2016 ICAS
International Competitions and Assessments for Schools

ENGLISH

DO NOT OPEN THIS BOOKLET UNTIL INSTRUCTED.

55 QUESTIONS

TIME ALLOWED: 55 MINUTES

STUDENT'S NAME:

Read the instructions on the ANSWER SHEET and fill in your NAME, SCHOOL and OTHER INFORMATION.
Use a 2B or B pencil.
Do NOT use a pen.
Rub out any mistakes completely.

You MUST record your answers on the ANSWER SHEET.

Mark only ONE answer for each question.
Your score will be the number of correct answers.
Marks are NOT deducted for incorrect answers.

There are 55 MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS (1-55).
Use the information provided to choose the BEST answer from the four possible options.
On your ANSWER SHEET fill in the oval that matches your answer.

Questions may sometimes be placed next to each other.
Make sure you read ACROSS the page and answer the questions in the correct order.

You are NOT allowed to use a dictionary or an electronic translator.
On a chilly Monday night in Lima, a bar called La Noche is packed. Usually people come to see live bands. But tonight they’re here for Lucha Libro. It’s a twist on Lucha Libre, Mexico’s version of pro wrestling where competitors put on masks and pseudonyms to duke it out in a ring. Peru’s Lucha Libro is kind of like that, without the violence. It’s literary ‘wrestling’. New writers don masks, and head onto a stage where they’re given three random words, a laptop hooked up to a gigantic screen, and five minutes to write a short story.

At the end of a match, the losing writer has to take off his or her mask. The winner goes on to the next round, a week later. And the grand prize? It’s a book contract. It’s not easy to jumpstart a writing career, anywhere. But in Peru—where books are expensive, and published in very small numbers—it’s especially tough. Tonight, an announcer in a striped referee shirt takes the stage to welcome the crowd, mostly in their 20s and 30s, wearing a lot of big glasses and skinny jeans.

The first contestant is a guy who goes by the name ‘Chicken Wilson’. He’s tall and goofy, but when he sees the three words projected on the screen behind him, he gets serious. He’s got monkey, plane ticket, and dictionary to work with.

The announcer counts to three, and the clock starts. No one’s talking, but just a paragraph in, Chicken Wilson freezes. The seconds are ticking by, so the crowd starts cheering him on. He rallies, dashing off a short story about monkeys living in the city, and an American girl on vacation in Peru.

Backstage after his turn in the spotlight, Chicken Wilson explains that his pseudonym is a family nickname. But other contestants say there’s more to their stage names. One young woman with a pale blond braid falling out the back of her black wrestler’s mask calls herself ‘L’.

‘When I write,’ she says, ‘I often write lyrical pieces, poems, and I usually sign them with that one letter. “L” also stands for “loser”, and to me, this concept of “the underdog”, of a person that nobody thinks can win, I’m really into that.’

Actually, it’s Chicken Wilson who ends up losing his match, while L advances. Whoever wins the final round in a few weeks will have six months to finish their book. It’ll be released at the Lima Book Fair, where the writer will take off the mask and reveal his or her real identity for the first time.

The chance to win that coveted publishing contract is important, says writer Christopher Vasquez, one of the founders of Lucha Libro, but there’s more to the contest than that. ‘It’s also about changing the idea that literature is boring. This turns it into an event. Because it’s not just about the opportunity for a young person to become a writer,’ he says. ‘It’s also about having a place for young people to hang out—and to read.’
TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Example:

Choose the option that best completes the sentence.

You should take an umbrella _________ it might rain.

(A) although  
(B) because  
(C) when  
(D) and

The answer is because, so fill in the oval (B), as shown.

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START

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20  21  22  23  24  25  26  27  28  29  30  31  32  33  34  35  36  37  38  39  40  41  42  43  44  45  46  47  48  49  50  51  52  53  54  55

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1. What other event besides Lucha Libro does La Noche feature?
   (A) Mexican pro wrestling
   (B) live music performances
   (C) sport on a gigantic screen
   (D) authors reading out their work

2. The words ‘It’s a twist on’, as they are used in the text, mean
   (A) it’s a variation of.
   (B) it’s an alternative to.
   (C) it’s an aspect of.
   (D) it’s a division of.

