

Queen's College
Mock Examination 2021-22
English Language I
Reading

Secondary 6
Class: _____
Class Number: _____

Date: 10 February 2022
Time: 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Maximum Mark: 60

Reading Passages Booklet

Instructions:

1. Write your Class and Class Number in the spaces provided.
2. Attempt ALL questions.
3. The reading passages are in a separate booklet. Write your answers clearly and neatly in the spaces provided in this Question-Answer Book. You are advised to use a pen to write your answers.
4. For multiple-choice questions, you are advised to blacken the appropriate circle with a pencil so that wrong marks can be completely erased with a clean rubber. Mark only ONE answer to each question. Two or more answers will score NO MARKS.

PART A

Read Text 1 and answer questions 1-23 in the Question-Answer Book for Part A. (42 marks)

How Lego conquered the world

5	<p>[1] You imagine that the headquarters of the biggest toy company in the world, whose products are sold in more than 140 countries, would be a serious skyscraper in a bustling capital city. The reality, however, is quite the opposite. Located in the unassuming town of Billund, Denmark, the newly redesigned building is the very essence of sleek, modern Scandinavian style. At every turn, there are playful nods to Lego, from the interlocking block shapes and bright primary colours of the building itself, to the Lego sculptures inside, and the personalised Lego mini-figures handed out instead of business cards by smiling employees.</p>
10	<p>[2] ‘We’ve always said that Lego is more than a toy,’ says Jatte Orduna, head of the Lego design team. ‘It’s a type of learning that uses both halves of the brain – structure and creativity.’ The design studio – the company employs around 180 designers in Billund – is very much off-limits; they’re working on top-secret products that will hit the shelves in two or three years’ time. Instead, Orduna takes us around Lego House, a visitor centre located just a few streets from the headquarters, which has an extensive exhibition devoted to Lego through the years that reveals just how much the toy has changed (as well as how much it hasn’t – its first bricks still fit with the pieces produced today). In the basement is an archive of every box since the early 1970s. ‘You get people crying here,’ says Orduna. ‘They see the set they had as a child, or that they wanted.’ Indeed, I spot a grey-haired granny, a precursor to the mini-figure that I owned and loved.</p>
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20	<p>[3] The early sets were simple, consisting mainly of houses. Then the franchises poured in: <i>Star Wars</i>, <i>Harry Potter</i>, <i>The Hobbit</i>. One of the criticisms often lobbed at Lego is that the vast majority of today’s sets encourage building of a certain structure – be it the <i>Star Wars</i> Millennium Falcon or <i>The Simpsons</i> family house – with little opportunity for more creative play. Lego, of course, doesn’t see it like that. ‘When you’re building something in particular, the child feels proud to have achieved it. But then we encourage the child to break it apart and make up something else using their imagination,’ says Orduna.</p>
25	<p>[4] Another criticism was of Lego’s perceived attitude towards girls. In 2014, a letter written by seven-year-old Charlotte Benjamin went viral. ‘I love my Lego,’ she wrote, ‘but I don’t like that there are more Lego boy people and barely any Lego girls.’ She had a point. At that time, 86 percent of mini-figures – the tiny characters introduced to encourage role play – were male. When Friends – the range targeted at girls – launched in 2012, its pink-plastic stereotyping was met with howls of dismay from adult women. As Charlotte said, ‘All the girls did was sit at home, go to the beach and shop and they had no jobs, but the boys went on adventures, worked, saved people and even swam with sharks.’</p>
30	<p>[5] Yet Friends continues to sell by the bucket-load. Little girls clearly love the model pet salons and juice bars, while Olivia’s House, one of the main character’s homes, remains a bestseller. Friends is Lego’s most extensive research project to date. The company spoke to 3,500 girls – and their mothers – and discovered that girls prefer figures to look more realistic so that they can identify with them, as opposed to the traditional blocky mini-figure. ‘We also found that girls like details – things they can change around a lot, and things they have seen on TV, such as exotic destinations,’ says Orduna. ‘I know boys play with Friends, too, until they’re five. Then there’s a separation between the sexes.</p>
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40 45	<p>[6] The great Lego gender imbalance started to change, though, with the release of the first Lego film, <i>The Lego Movie</i>. It tells the charming tale of an ordinary mini-figure mistaken for a ‘master builder’ who has to save the universe. But the star of the piece – and the coolest character – is a girl. ‘Wyldstyle is the real hero in this movie,’ agrees Matthew Ashton, vice-president of design and an executive producer of the film. Ashton and his design colleague Michael Fuller (both of whom are British – one of 35 nationalities working at Lego in Billund) worked closely with the Hollywood studio. Everyone involved wanted to make the film appear authentic, from the restricted movements of the mini-figures – as if an invisible child’s hand is guiding the action – to the fingerprints on the bricks. ‘The message was particularly important for us,’ says Fuller. ‘Every time the characters get into trouble, a creative building solution solves their problem.’</p>
50	<p>[7] To maintain the quality championed by Ole Kirk Christiansen, founder of the company, Lego is constantly doing research with children. ‘We go into homes and watch children play behind two-way mirrors,’ says Ashton. ‘And we discover things we would never have thought of – such as children being so detail-focused.’ Employees put on gloves to play with the bricks of better understand the motor skills of a five-year-old; and the company works with academics from the University of Cambridge and MIT on childhood development. Play has changed over the years. ‘Children today don’t have as much free time as they used to – due to sports and homework,’ says Orduna. ‘They have a schedule. They’re not allowed to be bored.’</p>
55 60	<p>[8] Lego (the word comes from the Danish phrase <i>leg godt</i>, meaning ‘play well’) has its adult fans, too, who make up around 5 percent of its sales. These include David Beckham, who recently revealed that he spends his evenings constructing grand edifices like Tower Bridge and the Taj Mahal. The appeal is partly nostalgia, partly escapism. ‘People want their moment away from a computer and want a creative and tangible experience,’ says Jamie Bernard, a design manager who oversees the Lego Creator series aimed at the adult market.</p>
65	<p>[9] Bernard is a true Lego geek. ‘Before I got this job, every night I’d come home and build. Then one day I was in a toy store and there were all these other adults. I asked the assistant who they were and was told they’re the local Lego club. I joined on the spot! Before the Internet, it was hard to find out about other fans.’ Bernard visits fan events around the world – ‘They’re doctors, lawyers, lots of architects and teachers’ – and witnesses some amazing achievements, from life-size dinosaurs to the Brick Testament, which features 2,000 scenes from the Bible. And no, they’re not all men. One of the best builders is Alice Finch, who has created a sprawling Hogwarts Castle out of 400,000 bricks. ‘She’s a rock star when she turns up to these events,’ says Bernard.</p>
70	<p>[10] The company remains tight-lipped about its product plans for the future – although staff will admit that fans are pushing for more motorised and robotics options. There are plans to continue expanding in China, too. The possibilities are endless – as indeed are the possibilities with Lego itself. As Bernard says Think of the greatest works of literature, and they ‘re made up of just 26 letters. Lego has 9,000-plus elements – just imagine what that allows you to do.’</p>

