



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**1123/21**

Paper 2 Reading

**May/June 2011**

INSERT

**1 hour 45 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This insert contains the two reading passages.

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



## Passage 1 – Pirates

- 1 Piracy has been around for as long as people have used the oceans as trade routes, and there is a probably universal stereotype of the pirate as a ruthless villain, brandishing a sword. He is in possession of a large fortune, some of it buried on a desert island, to be unearthed in his old age. In the popular imagination, pirates were rebellious and clever, operating outside the restrictive bureaucracy of the law. In reality, few became fabulously wealthy and many died young. 5
- 2 There are many reasons why piracy flourished in former times. Pirates sometimes captured the inhabitants of other lands, particularly children, and sold them as slaves. Taking hostage a powerful leader or public figure was a lucrative business, as huge sums of money could then be demanded as ransom. The famous Roman leader Julius Caesar was captured by pirates and a certain sum of ransom money was demanded; Caesar thought he was worth more and persuaded his captors to increase their demands! Pirate raids were often used to capture foreign territory; the Vikings were particularly successful in this regard. 10
- 3 When sailors were marooned because they were on the losing side in a war, they set up small gangs near river estuaries, initially to protect themselves. Soon they realised that they could plunder ships carrying expensive cargo, like silks and spices. In some parts of the world, continuous war demanded frequent supplies of fresh horses, imported on sea routes from Africa; this trade was subjected to frequent raids by thriving bands of pirates based in coastal cities. In other areas, it was not uncommon for people to consider piracy a legitimate response to the fact that they could make no money from their poor land, and that piracy was therefore their main source of income. 15 20
- 4 Not all piracy was illegal. Sometimes privately owned ships – called privateers – were authorised by a country’s government to attack and rob foreign vessels during wartime. Privateering was a form of state-sponsored piracy, where the ship, and not just the cargo, could be stolen. Privateering was encouraged by governments; it saved them money that they might otherwise have had to spend on building battleships. Because privateers were often thugs who exploited every opportunity to steal, they sometimes continued to plunder ships in peacetime. 25
- 5 However, piracy is not confined to history books; it continues to be a problem in modern times. Some modern pirates are content to make relatively limited amounts of money by boarding small ships and taking cash belonging to the crew; they also steal inexpensive goods which might be on board. Other pirates, working in organised syndicates, attack with more sophistication and planning, driven by the possibility of large cargoes, for example oil. The skill and planning of these syndicates mean that they are often able to make vast sums of money by capturing members of the crew and demanding ransom money for their release. There have been several recent high profile cases of pirates whose intention is not monetary, but rather the desire to achieve publicity for a political point of view. The worldwide media coverage which such cases provoke suggests that this type of piracy is effective. 30 35
- 6 Modern piracy is a growing and successful phenomenon because more and more international trade takes place via shipping, particularly as the cost of air travel increases. This means that often ships have to decrease their speed in order to avoid collision in busy shipping lanes, thus increasing the chances of pirate attack. Modern ships tend to have smaller crews as technology replaces manpower, thus making it easier for pirates to overpower what crew members there are. Modern technology also works in pirates’ favour because they are able to utilise it to discover the location of ships suitable for attack. In former times, what popular pirate areas, such as the Strait of Malacca, had in common was that they were narrow bodies of water; modern shipping routes also take ships through narrow passages which are more susceptible to having pirates lying in wait ready to attack them. 40 45
- 7 Pirates have been around for a long, long time, both in real life and in our personal and cultural imaginations, and it seems that the situation is unlikely to change.

## Passage 2 – Victory

- 1 Lore had it that my father once wrestled a bear, a claim he never denied. If the story had been about anyone else, it would have been dismissed as exaggeration, which in my country was almost a national affliction. But no-one ever doubted the veracity of any story about my father. He was a towering force of nature; when all six foot of him thundered into the room, people behaved like sunflowers turning towards the sun. With me, Amir, as the glaring exception, my father moulded the world around him to his liking. He was also a man whose word was always respected. 5
- 2 My mother had died giving birth to me and the truth was that I always felt my father hated me a little. And why not? Had I not killed his beloved wife? The least I could do was to turn out a little more like him. Was having a son who preferred poetry to sport what my father had envisaged? I was a pathetic, blundering liability to my football team, always unwittingly obstructing the other team members. When it became abundantly clear that I hadn't inherited a shred of my father's athletic talents, he settled for trying to turn me into a passionate spectator. I faked interest for as long as I could, but my father sensed my lack of genuine interest and resigned himself to the bleak fact that his son was never going either to play or to watch football. 10 15
- 3 Every winter, each district held a kite-fighting tournament, the winner of which was the child whose kite was the last one flying. This tournament was undeniably the highlight of the cold season. During the contest, participants tried to cut the strings of all their opponents' kites. On the day of any tournament, the streets filled with kite fighters, jerking and pulling on their strings, squinting up at the sky, trying to gain position to cut an opponent's string. I used to build my own kite from bamboo, glue and paper. Then came the crucial part: I had to make my own string – a long, sharp, and colourful line. It was at one of these tournaments that I sensed my opportunity to make my father love me. 20
- 4 Already streets and rooftops were jammed with spectators, including my father. I held my kite high over my head, like an Olympic athlete showing off his gold medal, and tossed it into the air. Within a minute it was rocketing into the sky, making a sound like a bird flapping its wings. At least two dozen kites already hung in the sky, like roaming paper sharks. Within an hour the number doubled; soon the cutting started and the first of the defeated kites whirled out of control and fell from the sky like a shooting star. Soon, kites were coming down all over the place. I sliced a bright yellow kite, the string also cutting a gash on my index finger. Within another hour, the number of kites flying dwindled from maybe fifty to a dozen. By late afternoon, shadows started to lengthen. We were down to six kites and mine was still flying. With each defeated kite, hope grew in my heart. 25 30
- 5 My eyes kept returning to a blue kite which had been wreaking havoc for the last hour. Then what had seemed like a fantasy that morning had suddenly become feasible; there was just me and the owner of the blue kite left. The tension in the air was as taut as the glass string I was tugging with my bloody hands. People were stamping their feet, clapping, whistling, chanting. All I saw was the blue kite. All I smelled was victory. A gust of wind enabled me to loop my kite on top of the blue one, the owner of which desperately tried to manoeuvre it away. I loosened my grip on the string, and saw the blue kite falling from the sky. Perhaps now I had achieved the redemption I had craved all my life. 35 40
- 6 It happened just the way I'd hoped. My father had already returned to his study and I stepped tentatively in. His head turned and a smile played on his lips. I put my kite down happily and walked into his thick hairy arms. I buried my face in the warmth of his chest and wept. My father held me close to him, rocking me back and forth. 45

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