3. According to the text, what do Lucha Libre and Lucha Libro have in common?
   (A) Contestants physically compete with each other.
   (B) Matches last for a maximum of five minutes.
   (C) Contestants conceal their identities while competing.
   (D) Only experienced professionals can compete.

4. ‘It’s not easy to jumpstart a writing career’
   This quotation is an example of
   (A) a metaphor.
   (B) hyperbole.
   (C) a simile.
   (D) a pun.

5. Chicken Wilson ‘freezes’ because
   (A) he is having difficulties with his laptop.
   (B) he is distracted by the crowd cheering him.
   (C) he is stuck for ideas to write about.
   (D) he is preoccupied with watching the clock.

6. Which skill would give contestants the best advantage in Lucha Libro?
   (A) the ability to plan and organise fine details
   (B) the ability to imitate the other contestants
   (C) the ability to spell accurately
   (D) the ability to work under pressure
Theme Park

I am sick of rainbows and happiness. Sick of lollipops and joy. I’ve been trapped inside this cartoon head for weeks, through the heat, the screaming children, the endless employee ‘fun sessions’ in the dismal windowless staffroom that smells like wet dog.

‘What are the ABCs of working at Fantasy Happy World?’ Tom, our manager, chirps in that annoying voice of his.

‘ALWAYS BE CHEERFUL,’ we employees drone in unison.

The day hasn’t even started and already I want it to be over. Still, at least I have Hannah to hang out with—another cynic wearing a cartoon outfit, hers a creepy Slippy the Penguin get-up with a grin plastered across its oversized head so large that it actually looks insane. ‘If I were a real creature and not a cartoon,’ says Hannah, ‘you would hide your children from me, not take them to get my autograph.’ She pops the giant head over her own. ‘Anyways, good luck out there, Alex.’ Her voice is muffled by the sound of her costume. I put my own head on—Moozie the Cow—and stagger out into the 34 degree heat.

By noon I’m nauseous and my suit smells like a gym sock, but by this point I’m used to it. ‘Think cool!’ Tom always says to us, though even he couldn’t possibly bear the heat today. A few minutes later someone’s kid runs up and punches me, hard, in the thigh through my suit, which I’m sure will leave a bruise.

‘A hyuk-hyuk! No hitting! A-hyuk!’ I laugh in my best Moozie voice. In reality, though, I would like to see a parent just once not snap a photo of their kid assaulting Moozie like it’s something incredibly cute.

At 5 pm I have my final break and meet Hannah behind the shaved-ice stand that our friend Michael is working today. ‘On the house,’ he says as he hands us each a mound of sweet frozen relief that stains our tongues and lips blue as we eat it.

‘If I could have a machine that makes these inside my suit, I could bear anything,’ Hannah says. ‘The heat, the kids, Tom’s stupid voice …’

I stare out at the rides of Fantasy Happy-World baking in the late-day sun, families already beginning to head for the exits. ‘What are you doing when the summer’s over, Alex?’ Michael asks me and I tell him I’m not sure. I say that now that we’re all done with school, I might work for my Dad or maybe travel a bit with the money I’ve saved. But the reality is that as much as I hate it here, I’m scared to leave it. I’m fighting the end of summer, and the end of summer is approaching fast.
7. What do the descriptions of the cartoon outfits reveal about the narrator’s attitude towards the costumes?

(A) He is disappointed that they prevent employees from expressing themselves.
(B) He is grateful as they allow the employees wearing them to conceal their feelings.
(C) He is concerned that they represent a serious health and safety issue for employees.
(D) He is appreciative of the opportunity it gives employees to engage more with customers.

8. The narrator disapproved of the behaviour of parents who

(A) ignored their children while they were in the park.
(B) spent all their time taking photographs.
(C) encouraged their children to shout and be loud.
(D) allowed their children to be aggressive.

9. Which quotation from the text expresses sarcasm?

(A) ‘employee “fun sessions” in the dismal windowless staffroom’
(B) ‘a grin plastered across its oversized head so large that it actually looks insane’
(C) ‘By noon I’m nauseous and my suit smells like a gym sock’
(D) ‘“If I could have a machine that makes these inside my suit, I could bear anything”’

10. ‘The heat, the kids, Tom’s stupid voice ...’

