
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Reading

INSERT

1123/21

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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 – Chess

- 1 Chess is one of the oldest games in the world, in which two opponents, each with sixteen pieces, play on a board of sixty-four squares. Such a complex game could not have been created by a single person, but has clearly been the product of a long process of evolution. It has been around for centuries, and a look at its development opens a fascinating window on numerous cultures, transporting our minds to distant lands and eras. 5
- 2 The earliest form of chess originated in India before the sixth century, where its Sanskrit name – chaturanga – meant ‘four divisions’ and referred to the different sections of the army: soldiers on foot, on horseback, on elephants and in chariots. From India the game spread to Persia: the story is told of an Indian ambassador who took it as a present to the Persian king, and a manuscript dating from that period describes the excitement generated by this gift. 10
The popularity of chess in Persia meant that it became an integral part of the education of young noblemen. The game evolved because the development of strict rules, and the need to adhere to them, added to its appeal. When the Arab countries conquered Persia, chess was taken up by the people of the Muslim world, who were attracted by the logical processes the game entailed. Furthermore, when Buddhist pilgrims travelled from India along the Silk Road, they introduced chess to the Far East, where variations were developed, resulting in many other games which are still known today. 15
- 3 When chess spread to Europe, it was seen as a prestigious pastime associated with the nobility: the social value attached to it can be seen in the exquisitely beautiful chessboards of medieval Europe. It also became a subject for art, and necklaces and other jewellery were often decorated with chess pieces. High-ranking soldiers, or knights, were required to have other, non-military skills in order to be worthy of their title, and one of these skills was the ability to play chess. Chess became more popular with the invention of the chequered board, made of alternate black and white squares, which made it easier to distinguish between the squares than it had been when the board was all one colour. Such was the popularity of this wonderful game that writings about theories and tactics for winning began to appear in the fifteenth century. 20
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- 4 In modern times, chess tournaments contribute to the continuing popularity of the game; the first of these took place in London in 1851, and they have become the standard form of competition among serious players. In the Chess Olympiad, which occurs every two years, the game is played by teams representing various countries globally; it resembles the Olympic Games in that its international flavour attracts both players and spectators, keen to see their own country perform well. The foundation of the World Chess Federation popularised chess because, by acting as the governing body of international chess competition, it defines the rules of the game and the ratings of players. Modern media keep spectators in touch with championships; for example, the final of the 2012 World Chess Championship was broadcast with live commentary on the internet. An innovation in chess has been the invention of chess computers, technology which actually takes on the role of the opponent and enables players to practise and improve their game. 30
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- 5 Chess is more interesting than other board games because the different pieces have different powers. There are several types of chess pieces ranging from the majestic king to the humble pawn, representing a servant or foot soldier, and part of the attraction of the game is that these various pieces move in different ways. Moreover, chess is probably unique in that victory for one particular player depends on the fate of only one of the pieces, the king; merely taking piece after piece is not sufficient. Chess is no ordinary game, because it demands skill and concentration: there is no element of luck as in, say, some card games. Furthermore, chess players are given a sense of continuity with the past, of belonging to a great chess-playing family which extends through centuries and embraces many nations. 40
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Passage 2 – Alice

- 1 One of the rituals of Alice’s life was going shopping with her grandmother, Elspeth. She was allowed to hold the shopping bag which, despite its short handles, knocked Alice on the leg when she carried it. Only certain things went in it. Her grandmother explained that vegetables and soap shouldn’t be in the same bag but tins and soap together were allowed. Peaches shouldn’t go in the string bag, as they got bruised. Once, when Alice was carrying a box of eggs, she opened the lid to inspect them and they slid from her hands, breaking on the pavement in a shock of shattered shell and a viscous watery blur. ‘Don’t worry, don’t worry,’ said her grandmother, over and over again. On this particular day, Alice was holding the string bag, which she put over her head and pulled down over her body with the plaited handles, folding her arms under the webbing. When she wore it like that, did it not make her a perfect Net Man? 5
- 2 Elspeth met a friend and they talked for ages outside the antiques shop. Alice started to jiggle about as she held Elspeth’s hand. Alice didn’t like this friend much. Without stopping her conversation or even looking down, Elspeth twitched Alice’s arm, which Alice knew meant she was expected to behave. Alice bent back the sole of her sandal under her foot. She tried not to look bored. Eventually, she extricated her fingers from Elspeth’s, walked over to the window of the antiques shop and pressed her face to it. At first she was looking only at how tiny beads of moisture left a ghostly imprint of her nose and lips on the glass. Then she peered into the shop: it was very dark and strange things hung from the ceiling, but then she saw a glass cabinet, heaped with beads, earrings and rings, and Alice’s apprehension gave way to exhilaration. 15
- 3 ‘Shall we go in and look?’ asked Elspeth. Soon Alice was standing next to a table with a surface so polished that she thought that, if she touched it, ripples would circle out from under her fingers to lap at its edges. She looked around the dark red walls of this temple of wonders: feathered fans, gold-edged paintings, lampshades dangling strings of purple beads. Alice walked over to a carousel of clothes, dived down underneath it, and then resurfaced, surrounded by antique dresses and scarves. She ran her hand reverently down the clothes, and turned round and round, until dizziness started to smudge her vision. 25
- 4 ‘You must be Alice.’ It was the shop owner, looming over the top of the carousel. He reached in and Alice felt him grip her underneath her arms before the floor fell away and she was rising towards a low red lantern covered with the writhing green bodies of dragons, which was hanging from the ceiling. Then the floor was coming up to meet her again, and she was set down in front of the man. ‘Tell me,’ he said, ‘what do you like best in here?’ Alice didn’t hesitate, but pointed solemnly to the red dragon lantern. 30
- 5 He smiled and holding up a pearl necklace said, ‘When you came in, I was testing these to see if they’re real or fake.’ He put the pearls into Alice’s palm. ‘The best way to do this is to put them into contact with human skin,’ he explained. ‘If they are real, they start to glow.’ Enchanted, Alice watched the pearls for any signs of opalescent glowing. Suddenly the man whipped them out of her hand. ‘Maybe that method is too time-consuming,’ he said. ‘The other way is to rub them against your teeth. Real pearls feel like sand. Open your mouth.’ The shop owner rubbed the largest pearl against her two front teeth. Alice waited, spellbound. There was a grainy feeling, a kind of friction. ‘They’re real!’ she exclaimed. 40
- 6 The shop owner placed Alice on a dilapidated chair in front of a mirror, fastening the pearls round her neck. Elspeth appeared behind them in the mirror. ‘Alice,’ she said, ‘we must go. Give the man back his necklace.’ She turned Alice round and began unfastening the clasp.
- 7 ‘No, no,’ said the shop owner, ‘I’d like her to have them.’ 45
- 8 ‘Don’t be ridiculous,’ said her grandmother, propelling Alice towards the door. ‘Are you running a business or what?’

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