

Comprehension Level 8

SECTION A

Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–1(e)** on the question paper.

Text A

Paper is back: why ‘real’ books are on the rebound

Digital books (also called e-books) are electronic versions of books designed to be read on a tablet or screen (e-reader).

The latest numbers for book sales are reported to be surprising and encouraging. For the first time since the invasion of their newest enemies, e-books and e-readers, real books are fighting back.

The result of the battle looks more like co-existence than conquest. For now.

Publishers, tracking what readers are buying, found the number of paper books sold went up 2.4 per cent last year, in all types of bookstores. At the same time, e-books have hit a plateau.

Apparently, print books are selling better than they have since sales of e-books exploded in 2010. The paper book hit rock bottom in 2012, but has since fought back in lucrative categories such as children’s books. Students, apparently, are rediscovering paper.

Several recent studies find a strong preference for printed textbooks, notably among those in colleges and universities who have tried both types. In one survey, 57 per cent preferred print; only 21 per cent preferred an e-textbook.

Multiple studies find that we pitiful humans read differently when given the same text on the screen of a tablet and on a printed page: less of what we read electronically sticks in our minds. Many e-books aimed at kids are designed to include animations, games and other technological temptations. On tablets, adults find navigating the book less natural and can be distracted by notifications of incoming email and social media.

Some people still like the feel, even the smell, of a book. There is also brilliant, large cover art and the ever-present reminder that you own a book: it’s there on your shelf.

The near-term future won’t be ‘paper-or,’ but ‘paper-and pixels’¹: until and unless the two become indistinguishable to the reader in terms of factors, features and feel.

1 *pixels*: small dots which are combined to form an image or text on an electronic screen

Read **Text A, Paper is back: why ‘real’ books are on the rebound**, in the insert and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on this question paper.

Question 1

(a) Give **two** examples of enemies of real books according to the text.

(1)

(b) **Using your own words**, explain what the text means by:

(i) 'real books are fighting back.' (lines 2–3):

(2)

(ii) 'more like co-existence than conquest.' (line 4):

(2)

(c) **Re-read paragraph 3 ('Publishers ... plateau.').**

Give **two** reasons why the rise in the number of paper books sold was significant.

(2)

(d) **Re-read paragraphs 4 and 5 ('Apparently, print books ... media.').**

(i) Identify **two** reasons why sellers of e-books might be worried about those categories where print book sales have increased since 2012.

(2)

(ii) Explain why reading e-books may be less efficient than reading real books, according to the text.

(3)

(e) **Re-read paragraphs 6 and 7 ('Some people ... feel.').**

Using your own words, explain why people are unlikely to give up real books altogether in favour of e-books.

(3)

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B**The rebirth of the bookshop**

This article explains how bookshops have changed in recent years.

Time was when bookshops appealed for being old-world and fusty with their confusing layouts, musty smells and eccentric proprietors. Now a new breed of bookshops is emerging. Luminous and spacious – the very opposite of the traditional bookstore.

Changing tastes in architecture and interior design are partly responsible for this trend, but so, too, are economics and new book-buying habits. Fierce competition from online retailers, cut-price supermarkets and e-books has seen the market for physical paper books dwindle, causing many bookshops to close, but booksellers are fighting back.

One of their tactics is to hire cutting-edge architects to design shops with an alluring, contemporary feel to help attract customers day and night.

A case in point is Foyles bookshop, London, once famous for its quaintly chaotic warren of rooms with books piled up everywhere – not just on shelves but in nooks under tables. Last June, however, the mammoth store relocated. Interviewed recently, Foyles' chief executive, Sam Husain, said that one reason why the shop moved was that its original layout was old-fashioned – 'higgledy piggledy and inefficient'. By contrast, the new shop boasts 6.4 kilometres of orderly bookshelves and stocks over 200,000 titles. Its interior is clean-lined, minimalist and easy to navigate, geared to convenience in an age when customers are used to snapping up goods online at lightning speed. Customers can also use an in-store mobile search tool to see if the book is in stock and, if so, where. With the aid of an interactive map, the book can be located.

Another survival tactic for this new generation of bookshops is to operate as a cultural centre, not just a bookstore. To use that retail cliché, shops today must offer an 'experience' – not just a 'shopportunity' – if they are to succeed. According to retail expert Matthew Brown: 'Shops have never been about buying stuff – we can get that online. We expect hospitality and service.'