The points of ellipsis (...) are meant to indicate that

(A) Hannah had a long list of things to complain about.
(B) Hannah was interrupted before she finished speaking.
(C) Hannah was busy eating and lost her train of thought.
(D) Hannah had been called back to work by Tom.

11. What is the most likely reason that the narrator was ‘fighting the end of summer’?

(A) He was concerned about having enough money to travel.
(B) He was afraid of losing his special friendship with Hannah.
(C) He was reluctant to return to school after the holiday break.
(D) He was uneasy about moving onwards into adulthood.

12. Which word from the text is an example of a modal adverb?

(A) ‘possibly’
(B) ‘incredibly’
(C) ‘might’
(D) ‘fast’
Can we stomach the modern world?

Dr Dominguez-Bello queries if these two facts are related: 'It's not clear if more diversity in the microbiome is healthier. But maybe we have lost species with important functions.'

Although diet plays a role in the types of bacteria present in the gut, Dr Dominguez-Bello also raises the possibility of the impact of antibiotics. When her team visited the Yanomami in 2009, they had never been exposed to antibiotics. ‘Antibiotics kill bacteria in the gut and sometimes species don’t come back,’ she says. ‘This is especially true with children, whose microbiomes are in the process of getting assembled. Impacts on the microbiome at a young age can have lasting consequences.’

Dr Jens Walter, a microbiologist at the University of Alberta, contests Dr Dominguez-Bello’s findings. He analysed the gut microbes in two indigenous populations in Papua New Guinea. These populations regularly used antibiotics and yet his analysis showed they had a wide range of bacteria in their guts. To him, a more cunning culprit is responsible: modern sanitation. The Papua New Guinea tribes had a more diverse gut microbiome because bacteria spread more easily due to a lack of a proper sewage system and clean drinking water. Western society prides itself on its effective sanitation processes and its provision of clean drinking water. However, while this prevents the spread of infections, Walter says it also ‘prevents the easy exchange of our microbiomes.’

The human gut contains trillions of bacteria from multiple species—fantastic for maintaining health and supporting digestion. However, this variety of intestinal life is under threat. Paradoxically, this threat may arise from improvements in living conditions and the benefits of modern science and medicine.

Microbiologist Dr Maria Gloria Dominguez-Bello from the New York University School of Medicine hypothesises that the combination of a Western diet and Western medicine may be responsible for key species of gut bacteria disappearing. To test her hypothesis, Dr Dominguez-Bello and her colleagues turned to members of the Yanomami tribe who live in a remote and mountainous area of the Amazon rainforest, and who had had no previous contact with the modern world. Her team analysed samples of their faecal matter to identify the species of bacteria that lived in their guts. The analysis revealed that the digestive microbiome of this tribe contained about 30 percent more ecological diversity than that of the average American.

As people eat a more Westernised diet, their gut biome changes. Specifically, the number of gut species decreases. At the same time, it has been observed that in Western societies, the incidence of chronic immune system illnesses such as allergies, Crohn’s disease, autoimmune disorders and multiple sclerosis has increased.
13. What specifically about the Yanomami tribe was valuable to Dr Dominguez-Bello and her team?
   (A) They had very low incidences of allergies and chronic illnesses.
   (B) They lived a low-stress traditional lifestyle.
   (C) They lived in a mountainous area in the Amazon.
   (D) They had not been exposed to Western diets and medicines.

14. In the text ‘ecological diversity’ refers to different
   (A) amounts of bacteria.
   (B) types of bacteria.
   (C) sizes of bacteria.
   (D) functions of bacteria.

15. ‘Dr Dominguez-Bello queries if these two facts are related’
   What are ‘these two facts’?
   (A) cultures having high levels of microbiome diversity AND having increased incidences of chronic immune diseases
   (B) cultures becoming Westernised AND losing digestive bacteria species
   (C) cultures having diverse gut bacteria AND losing digestive bacteria species
   (D) cultures adopting Western diets AND having high incidences of chronic immune system illnesses

16. Which practice would Dr Dominguez-Bello likely caution people against doing without good reason?
   (A) adopting a hunter-gatherer diet
   (B) excessive handwashing
   (C) sterilising drinking water
   (D) giving antibiotics to babies

17. What does the word ‘culprit’, as it is used in the text, mean?
   (A) danger (B) cause (C) problem (D) issue

18. Traditional and modern societies have been observed to have differences in their gut microbiomes. Which of the following is NOT stated in the text as a reason for this difference?
   (A) antibiotic use
   (B) dietary differences
   (C) availability of clean water
   (D) immune system disorders

19. According to the text, why may a high level of diversity in gut bacteria be desirable?
   (A) It reduces the risk of contracting parasites.
   (B) It is associated with fewer autoimmune disorders.
   (C) It provides immunity from bacterial infections.
   (D) It helps people to digest poor quality food without side effects.

