
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1123/22

Paper 2 Reading

May/June 2015

INSERT

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 – Social Networking Sites

- 1 Social networking sites are a recent and, sometimes, controversial innovation. They enable people, by means of the internet, to get in touch with friends easily, without having to worry about interrupting them in the way that telephone calls might. People can keep in regular, even daily, contact with details of their friends' lives, such as the clothes they wear and the music they listen to, even sharing photos by way of illustration. The fact that messages can be posted on the site at any time of the day or night makes for almost instantaneous updates; every detail of a day's events – meals eaten, lessons attended – is there to be shared almost as it happens. Using such social networking sites is obviously much cheaper than long distance travel, and maintaining relationships with friends or family in faraway places becomes much easier, making the world seem a small place when, say, a friend goes to a foreign university to study or a daughter emigrates to take up a better job. 5 10
- 2 The internet can be accessed outside the home on smartphones, and on laptop or tablet computers, making social networking sites a useful way to utilise down time, which is time which might otherwise be wasted in, for example, the dentist's waiting room or on the bus. Because very many people can contact each other on the same site, social networking sites provide the opportunity to be introduced to new friends through existing contacts. In this way, these sites offer what is to some the attractive possibility of greatly increasing their circle of friends; why have one or two close friends when you can have hundreds? 15
- 3 Social networking sites have a role to play in the world of work too. In certain businesses and professions, employees rely on them to keep themselves up to date with the latest developments in their field. People with no jobs, or wanting new or better ones, do not have to wait for advertisements to appear in newspapers; they can be pro-active and advertise themselves on such sites. A converse situation exists for employers, who are able to recruit the best potential employees by examining information about their background, experience and qualifications posted, and so make an informed choice which does not rely on interview skills alone. 20 25
- 4 However, more importantly, social networking sites have many critics who say that relationships formed through them, unlike face-to-face friendships, are too impersonal to be described as real friendships. They argue that it is all very well to have a hundred cyber friends, but such a number of contacts devalues true friendship, which implies a certain exclusivity. Certainly, to describe a hundred people as your 'best' friends is absolute nonsense. Real meetings with friends for coffee or lunch might be trivialised; if your friend has read on screen every detail of your life that week, and she yours, what are you going to talk about? Information overload is another drawback of these sites, where readers are bombarded with intimate facts which might be best left unsaid because they are inappropriate. In fact, most information posted is utterly boring. 30 35
- 5 The constant desire to know what their contacts are doing leads networking site users to become almost addicted to checking for updates. And what could be more insulting than to be out with a friend who makes it clear that the friend he is contacting online is far more interesting than you are? People often cannot relax in the company of others because there is a persistent niggle about what their social networking contacts might be doing; there is a blurring in the distinction between the real and the virtual worlds. Instead of enjoying a social occasion, people might be thinking about whether or not it would be worth posting later on a social networking site. 40
- 6 In the business and professional sphere, there is often pressure for instant responses from social networking sites, so that taking even a short holiday becomes unthinkable. The fact that trivial information about people is posted on such sites might have repercussions in the world of work; seeing you having fun at a party might be amusing to your contacts, but your boss might not find it as charming as you do. Stricter regulation of social networking sites is long overdue. 45 50

Passage 2 – Monica

- 1 I could not decide whether or not Monica's odd behaviour was caused by old age. Obvious as that might have been, I could not avoid a suspicion: might it be caused by no more than her plan to get her own way – an old lady's prerogative? Without doubt she was highly intelligent and well-informed, but it was often hard to cope with the strands of her conversation because of the way in which memory and forgetfulness crossed and re-crossed each other. Who was the real Monica? I could not tell. 5
- 2 No doubt she had always been eccentric. For example, she would cross roads without so much as glancing to left or right. Drivers would slam on their brakes, tyres would scream, lorries would come to a shuddering halt, while this elderly lady meandered across the busiest roads in town. Although her idiosyncrasies must always have been there, perhaps they had become more accentuated as she became older. I remember well the occasion when my friend Cynthia and I took her to a concert. Cynthia and I had a night off work and thought how nice it would be to take Monica. Never again! 10
- 3 To begin with, she insisted on taking her knitting. Neither Cynthia nor I remonstrated with her as we should have done, but that was only with the wisdom of hindsight. Knitting during a concert is not common; in fact I had never seen anyone do it. We entered the village hall, which was almost full, and Monica wanted to sit in the front row. Like a duchess she sailed down the central aisle, and sat down directly opposite the chair placed in readiness for the pianist, while we sat on either side of her. Everyone knew Monica, and from the outset I felt conspicuous and mortified. 15 20
- 4 Monica grumbled as she tried to adjust her bony bottom to the wooden chair. Attendants ran hither and thither poking into cupboards, but with no luck: the paraphernalia of the hall included everything but cushions. Soon the musicians arrived and the concert was about to begin. 'I think the pianist made her dress out of old curtains,' said Monica. The pianist glared at her, offended and embarrassed. Monica fidgeted beside me, trying to get comfortable. Her stage whisper, which at best could penetrate a railway station at rush hour, had reached every corner of the hall. I was squirming, trying in vain to keep calm. The concert started and Monica, comfortable at last, took out her knitting. 25
- 5 Now, knitting is not generally considered to be a noisy occupation. I had often seen Monica knitting elsewhere but, when she dropped her knitting needles, as she often did, it had never caused a problem. But on this occasion the atmosphere in the room was different. Each time the knitting needles fell they clattered on to the wooden floor: it was absolute mayhem. Cynthia or I had to retrieve them, depending on which side they dropped. The ball of wool fell and rolled under several chairs. Someone about four chairs back kicked it back towards her, but the trailing end of the wool caught round a chair leg and pulled tight, thus yanking the needles out of Monica's hands. 'Be careful,' she hissed, just as the pianist, her eyes closed in rapture, was approaching a particularly difficult section of music. She opened her eyes sharply, simultaneously hitting a wrong note. 30 35
- 6 The ball of wool rolled backwards again and this time got tangled round the feet of someone sitting behind who, attempting to return it to Monica, inadvertently caused another knitting needle to drop to the floor. An attendant came forward and asked Monica to be quiet. 'What did you say?' she asked loudly, as though she were deaf – which she wasn't. I was grinding my teeth in fury and plotting murder in my heart. But worse was to come. As soon as the first piece of music finished, Monica decided to leave. With knitting needles dropping all around her, and in full view of the audience, she swept up the central aisle towards the door. Tumultuous applause broke out from the audience, stamping, cheering, whistling – no musicians could have asked for a greater ovation. But we knew that the applause was not for the musicians or their music. They bowed stiffly, their faces set in grim smiles. At that point, I made up my mind that her apparent senility was no more than a ruse designed for her own delight. 40 45

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