Worldwide there's an emergence of a new wave of bookstores – businesses which have diversified their product ranges, have increased their scope. Bookstores like Livraria Cultura in São Paulo also sell electronics, DVDs, toys and stationery, and they function as event and meeting spaces for book and product launches. Livraria Cultura boasts an exhibition space, conference area and garden café. It's as much a see-and-be-seen hangout as a bookshop. White bookshelves incorporating LEDs, laminate surfaces and glass handrails on the staircases all contribute to the shop's luminous, transparent feel. The shop also has two basement levels, with the lower one devoted to children's books, and featuring a funky, rainbow-striped ramp providing access to shelves, and beanbags to recline on and read.

In short, bookshops are turning over a new leaf as they battle to survive in the internet age.

Read **Text B, *The rebirth of the bookshop***, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on this question paper.

Question 1(f)

According to Text B, how and why have bookshops had to change to attract customers?

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form) and **use your own words** as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

(15)

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–2(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C

Mr Penumbra's 24-hour bookstore

The narrator, Clay, is young and talented, but struggling to find a new job. After months of searching, including walking the streets each day looking for advertisements in shop windows, he finds just one job to apply for.

Lost in the shadows of the shelves, I almost fall off the ladder. I'm exactly halfway up. The floor of the bookstore is far below, the surface of a planet I've left behind. The tops of the shelves loom high above. It's dark up there – books are huddled together, not letting any light through. The air might be thinner, too. I think I see a bat. I'm holding on for dear life, one hand on the ladder, the other on a shelf, fingers pressed white.

Many of the books have the look of antiquity – cracked leather, gold-leaf titles; others are freshly bound with bright crisp covers. All are in such excellent condition that they might as well be new.

My eyes search the spines. I spot it - the book I've been sent up for.

But wait – let me explain how I got here:

I was unemployed, a result of the great food-chain contraction sweeping through the country, leaving bankrupt burger chains and shuttered sushi empires in its wake.

The job I'd lost was at the corporate headquarters of a very new company. It wrote software to design and bake the perfect burger bun: smooth toasted skin, soft interior. It was my first job out of art school. I started as a designer, making marketing materials to explain and promote this tasty treat: menus, diagrams and posters for store windows.

There was lots to do: first, redesigning the company's logo, then, the website. I was the company's voice on social media, attracting followers with a mix of fast-food trivia and digital coupons.

Then the economy nose-dived. It turns out that in a recession, people want good old-fashioned food, not smooth alien-spaceship snacks. I was jobless.

Next to the bus stop I'd seen the handwritten advertisement:

**MR PENUMBRA'S 24-HOUR BOOKSTORE
HELP WANTED
LATE SHIFT**

I pushed the bookstore's heavy wooden door, making a bell tinkle brightly, and stepped slowly through.

Inside: imagine the shape and volume of a normal bookstore turned on its side. This place was absurdly narrow and dizzyingly tall. The shelves went all the way up, fading smoothly into the shadows as if they might just go on forever. Shelves were packed so close together it felt like I was standing at the border of a forest – an old Transylvanian forest, full of wolves, witches and dagger-wielding bandits all waiting just beyond moonlight's reach. There were ladders that clung to the shelves and rolled side to side, stretching up ominously into the gloom. I stuck to the front half of the store, where bright midday light pressed in.

'Hello there,' a quiet voice called from within. A figure emerged – a man, tall and skinny, in a light blue cardigan. He tottered as he walked, running a wrinkled hand along the shelves for support. He was very old.

He nodded at me. 'What do you seek in these shelves?'

That was a good line; for some reason, it made me feel comfortable.

'I'm looking for a job.'

Mr Penumbra blinked, then nodded and tottered over to the desk beside the front door. It was a massive block of dark-whorled wood, a solid fortress on the forest edge.

‘Employment.’ Penumbra nodded again. ‘Have you ever worked at a bookstore?’

‘Well ...’ I said.

‘No matter,’ Penumbra said. ‘Tell me about a book you love.’ I knew my answer immediately. No competition.

I told him, ‘The Dragon-Song chronicles.’

Penumbra smiled. ‘Good ... very good,’ he said, then squinted at me. His gaze went up and down. ‘But can you climb a ladder?’

And that’s how I find myself on this ladder, up on the third ‘floor’ of Penumbra’s Bookstore. The book I’ve been sent up to retrieve is over an arm-length to my left. Obviously, I should return to the floor and scoot the ladder over. But down below, Penumbra is shouting, ‘Lean across! Lean!’

And I really need this job...