20. Which of the following statements about gut microbiome diversity is supported by the text?
   (A) It is unclear which organisms are important in microbiome diversity.
   (B) Greater microbiome diversity naturally leads to better health.
   (C) Microbiome diversity is more desirable than gains from sanitation.
   (D) Allergies do not occur in societies with great microbiome diversity.
The Art of Bunburying

Algernon: Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I have always suspected you of being a confirmed Bunburyist; I am quite sure of it now.

Jack: Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

Algernon: Produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [Sits on sofa.]

Jack: My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me, in his will, guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

Algernon: Oh. And why are you known as Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

Jack: My dear Algý, I don’t know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It’s one’s duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one’s health or one’s happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algý, is the whole truth pure and simple.

Algernon: The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right! You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

Jack: What on earth do you mean?

Algernon: You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn’t for Bunbury’s extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn’t be able to dine with you at Willis’s tonight, for I have been engaged to dine with Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

Jack: I haven’t asked you to dine with me anywhere tonight.

Algernon: I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations.

Jack: You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

Algernon: I haven’t the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.
21. A Bunburyist is a person who
   (A) adopts a false identity to appear important.
   (B) invents a fictitious person to avoid obligations.
   (C) entertains others with stories of misadventures.
   (D) creates an eventful social life to seem more interesting.

22. The phrase 'conduce ... to' means
   (A) imply by.
   (B) lead to.
   (C) change to.
   (D) persuade of.

23. Algernon told his Aunt Augusta that he was unable to dine with her because
   (A) he needed to meet his friend Jack who was visiting the city.
   (B) he had to meet a friend called Ernest who was visiting from the country.
   (C) he needed to care for a friend called Bunbury who was unwell.
   (D) he had to return to the country on urgent business.

24. Jack most likely thought that Algernon was
   (A) sociable.
   (B) generous.
   (C) crafty.
   (D) dull.

25. The tone in which Algernon addressed Jack is best described as
   (A) imperious.
   (B) antagonistic.
   (C) fawning.
   (D) cruel.

26. When Algernon said 'I want to tell you the rules', he was intending to
   (A) criticise Jack.
   (B) present Jack with a challenge.
   (C) seek Jack's advice.
   (D) collude with Jack.
It’s hard to believe that air pollution could be a problem in the remote and sparsely populated spinifex country of Western Australia’s tropical north. Yet in a bad year, the air quality in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions is far worse than on smoggy days in Sydney or Melbourne.

The managers of the north-west’s major national park, Karijini, are well aware that the source of the problem is the huge fires that regularly occur in the area. They belch out so much smoke that they can block out the sun and even change local rainfall patterns. When good rains favour vigorous growth of the spinifex, lightning strikes in spring can ignite the dry grass and start fires that may spread rapidly on very wide fronts. In addition, graziers and Aboriginal peoples deliberately light many fires to promote new plant growth for grazing livestock and wild animals, and to stop the prickly spinifex grass from becoming too dense.

Under the right fire conditions, it’s not uncommon for a blaze to travel up to 100 kilometres before it peters out or has to be put out.

The spring fires in the year 2000 were especially problematic in the Kimberley. Satellite images recorded more than 750 fires in September and October alone. They burnt 188,000 square kilometres—an area almost three times the size of Tasmania. In early October 2000, a series of very large fires burnt into, out of and around Karijini and vast areas of adjoining land. They threw up prodigious amounts of smoke and soot particles. Measurements of air quality taken at Lake Argyle, about 100 kilometres to the east, found that surface levels of particle density were roughly equivalent to a heavily polluted urban centre.

The smoke plume was enormous, spreading from Karijini north-west about 2,000 kilometres to Bali.

