



Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1120/01

Paper 1 Reading

May/June 2025

INSERT

2 hours

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading passages.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Read **Text A** and answer **Question 1** and **Question 2** on the question paper.

Text A: *The elephant and the boy*

Jahan's job is to look after a young elephant that is being transported by ship to the Sultan's palace in Istanbul as a gift for the Sultan.

- 1 The boy named Jahan had barely completed twelve years of his life when he saw Istanbul for the very first time. Skinny, sunburned and restless as a fish in midstream, he was rather short for his age. As if to make up for his height, a thatch of black hair grew upwards and perched on his head like a creature with a life of its own and was the first thing people saw when they looked at him. 5
- 2 After weeks of sailing in the open sea, catching sight of the city in the mist had a strange effect on Jahan's imagination. He walked across the deck to the front of the ship and ignoring the wind on his face, he peered intently ahead at the line where the water lapped against the shore, a hazy strip of grey. The longer Jahan stared, the more the land seemed like an extension of the sea, a molten city perched on the tip of the waves, swaying, dizzying, ever changing. This was his earliest impression of Istanbul. Jahan sensed how one could fall under its spell. 10
- 3 And then, slowly, the mist dissolved, as though someone had pulled back a curtain. The vast city, now clearly defined, opened up before him.
- 4 Jahan hurried back below deck. The elephant, Chota, was in a crate, downcast and listless. 'You've made it, my friend! We're here.' This last word Jahan uttered with a slight quaver, since he didn't yet know what kind of a place 'here' was, but whatever awaited the animal in this new kingdom couldn't be worse than the voyage they had just endured. 15
- 5 Chota was sitting so still that for a moment Jahan feared the elephant's heart had stopped beating. Detecting Chota's soft, ragged breathing upon approaching him, Jahan felt a small relief. The brightness, however, had gone from the beast's eyes. The boy splashed water on Chota's swollen trunk, uneasy about yet again using seawater which left salty marks all over his skin that must have prickled. 'When we get to the palace, I'll wash you with fresh water,' Jahan promised. 'They will adore you there, you'll see.' Then, as another possibility came to mind, he added, 'If it turns out they're not kind, you can run away. I'll come with you.' 20 25
- 6 Five sailors were assigned the task of getting the elephant out of the ship from below deck. Eyeing the animal with disdain, they tied ropes around him and pulled with all their strength. Chota refused to move. Jahan watched the men toil, his anxiety growing. After much deliberation, it was decided not to force the elephant out but to winch the crate up with him inside it. The doors to the space below deck were opened, and ropes were tied to the crate. When they were ready, the men pulled in unison, their cheeks puffed with exertion. The crate levitated bit by bit, then stopped – Chota, visible through the gaps in the crate, dangling in the air like some mythical half-bird, half-bull creature. The sailors pushed and yanked and hoisted, ultimately managing to thrust the crate on to a cart pulled by a dozen horses. Jahan scampered back and forth, trying to lend a hand but not knowing quite how, only just scrambling on board the cart in time as it left for the palace. 30 35
- 7 They reached the Palace Gate under the stern gaze of the guards who showed no interest in elephants or boys who would become famous one day. All Jahan glimpsed that first night were the massive walls, a mammoth door with iron studs, a courtyard so vast it could have swallowed the world, and more walls. It occurred to him that you could live in a palace all your life but never see much of it. 40

- 8 They were taken to a barn with an earthen floor and lofty ceiling – Chota’s new airy home. Inside was a sullen fellow of an age that was impossible to determine who glared at Jahan, clearly blaming him for the animal’s condition. The boy felt small and ashamed. Taras examined Chota’s mouth, eyes and trunk. Jahan lowered his gaze, uncomfortably aware that Chota was on the brink of collapse. Taras had magical fingers that healed animals, though were of no use when it came to human diseases. Deftly, gingerly, he applied a foul-smelling lotion to Chota’s trunk, wrapping it with sacking full of crushed leaves and fragrant oil. Not knowing how else to help, the boy brought the bucket of fresh clear water as instructed, placing it next to piles of apples, cabbages and hay – a banquet. Jealousy gnawed at the boy’s heart. He was torn between wishing, with all his being, for this man to make the elephant better, and dreading that once back on his feet the animal would love the healer more than he loved him. 45 50
- 9 In the weeks that followed, Chota recovered slowly, regaining his weight, to look resplendent in his new saddlecloth – a golden blanket of heavy brocades. Jahan offered him handfuls of sweet almonds, which he always carried ready in his sash, smiling as Chota popped the nuts into his mouth with a swing of his trunk. 55

Read **Text B** and answer **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text B: Local residents against plans for city zoo

- 1 Local residents fighting to stop the closure of a city centre zoo say they are still confident they can force bosses at the famous tourist attraction to change their minds.
- 2 The residents are challenging plans to close the existing zoo – established over 130 years ago – and move it to a new rural location over 40 km and two bus rides away. Funds for the move will be raised by selling off the historic zoo site for building development – something protesters living nearby are furious about. ‘Can you imagine the disruption of all that construction work?’ asks longtime local resident Mo Gurley. ‘There are plans to build 220 apartments! And offices – who even needs those? It’s so sad. I remember visiting that zoo as a child and as a parent taking my own children there too.’ 5
- 3 Last month, in a bid to calm fears that new generations of city youngsters would miss out on seeing rare and endangered wild animals up close, the zoo released computer-generated images of plans for the new visitor attraction, ‘Project Planet’. “Project Planet” – our virtual reality zoo and wild area – will still feature some of the older zoo residents, including the black-eyed lemurs, in their new, far larger enclosures,’ explains the zoo’s director Benjamin Bentley. He confirms, however, that the lions and tigers, some of the more popular animals, will be sold to other zoos. 10 15
- 4 ‘And we’re excited about our collaboration with innovative design media companies and renowned conservationists. Most notably, we have worked with animal welfare campaigner, conservationist and documentary maker, Lucy Graves, to develop 4D documentary films and interactive displays. These aim to show the role of zoos in the bigger world picture,’ adds Bentley. ‘We’re also delighted that from next year there will be a free direct bus service from the city.’ 20
- 5 Of course, opinions on zoos are often divided and controversial: some say that zoos do important research, playing a part in raising awareness to protect at-risk species and habitats; others find that claim less convincing. The plan to close the traditional zoo has been met with mixed reactions from environmental campaigners and conservationists. They are pleased to see the focus moving from entertaining to educating but are worried about the departure of some of the big cats to other zoos. There’s a responsibility to keep these animals safe and stress free – transporting them over long distances to other zoos is a concern. 25 30
- 6 Meanwhile, employees working for the zoo say there is growing anxiety, and even anger, at the potential loss of jobs and the way the plans are being decided. ‘It is unthinkable that this beautiful, iconic place, loved by generations of city dwellers, could be abandoned with no public consultation,’ says one employee who asks not to be named. ‘The reality is that only a tiny percentage of the animals will be able to move to the new site. There’s much less land available for them than bosses are suggesting and apparently parking will be restricted, so even if people wanted to drive all that way to visit, they wouldn’t be able to.’ 35
- 7 Benjamin Bentley is not backing down. ‘We’ve worked closely with conservationists to develop our species survival plan so that we can really focus our resources on animals that most need our help, maximising the impact we can make in the future,’ he insists. 40

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