Read **Text C, *Mr Penumbra’s 24-hour bookstore***, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** on this question paper.

Question 2

Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

(a)

(i) A lot of the books in the store seem to be from the ancient past.

(1)

(ii) The narrator was looking at the outside edges of the books to check what they were called.

(1)

(iii) The narrator used to work in the main office of a software company.

(1)

(iv) The narrator lost his job when the economy plunged dramatically downwards.

(1)

(b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:

I was unemployed, a result of the great food-chain contraction sweeping through the country, leaving bankrupt burger chains and shuttered sushi empires in its wake.

(i) contraction

(1)

(ii) sweeping

(1)

(iii) shuttered

(1)

(c) Use one example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests what the narrator thinks about the burger bun.

Use your own words in your explanation.

The job I'd lost was at the corporate headquarters of a very new company. It wrote software to design and bake the perfect burger bun: smooth toasted skin, soft interior. It was my first job out of art school. I started as a designer, making marketing materials to explain and promote this tasty treat: menus, diagrams and posters for store windows.

(3)

(d) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 12.

- Paragraph 1 begins 'Lost in the shadows ... ' and is about what Clay sees and feels as he climbs the ladder.
- Paragraph 12 begins 'Inside: imagine ... ' and describes the inside of the bookstore. Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose **three** examples of words or phrases from **each** paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

(15)

Re-read **Text C, Mr Penumbra's 24-hour bookstore**, and then answer **Question 3** on this question paper.

Question 3

Imagine you are Mr Penumbra. Clay has been working in your store now for over a year and has suggested ways to improve the bookshop and increase trade. You reflect on your thoughts and Clay's suggestions in your journal.

In your journal, you should:

- remember what exactly happened the day you first met Clay and your impressions of him
- reflect on the shop as it is now – what you like about it
- outline the suggestions Clay has made for how he could help improve the bookstore.

Write your journal entry.

Base your journal entry on what you have read in **Text C**, but be careful to use your own words.

Address each of the three bullet points.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

(25)

SECTION B

Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A

My week on powdered food

The writer explains their experience of a new powdered food product called Erfoo (Earth Food).

I've always found lunch annoying. It interrupts work. At the office, I resent the endless canteen queues; working from home, I object to the daily decision-making. Lunch fatigue troubled me so much that last month I decided I'd had enough. Erfoo (Earth Food) would be the solution to my problem. According to the advertisements, this self-proclaimed 'future of food for our planet' delivers 'everything your body needs'.

Coming in a minimalistic white pouch, the meal-replacement powder blends things like rice, peas and flaxseed. Add water, shake it up, and there's your lunch, dinner or breakfast, or all three. I ordered a week's supply, telling friends about my exciting discovery. Comments ranged from outraged to encouraging ('this makes a lot of sense'). My mum suggested I just ate a banana.

Apparently, Erfoo is favoured by developers – people who make websites and apps. It leaves them with more time to write code. I began fantasising about my new streamlined lifestyle: the extra work I would do, money I could save; maybe I'd lose weight. At the very least, I would feel a bit like an astronaut.

Sadly, my first gulp of Erfoo tastes revolting. There are lumps in the mixture – I've accidentally made it with room-temperature water. Chugging down the concoction, it strikes me that Erfoo doesn't just sound like the act of vomiting. I haven't enjoyed my liquid meal. Afterwards, I feel full, but not as if I've eaten.

When lunchtime next rolls around, I'm not hungry – the thought of Erfoo doesn't appeal. But if you're committed to the future of food, you know lunchtime is Erfoo o'clock.

This time I use chilled water, and a hand blender to eliminate lumps. I also add mocha flavouring. It occurs to me that I'm now, in fact, 'cooking'. This defeats the object of attempting to streamline the rigmarole of lunch, but at least my second Erfoo tastes more palatable.

As the week progresses, Erfoo becomes a habit, but by day seven a new joylessness has engulfed lunchtimes. I don't feel like a spaceman. I feel like an idiot. The Erfoo goes to the back of a kitchen cupboard and I eat a banana instead.

Read **Text A**, *My week on powdered food*, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on this question paper.

Question 1

Give **two** examples of what advertisements say about Erfoo (Earth Food), according to the text (paragraph 1).

(a)

(1)

(b) Using your own words, explain what the text means by:

(i) 'Lunch fatigue' (line 2):

(2)

(ii) 'meal-replacement powder' (line 6):

(2)

(c) Re-read paragraph 2 ('Coming in ... ate a banana.').