27. Which words from the text are synonyms?
   (A) ‘sparsely’ and ‘prickly’
   (B) ‘belch’ and ‘burnt’
   (C) ‘vast’ and ‘prodigious’
   (D) ‘aloft’ and ‘emit’

28. Which of the following is used as a verb in the text?
   (A) ‘strikes’
   (B) ‘fronts’
   (C) ‘light’
   (D) ‘blaze’

29. According to the text, which of the following is NOT a reason why people intentionally start fires in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions?
   (A) to control the density of spinifex
   (B) to stop introduced weeds from taking over
   (C) to promote new plant growth for native animals
   (D) to assist new plant growth for grazing livestock
south nearly 3,300 kilometres to the Great Australian Bight and east another 2,700 kilometres to the Tasman Sea. In all, the plume covered an area of almost 2.5 million square kilometres—about one-third of Australia. The smoke cloud reached up to eight kilometres in altitude, almost as high as Mount Everest. It is thought that between 20 and 80 million tonnes of carbon were carried aloft in that cloud as carbon dioxide—the key greenhouse gas—with another 400,000 to 1.8 million tonnes of smoke. In context, that’s about one per cent of the total smoke produced across the world each year—all in just that one plume.

Wildfires burn across more than 100 million hectares of Australia each year, but the area burnt varies greatly from year to year. In wet years, there are few fires and the regrowth of vegetation can remove as much as 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. But in hot dry years, such as 2003, major fires can release up to 190 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. For comparison, all of Australia’s transport sources combined emit about 87 million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

30. The key on the map shows
(A) the area subject to wildfire risk.
(B) the surface levels of smoke pollution.
(C) the extent of spring fires in 2000.
(D) the area affected by high altitude smoke.

31. What do the concluding sentences in the final two paragraphs have in common?
(A) They act as topic sentences.
(B) They give alternative viewpoints.
(C) They summarise the paragraphs.
(D) They provide frames of reference.

32. According to the text, the area of Australia affected by wildfires in any year varies greatly depending on
(A) the amount of rain received.
(B) the strength of prevailing winds.
(C) the annual fire management strategies.
(D) the area burnt by wildfires in previous years.

33. What would be the best alternative title for the text?
(A) Smoke and greenhouse gas emissions in Australia
(B) No smoking! Keep Australians healthy
(C) Australia—smoke and mirrors
(D) Australia—a country on fire
The long lonely road

Beth pointed the front wheel downhill, took a deep breath, then started riding. At first she held tight to the brakes, inching along at a snail’s pace. When she looked up at the sky, though, and the ever-darkening clouds gathering there, she decided to let loose. A mountain pass was no place to be caught in a storm.

At first the bike merely rattled as it picked up speed. But as it rolled faster and faster, the tyres biting hard into the dirt on the corners as she descended, it began to shake. Violently. Like she was riding a bucking bull, holding on so tight that her fingers turned white on the handlebars.

She was really flying now. Raising her eyes from the track for a moment, she stole a look at the country spread out below her like a landscape painting. It was all unknown, vast and limitless, and who knew what she would find there? That, after all, was why she’d come: to take a leap into the unknown. Thunder boomed in the purple sky above her and she gripped the bars harder as she hurtled down the mountain.

The heavy sky, the rough road seemed to suggest her own inner world to her: the storms of her life that had driven her to this road at the civilised edge of Colombia. She would ride on, she knew, onto roads that became ever lonelier and more remote, until the ways she travelled were virtually trackless, a wilderness that would at last mirror what she felt inside. That was the thing she wanted.

‘It’s crazy for a girl to do this alone,’ her friends had told her. ‘Take a tour, Beth; go with a group. But setting off alone across South America? Where will you sleep? What will you eat? Let the experts plan it! You really haven’t thought this through!’

Lightning arced through the dark clouds hanging above the mountains, a blue-white flash jagged as shattered glass. What would be the point if I knew where I was going to sleep every night? What would be the point if I let some stranger tell me what I should see, what I should feel? The first fat drops fell from the sky, globes of water big as grapes, spattering the dry, thirsty dirt all around her. That dirt has been waiting a long time for this, and so have I. She pushed the thought of her friends away, those well-meaning, caring people who thought they knew what was best for her.

It was pouring down now, raging. The track was becoming mucky, her vision streaked with stinging rain. Her teeth rattled in her head as she held on, the world blurring all around her as she screamed faster and faster into the teeth of the storm.
34. A backstory is a literary device that creates a set of events that take place before the narrative begins.