Part B

Read Texts 2–4 and answer questions 24 – 43 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B. (42 marks)

Text 2

Title: _____

1 [1] The enterprise of sending civilians into space didn't exactly get off to an auspicious start, when, in 1986, the high-school teacher Christa McAuliffe perished in the tragic explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*, along with her six crewmates. Understandably, this not only spelt the end for NASA's Teacher in Space Project, in which McAuliffe was the first and last participant, 5 but it also resulted in NASA effectively banning civilians from all future space flights.

[2] However, where there is a will—not to mention the potential for a hefty profit—there is a way. Thus, in 2001, 15 years after the *Challenger* disaster, Russia's severely cash-strapped space programme stepped up to the plate, selling a seat on a Soyuz rocket bound for the International Space Station to the person who was to become the very first space tourist: the American entrepreneur Dennis Tito. Tito, who'd been dreaming about going to space ever since he saw Yuri Gagarin being launched into orbit in 1961, described his experience as 'eight days of euphoria'. And how much did this euphoric week set him back? A cool US\$20 million—a ticket price decidedly out of reach for even the most privileged high-school teacher.

15 [3] In the 20 years that followed that inaugural voyage, only a handful of other non-professionals went to space, all uber wealthy and all on board a Soyuz rocket of their very own, but that number looks set to go into the stratosphere, both figuratively and literally, now that the private sector has well and truly entered the space race. Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin have both recently launched extremely well-heeled tourists into space, the latter infamously at a cost of US\$28 million to an astronaut wannabe who couldn't even make 20 the trip, citing a 'scheduling conflict' as the reason—rather mindboggling given the astronomical outlay and the fact that the flight was a mere 11 minutes long.