Give **two** examples of reactions which show that the writer's friends and family did not all think that switching to Erfoo was a good idea.

(2)

(d) Re-read paragraphs 3 and 4 ('Apparently, Erfoo is favoured by 'I've eaten.'').

(i) Identify **two** advantages the writer hoped switching to Erfoo would bring.

(2)

(ii) Explain what the writer did not like about Erfoo when they first tried it.

(2)

(e) Re-read paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 ('When lunchtime next rolls around ... banana instead.'). Using your own words, explain why the writer decides not to continue with Erfoo.

(3)

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B

A complete diet in a time-saving way?

The writer discusses some of the meal-replacement products such as protein shakes,

gels and powders that are currently available.

You can divide the world into two groups of people: those who drink protein shakes for breakfast and those who don't. I am firmly in the latter. It's fair to say that I'm not the target market for the lucrative line of trendy meal-replacement products all tapping into the idea that food is old-fashioned, inconvenient and boring. Apparently, there's now a more hi-tech, whizz-bang way of delivering the same nutrients more efficiently in the form of gels and powders. Yum.

I'm almost tempted to try the 'bespoke vitamin and mineral blend' described as 'an all-natural, vegan formula' – until I talk to Joanna Blythman, an investigative food writer. She scoffs at the idea. 'These products contain technologically altered hi-tech ingredients. You're talking about industrial food chemistry where basic ingredients are being mucked around with and transformed. There are these very intense chemical sweeteners in there. There's sucralose; that's something like 200 times sweeter than sugar. There's maltodextrin – that's another sweetener. And xylitol – that's another one.'

It's all just rubbish. Then there's 'pea protein', which sounds good, doesn't it, but what is it? Peas treated with a number of complex, chemical reactions to extract some sort of beige powder.'

It does raise the question of why you'd want to eat that.

On Twitter, I find a Swiss software developer who tells me he's been eating nothing else for weeks. 'I've just moved to the city and it's an effort to find time to cook each evening. I have a very healthy lifestyle and like eating healthily. I read about it and thought I'd give it a go.'

My running partner, Catherine, is exactly the type of person who drinks protein shakes for breakfast. At the end of our run she pulls out her 'lunch' from her rucksack. 'It's OK,' she says.

I'm not sure. We may want to maximise the health benefits of food, but the research simply isn't there yet, and what about the emotional, cultural and social well-being aspects of food? We're not robots: food is more than just fuel.

Appetite is such a fundamental drive. Food is part of what we do every day to make our lives a bit nicer. If you've had a bad day, it's just that little nice thing you can do for yourself. And these products just don't get that at all.

Read **Text B, A complete diet in a time-saving way?**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on this question paper.

Question 1f

According to Text B, what are the worries and concerns some people have about the new meal-replacement products now available?

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form) and **use your own words** as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

(15)

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C

The Clement Street Soup and Sourdough Restaurant

Lois has moved away from the place where she grew up to work for a company called General Dexterity (GD) founded by a young businessman called Andrei. The company designs industry-leading robot arms for factories and needs talented computer-programmers to find ways to improve what their robots can do.

Day one, Andrei gave a guided tour of the company's underground base – a cavernous construction, formerly a car park. Towering rows of robot arms sweeping, grasping and lifting lined the cement floor. Their plastic cladding was coloured sky-blue, their contours friendly and capable with just the faintest suggestion of biceps – gentle swells sporting GD's logo, a lightning bolt.

These were repetitive gestures, Andrei explained, currently executed by human muscles and minds. Repetition stifled human creativity, he said. Repetition belonged to robots.

I learned about the software I'd be working on and saw the founder's original prototype robot arm, a three-jointed limb taller than me. You could call, 'Arm, change task. Say hello!' and it would wave a wide, eager greeting – unlike my new workmates.

Orientation week ended on Friday night. Then my job began. Not the following Monday. The next morning. Saturday. I had the feeling of being sucked – floop – into a pneumatic tube.

Programmers at GD were almost exclusively young, distant, cold-eyed wraiths, in identical denim. They started early morning, working past midnight, in a hurry to be done, and rich. Each week the section manager, Peter, reminded us: We're on a mission to replace human labour – work harder.

Programmers often slept at the office. Some nights I'd lie there, staring blankly at the ceiling and the braids of fibre ferrying data around the office. My parents were far away, locked in the frame of a video-chat window. I had no friends nearby. There was a knot in my stomach that wouldn't loosen. I existed in a state of stupor, brain flaccid, cells gasping. I couldn't get my turbine spinning.