Which paragraph refers to Beth’s backstory?
(A) paragraph 1
(B) paragraph 2
(C) paragraph 5
(D) paragraph 7

35. Which quotation from the text contains figurative language?
(A) ‘Thunder boomed in the purple sky above her’
(B) ‘she gripped the bars harder as she hurtled down the mountain’
(C) ‘the storms of her life that had driven her to this road’
(D) ‘Lightning arced through the dark clouds’

36. ‘What would be the point if I knew where I was going to sleep every night?’

The purpose of this quotation is
(A) to question another character’s motives.
(B) to express a strongly held personal feeling.
(C) to ridicule the concerns of a group of close friends.
(D) to seek additional information about travel arrangements.

37. Which of the following descriptions from the text appeals primarily to a different one of the senses than the others?
(A) ‘and the ever-darkening clouds’
(B) ‘Like she was riding a bucking bull’
(C) ‘like a landscape painting’
(D) ‘a blue-white flash jagged as shattered glass’

38. Which of the following quotations does NOT contain an adjectival clause?
(A) ‘the tyres biting hard into the dirt on the corners as she descended’
(B) ‘She would ride on, she knew, onto roads that became ever lonelier’
(C) ‘a wilderness that would at last mirror what she felt’
(D) ‘those well-meaning, caring people who thought they knew what was best for her’

39. Beth considered her friends ‘well-meaning, caring people’ but

(A) she implied that they had wounded her in the past.
(B) she believed that they were projecting their fears onto her.
(C) she actually doubted their intentions.
(D) she thought they should do what she was doing.

40. The most likely intended audience for this text is readers looking for

(A) stories about heroism in mythological settings.
(B) travel advice about South America.
(C) character-driven adventure stories.
(D) historical character-based nonfiction.
Ah Bee Koh said, 'We didn’t steal this money; we just found it,’ and settled, once and for all, the moral right of its retention. The poor, despite their poverty, never stole. If the gods chose to put into their very hands the money of the rich or the undeserving, who were they to resist?

Ah Bee Koh repeated firmly, counting the money a second time, ‘We never stole this money. It came to us.’ His wife was silent and looked anxiously at him. She was thinking of an angry Ah Hoo Chek, who was probably already on his way to reclaim his money, and of his wife, a thin, frightened-looking woman, who had probably already borne the full brunt of his anger.

The principle of honest living inculcated by upright ancestors stayed strong when the money was but a few paltry coins; it wavered in the face of a glittering pile.

‘It’s a lot of money,’ said Ah Bee Soh slowly, and this time she was thinking of the concrete reality of Ah Hoo Chek’s wrath. It would be in proportion to the amount lost. The man would never accept any explanation. He would insist on a thorough search of the house. Worse, he would tell everybody about the incident, and eventually destroy the family’s laundry business and livelihood. Would it be worth it?

The abstractions of moral principle had given way to the solid calculations of an abacus starting to click-click-click in Ah Bee Soh’s brain.

‘He’ll be here any minute,’ she said anxiously to her husband.

‘I have an idea,’ said Ah Bee Koh. He was actually quivering in the mounting excitement of his plan. He asked to see Ah Hoo Chek’s trousers, and inspected them closely. He said to Silver Frond, ‘Can you remember which pocket you found the money in?’ and whistled with eager relief when she said promptly, ‘The right one.’

‘Good. You are a clever girl who remembers important things,’ said Ah Bee Koh, and now there was no stopping his frenzied energy. He drew the pocket out, inspected it and said to his wife, ‘Quick, get me a pair of scissors.’ She looked at him quizzically and was shouted into immediate compliance. ‘I say, get me the scissors at once! I have no time to lose!’

The scissors were not for cutting but for picking out the row of machined stitches at the bottom of the pocket. Ah Bee Koh set to work, expertly loosening and snipping the stitches, one by one, watched by his wife and daughters. Finally he slipped three fingers through the hole. It should be big enough, he said, and raised it to show his family.

‘The money fell out,’ he said and laughed with self-congratulatory pleasure. ‘Could any of you have thought of this? Ha! Not even you, my clever, pretty daughter!’ he cried, pinching Silver Frond’s cheek.

