silver and money, thus underpinning its importance. 10 15
- 3 In the religious beliefs of many ancient cultures, silver became associated with various gods, who kept it shiny and rust-free. Although the Romans had no knowledge of modern biology, they stored wine in silver containers, realising that it remained drinkable for a longer period of time, and their army generals discovered that silver coins dropped into water storage containers meant that fewer soldiers would become sick during military campaigns. Other ancient civilisations, such as Greece and Macedonia, used silver extensively for medicinal purposes; the Greek physician Hippocrates, the so-called 'Father of Medicine', taught that silver healed wounds and controlled diseases. 20
- 4 Mirrors were originally made of polished stone, and later of bronze, but by the fifth century the Chinese were making much better quality mirrors by combining silver and mercury. Silverpoint, a drawing technique which involves dragging a silver wire across a surface, has been used by artists since ancient times and flourished in sixteenth century Europe as a fine-line drawing technique used by many artists, including Leonardo da Vinci. 25
- 5 In modern times, silver is used to make solar panels, which provide electricity for commercial and residential premises. As silver is very effective in the collection of solar power, the energy which comes from the sun, it allows us to access this source of renewable energy. In the past, aluminium was used to coat telescope mirrors, but silver is now seen as being more effective. When used to insulate glass, silver is recognised as an extremely efficient method of reducing heat loss, an important factor in the modern age when conservation of the world's resources is seen as a priority. 30 35
- 6 As Hippocrates realised all those years ago, silver can be beneficial to healthy living. The use of silver in water purification systems prevents bacteria and algae from building up in filters, and helps oxygen to sanitise the water, thus avoiding the need for chlorine in pools and spas. Mixed with mercury, silver produces amalgams which harden within minutes and are used in dentistry to fill cavities in teeth. It also has a role to play in modern medicine as it can be used to make instruments to perform surgical procedures. Small electrical devices such as hearing aids use silver oxide batteries due to their long life and high energy-to-weight ratio. 40
- 7 In the music industry, speaker wires are produced using silver cable because many experts believe that silver improves sound quality. Silver plays an important role in the manufacture of various high-quality wind instruments; for example, flutes are made with silver alloy because of the fine sound it produces as well as for the beauty of its appearance, and some brass instruments, such as trumpets, are plated with silver. 45

Passage 2 – Mr Lutchman and Gardening

- 1 When Mr Lutchman's passion for gardening developed, he firstly bought himself a set of gardening tools. His interest in gardening seemed to have arisen unpremeditated, coming upon him suddenly one morning when, probably for the first time since the family had moved into the house, he noticed the patchy remains of lawn, a ragged reminder of the previous owner's industry. He looked over the fence and compared his lawn enviously with the healthy green strip he could see in the neighbour's garden. That same day, he set to work, weeding and removing the stumps of dead plants. He went to the local park and uprooted clumps of grass which he brought back and planted at evenly spaced intervals. 5
- 2 'It's public property you're taking,' said Mrs Lutchman. 'Don't you realise you'll go to jail if you're caught rooting up grass like that? What if somebody goes to the park, likes the look of the railings and thinks they'll take them home and make a fence with them?' But, in spite of this threat, Mr Lutchman persisted. The police did not catch him and with the transplants of grass the lawn flourished. Success stimulated ambition. He decided to have flower beds on either side of the house and rose bushes at the front, and it was the purchase of these items that prompted the excursion he took his children on during the school holidays. Mr Lutchman became the happy family man, and was in a good mood, a straw hat perched rakishly on his head. Mrs Lutchman, who had not been invited to accompany them, was delighted that this new air of domesticity had descended on her husband in recent weeks, and that he was content to spend most of his spare time at home playing with his set of gardening tools. 10 15
- 3 The planned excursion took them out of the city. At first the roads were bordered by fields of rice and watercress. Further on, however, the land was dry and uncultivated, the predominant colour changing from green to reddish-brown. They left the highway and drove along a lane for a mile or so before turning on to a stony track. A large sign proclaimed in peeling, faded letters: 'Plants for sale. Visitors welcome.' They drove through the gate. There was a rambling, red-brick house from which hung baskets full of dead and dying plants. The lawn was being watered by a gardener. The house was set in an extensive, decaying garden dotted with mango trees. The gardener waved at them. 'Stop!' he shouted furiously. 'This is private property you know.' Mr Lutchman was losing his temper. 'We want to buy some plants,' he said. 20 25
- 4 The main part of the garden stretched behind the house. Mr Lutchman's eye was caught by an orchid and he bought it. 'I'll give it to you at half price,' said the gardener. 'It's already half dead.' Encouraged by the logic of this generosity, Mr Lutchman bought six rose bushes too. 30
- 5 While the gardener went away to make up the bill, Mr Lutchman saw a young avocado tree. He was tempted. There was nobody in sight and nearby was a little gate. Could he not put the tree outside the gate and collect it later when they were driving back? Swooping down, he snatched up the tree. The gardener, coming up behind him, tapped him on the shoulder, making small, scolding noises. When Mr Lutchman protested that he was about to come looking for him to have the price added to his bill, the gardener wagged a finger at him. Later, in his 'office', a dilapidated old shed used mainly for storing tools, he started to enumerate the prices of the various items with exaggerated care to disguise the fact that he was making up the prices as he went along. 35 40
- 6 When they were planted in Mr Lutchman's garden, the orchid and the roses were a great success. The avocado tree, however, worried him. He had planted it in the back yard where there was more room and where, ironically, he felt it was less likely to be stolen. The tree grew slowly and reluctantly and seemed on several occasions to be on the point of dying. It weighed heavily on his mind and Mr Lutchman, overcome by guilt, finally confessed to his wife. 'It's because I tried to steal it,' he said. 45
- 7 Comprehension dawned. 'That's the exact reason why it doesn't grow,' she said. 'Crime never pays.'

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