It was Peter who'd recommended switching to the meal-replacement, Slurry. 'It's what we all eat,' he said.

At meal times, I sat in a corner of the empty cafeteria and slurped the grey gel.

It would have been Slurry for 'dinner' as always, if I hadn't discovered, stuck to my apartment's door, a handwritten menu advertising a local delivery service. I'd just arrived home from work. My face felt brittle from stress – this wasn't unusual. I was already flagging after a single summer at my new job. I was supposed to be one of the bright new additions, the fresh-faced ones. My face wasn't fresh. My hair had gone flat and thin. My stomach hurt.

I wouldn't normally have been interested, but this menu, written in a dark confident script, intrigued me. At the top, in exuberant letters, was the restaurant's name and telephone number. The menu was compact: Spicy Soup, a Spicy Sandwich or a Combo (double spicy), all of which, the menu explained in its curling connectors, were vegetarian. The menu charmed me – as a result, my night, and my life, bent off on a different track.

I called the number. A friendly voice answered, 'Hello! What can I make for you?'

I ordered the Combo.

Sometime later, my order arrived, delivered by a cheery young man with a heavy, hard-to-place accent: 'Good evening, my friend!'

I dug in my pocket for cash, then thought to ask, 'What kind of food is this?'

His face beamed. 'Real food, traditionally made. If you like it, I'll give you the recipe.'

Sitting on my kitchen countertop – utterly bare in those days, free from any sign of food preparation – I consumed the first Combo (double spicy) of my life. The healing powers, physical and psychic, of the spicy soup made traditional noodle soup seem like dishwater. It was an elixir. The sandwich was spicier still, thin-sliced vegetables slathered with a fluorescent red sauce, the burn buffered by thick slabs of bread artfully toasted.

First my stomach unclenched, then my brain. I let loose a long sigh that transformed into a rippling burp. I laughed out loud.

That night, instead of fitfully reviewing the day's errors, I fell asleep soothed by spicy broth and dreams of baking that fragrant, fluffy sourdough bread.

Read **Text C, *The Clement Street Soup and Sourdough Restaurant***, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** on this question paper.

Question 2

Identify a word or phrase from the text which suggests the same idea as the words underlined:

(a)

(i) The company's headquarters was a huge building.

(1)

(ii) The lines of robot arms seemed extremely tall.

(1)

(iii) Andrei believed that doing the same thing over stopped people being inventive.

(1)

(iv) The prototype robot arm appeared to offer an enthusiastic welcome.

(1)

(b) Using your own words, explain what the writer means by each of the words underlined:

Programmers at GD were almost exclusively young, distant, cold-eyed wraiths, in identical denim. They started early morning, working past midnight, in a hurry to be done, and rich.

(i) almost exclusively

(1)

(ii) cold-eyed

(1)

(iii) identical

(1)

(c) Use **one** example from the text below to explain how the writer suggests Lois' feelings while at work.

Use your own words in your explanation.

Programmers often slept at the office. Some nights I'd lie there, staring blankly at the ceiling and the braids of fibre ferrying data around the office. My parents were far away, locked in the frame of a video-chat window. I had no friends nearby. There was a knot in my stomach that wouldn't loosen. I existed in a state of stupor, brain flaccid, cells gasping. I couldn't get my turbine spinning.

(3)

(d) Re-read paragraphs 10 and 16.

- Paragraph 10 begins 'I wouldn't normally have been interested ...' and is about Lois' reaction to the menu.
- Paragraph 16 begins 'Sitting on my kitchen countertop ...' and gives Lois' reactions to her first Combo.

Explain how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect in these paragraphs. Choose **three** examples of words or phrases from **each** paragraph to support your answer. Your choices should include the use of imagery.

Write about 200 to 300 words.

(15)

Re-read **Text C, The Clement Street Soup and Sourdough Restaurant**, and then answer **Question 3** on this question paper.

Question 3

Imagine you are Andrei. You have noticed the changes in Lois which have made you reconsider how your business operates and decide to make some improvements. A few weeks later, you **give a speech** to other business owners.

In your speech you should explain:

- the nature of your business, what you hope to achieve and how successful it has been so far
- the concerns you have had about your staff
- the improvements you have made at GD as a result of speaking with Lois.

Write the words of the speech.

Base your speech on what you have read in **Text C**, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your speech: 'My company, General Dexterity ... ' .

Write about 250 to 350 words.

(25)