[4] Hot on the heels of his billionaire brethren is Tesla CEO Elon Musk, whose aerospace company SpaceX has perhaps the most ambitious plans of all the private-sector actors, including for an eventual human colonization of Mars. Given what we've seen so far of this new space 25 race, it's not hard to guess who these colonizers will be ...

Text 3

Title: _____

1 [1] Recent highly publicized space launches by private companies for the exclusive benefit of the ultra-wealthy have sparked a debate as to whether space tourism will represent another giant leap for all mankind, or merely a small—if enormously expensive—step for a highly select few members of our species. While I'm a lifelong proponent of space exploration, I regret to say that 5 I hold firmly to the latter position, for two main reasons.

[2] First, as hinted at already, I take issue with the egregious inequality inherently embodied in the very concept of space tourism. Tickets for space flights significantly shorter in duration than the average commute are currently selling for millions, or even tens of millions, of US dollars. And while it's likely that these fares will eventually come down, as happened with terrestrial 10 commercial flights, they will nevertheless remain forever out of the reach of the vast majority of the people on this planet.

[3] I fret over the impact of this space elitism on the general public's enthusiasm for more legitimate exploration of the cosmos. When Neil Armstrong took his first step onto the surface of the moon, it was a genuine cause for celebration all over the world. When the first billionaire 15 follows in his footsteps, however, I suspect the event will engender mostly resentment, followed

by a global disillusionment with the idea of space travel as a force for the betterment of humankind.

20 [4] Second, with climate change already wreaking havoc on our planet, it's hardly in our best interest as a species to start engaging in an activity that will pollute our atmosphere even further. The environmental impact of space travel has so far been negligible, in the grand scheme of things, but that is only because the launches have been few and far between.

25 [5] According to Virgin Galactic's own figures, the carbon emissions per passenger mile of their inaugural voyage were 60 times higher than those of a regular business-class flight. Considering that the long-term goal of Virgin Galactic and its competitors is to launch paying customers into space several times a day, space tourism clearly comes at much too high a cost not only to those making the trip but also to those of us staying behind on terra firma. The effects of climate change are already expected to disproportionately impact the less fortunate. The idea that we're now setting the stage for these people to be hit even harder just so that the super-wealthy can post space selfies to their Instagram accounts is nothing short of outrageous.

30 [6] Until such time that space travel can be conducted in a way that is both egalitarian and environmentally sound, it needs to be the preserve of professionals who engage in it for scientifically meaningful purposes—not of rich people looking for a short thrill and bragging rights within their social circle.

Maria Choi, Tsuen Wan

Text 4

Title: _____

1 [1] Like your correspondent Maria Choi, I too have always been a fervent proponent of space exploration. It's for precisely this reason that I see the entry of the private sector into the space race as something to be lauded and inspired by, rather than as something to deride. And I say that knowing full well that I'm unlikely in the extreme ever to go to space myself.

5 [2] Because, clearly, and regardless of Elon Musk's dreams of turning mankind into an interplanetary species, very few people currently alive will have that opportunity. That might be unfair, but it's just the way life works. That said, the average person still has a much better chance of going to space by becoming sufficiently wealthy to buy a ticket than by becoming an astronaut, which is of course one of the most 'elite' professions on this planet (and off it).

10 [3] It's also worth keeping in mind that the further development of space tourism includes plans for regular space flights and even the construction of space hotels, all of which will require the hiring of a decidedly non-millionaire space workforce. So while a space *holiday* might be unattainable for the average person for the foreseeable future, space *travel* is certainly a more achievable dream now than it has ever been before.

15 [4] When it comes to the environment, it is of course essential that space travel be made as sustainable as is humanly possible. And while I admit that we may not be there just yet, the technology in this field has nevertheless improved by leaps and bounds since the private sector got involved, and will undoubtedly continue to do so at an ever-accelerating pace. These advancements will likely benefit not only space travellers but also the rest of the people on our planet, as has been the case with many of the innovations to come out of the space race so far.

25 [5] If, for the moment, only the wealthy are able to aim for the stars, then so be it. Virtually everyone who's ever travelled to space has raved upon returning about how awe-inspiring the experience was, and how it taught them about the importance of cherishing and protecting their own planet. And who better to learn this lesson than the most privileged and powerful people on earth?

Troy Fang, Ma On Shan

END OF READING PASSAGES

