

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER 1

PART B2

Reading Passages

8:30 am – 10:00 am (1½ hours)
(for both Parts A and B)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Refer to the General Instructions on Page 1 of the Reading Passages booklet for Part A.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PART B2

- (1) The Question-Answer Book for Part B2 is inserted in this Reading Passages booklet.
- (2) Candidates who choose Part B2 should attempt all questions in this part. Each question carries ONE mark unless otherwise stated.
- (3) Hand in only ONE Question-Answer Book for Part B, either B1 or B2, and fasten it with the Question-Answer Book for Part A using the green tag provided.

PART B2

Read Texts 5-6 and answer questions 46-71 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B2.

Text 5

Farmers Resort to Hand Pollination

5 [1] The story begins in central China, in an apple-growing region called Maoxian County, near Chengdu. In the mid-1990s, the bees that regularly showed up there every spring suddenly didn't. Apple farmers, obviously, need bees. Bees dust their way through blossoms, moving from flower to flower, pollinating, which helps produce apples in September. The farmers had to do something, and do it quickly. So they decided to replace bees with humans. They pollinated by hand.

10 [2] In 1997, Maoxian apple growers, using brushes made from chopsticks and chicken feathers, went from blossom to blossom – just as bees do, to spread pollen. Hired hands worked full shifts, moving up the hillsides as each orchard hit blossom-time. News stories were written about this, with the obvious conservation moral: see, biologists said, this is what happens when we don't take care of the little creatures like the pollinators. When they disappear, the work they did for free suddenly becomes expensive. That was the moral of this story – until some economists took a second look.

The Economists' Version of the Bee Story

15 [3] The economists arranged interviews in Maoxian County with the local farmers – first early in the 2000s, and again in 2011. What they learned was a shocker. First, the apple farmers reported that apple production was not hurt by the absence of bees. In fact, the apple harvest was 30 to 40 percent greater when humans did the pollinating. Human pollinators were better at getting to every blossom, performed cross-pollination more efficiently, and could work in windy, rainy weather.

20 [4] Bees, you should know, are less dependable. They don't like working when it's wet, they sleep a lot and they don't like the cold. The economists seemed to turn the moral of this story on its head. They argued that destroying and replacing the free gifts of nature could be an economic benefit.

[5] Woah! Well, you can imagine what the biologists must have thought. The economists said there are some critters we humans don't really need to have around to lead a good life. So let's not get hung up on biological diversity, because we can live fairly well – maybe even be better off – in a less diverse, biologically shrunken world.

25 The 'Real' Lesson of the China Bee Story

[6] Even though people outperformed bees in apple orchards, that should not argue for their elimination. On the contrary, the conservationists said, the Maoxian case study illustrated the danger of allowing the logic of the market to drive conservation policy. Those missing bees weren't valuable in Maoxian County, but that doesn't mean they don't have value. These decisions are much more complex.

Text 6

Sweetness and Light

[1] Willie Robson drives his lorry up to his beehives on the heather moor at Hangwell Law in the north of England. Beekeepers have brought their hives onto these starkly beautiful moors for at least a millennium, and some still do. Heather honey, with its unique gel-like texture and room-filling fragrance, is one of the most prized in the world. In the pot, it glows fox-red, often beaded with little silver bubbles.

[2] Willie takes off his hairy tweed cap and kits up in his bee-suit. Honey bees left alone do not sting: stinging might harm the intruder but it also kills the bee. The barbed lancets dig into the skin, pump poison into human flesh, and then cannot withdraw. Instead, the sting rips the centre from the bee's abdomen so the insect straggles towards death, its insides ripped out, pink and pulsing. But bees will die to protect the hive, just as they will fly ceaselessly to collect nectar and pollen so the hive's colony can live.

[3] The armour of the apiarist is a bee-suit. Willie has a sort of khaki-green nylon flying suit, which zips across the body and then across the neck to close up the net-fronted hood. The legs are tucked into wellies and the arms into gloves, elasticated at the wrists. In his suit, he walks around like a spaceman. Boots and gloves restrict some movement, but he goes slow-mo for another reason. 'You go with a quiet tread, or all hell breaks loose,' he says. 'It's a matter of weighing up the form. If trouble starts, you bail out.'

[4] After finding a piece of hessian sacking among the bric-a-brac on the back of the lorry, Willie lights the cloth with a match and puts it in a smoker formed like a pair of miniature bellows. The smoke can help lull the bees. They think there is an emergency, eat their fill of honey as if ready for flight and become less aggressive, perhaps because less able to bend and sting. Willie takes the top off the first hive. Pffffff, pffffff, pffffff, goes the smoke. After a short pause, he heaves off the top box. Immediately, its weight reveals the exact extent of the haul. Honey is half as heavy again as water and a full box tells on your muscles. Beekeeping, in some aspects, is like fishing: some years you get next-to-nothing, in others you crop gold. This year everything worked, both skill and luck came together, and it is boom time; the weather was good over the year. Willie and his family have kept bees here for over fifty years, and he is now reaping the rewards of knowing his turf and keeping bees that are well adapted to their environment. This trip to Hangwell Law comes after a run of collecting a bumper harvest of heather honeycomb in ten days. It does not happen every year, or even often. Some years he gets nothing at all. But today he gets 2,500 pounds of honey. Such is the drama of harvest.

[5] The bees, in the meantime, go purposefully berserk. Zinging, small, aggressive atoms, gold in the late afternoon sun, attack again and again from different angles, trying to find a way into the bee-suit. Their persistence is unrelenting. Bees in the wild can burrow into the fur of an attacking bear, to sting the animal where it will hurt them hopping mad. In the same way, they seek the vulnerable chink in the beekeeper's second skin. A hole in the finger-tip of a glove, a stray stitch on the seam, will not go unpunished. You feel like a character within a video game, surrounded by flying attackers. The bee-suit is slightly claustrophobic, limiting your vision but not the sounds, nor the sudden sight of bees flying onto the net visor, inches from your eyes. Willie says the bees can get to people mentally. 'They get you on the shake,' he says. 'They undermine your confidence and go dab, dab, dab.' When a bee stings, a banana-like odour spreads in the air, attracting others to sting the same spot, like sharks drawn to blood pulsing through water.

[6] Some beekeepers lose bees by carelessly crushing them under boxes as they work under the pressure of time and the bee-blitz. Willie knows that bees matter more than honey. He brushes insects off each box with gentle sweeps of bracken and the triumph he feels at the haul is as much about the bees as anything else. Man makes use of bees but only by respecting their nature.

END OF READING PASSAGES

Sources of materials used in this paper will be acknowledged in the booklet *HKDSE Question Papers* published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority at a later stage.