‘Useless husband, eh?’ he said, pinching his wife’s cheek. ‘The next time you want to call me useless, think of this.’
41. In the first paragraph, what was Ah Bee Koh doing?
   (A) justifying his actions to himself
   (B) weighing the consequences of his actions
   (C) thinking of alternative courses of action
   (D) convincing Ah Hoo Chek to believe him

42. In the phrase 'concrete reality', what does the word 'concrete' mean?
   (A) urban
   (B) fundamental
   (C) tangible
   (D) familiar

43. In the sentence 'Would it be worth it?', what does the second 'it' refer to?
   (A) offending Ah Bee Soh
   (B) annoying the ancestors
   (C) dealing with Ah Hoo Chek's reaction
   (D) having a crime on their conscience

44. What was Ah Bee Soh's attitude towards keeping the money?
   (A) She thought that keeping the money was an affront to the ancestors.
   (B) She was not averse to keeping the money but was considering the risks.
   (C) She believed the benefits of keeping the money overrode other considerations.
   (D) She wanted to keep the money but did not trust Ah Bee Koh to keep a secret.

45. The third and fifth paragraphs are authorial insertions that
   (A) preview the characters' rising doubts.
   (B) describe the cultural context of the situation.
   (C) foreshadow the implications of keeping the money.
   (D) provide a commentary on the characters' thoughts.

46. The success of Ah Bee Koh's plan relied mainly on Ah Hoo Chek
   (A) forgetting that he had left money in his pocket.
   (B) accepting that it was fate that caused him to lose his money.
   (C) believing that he had lost his money because of a hole in his pocket.
   (D) blaming his wife for not mending a hole in his pocket.

47. Silver Frond's role in the deception could be described as that of
   (A) a heartless onlooker.
   (B) an eager participant.
   (C) an unwitting accomplice.
   (D) a misguided conspirator.
A big test at school. A big sports match on the weekend. A job interview. A first date. Most of these things fill us at best with a little anxiety, and at worst with a sense of dread. Our palms get sweaty; our heart pounds and our blood pressure rises, and though there are many names for it, what we're experiencing is essentially the same: stress.

There's a tendency, of course, to avoid experiencing stress if we possibly can, and there's some wisdom in that. Chronic stress—a kind of long-term, lasting distress or emotional pressure—is linked to a host of ailments from heart disease to depression. Of a more mixed nature, however, is chronic stress's shorter-lived cousin—acute stress. These temporary feelings of emotional discomfort may be unpleasant, but while they are not guaranteed to do so, they may also help us to perform at our peak when used correctly.

You heard me right: I'm promoting stress. I'm telling you that you can—and should—use it to your advantage. Why? Because stress, subjectively unpleasant though it may be, also increases our physical and cognitive alertness, enabling us to focus and concentrate better.

How often have you heard someone say, "Just relax" to a person about to take an exam? Terrible advice! It's far better to acknowledge and try to channel the alertness you feel as a result of that acute stress than to try to deny it, calm it down or wish it away. Would you be sipping a cup of sleep-time chamomile tea just before running the 400-metre hurdles? No—you want to be keyed up, so as to perform your best.

A 2010 study in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology backs this up. The study found that university students instructed to consciously consider and harness their stress before an exam did better than a control group receiving no such instruction (and presumably trying to "relax", as per conventional wisdom). Nor can it be said that the effect is a byproduct of the stress alone without an injunction to intentionally use that stress to one's advantage: researchers measured the students' stress levels from saliva samples collected immediately after the exam, and students who received no instructions on how to use that stress effectively were as stressed-out as the higher-achieving group.

Simply put, stress doesn't have to be your enemy. Use those jitters to your advantage and you might just come out on top.
48. How does the writer engage readers’ interest in the first paragraph?
   (A) by listing ways of dealing with stress
   (B) by comparing various stressful situations
   (C) by explaining why stress affects us the way it does
   (D) by describing the firsthand experience of stress

49. Which statement best summarises the second paragraph?
   (A) Though some kinds of stress are harmful, others can actually help you.
   (B) Chronic stress presents several dangers and should be avoided.
   (C) Short-term emotional discomfort is useful for performing your best.
   (D) Ailments like heart disease and depression are linked to acute stress.

50. How does the writer create an informal tone in the third paragraph?
   (A) through the use of slang words
   (B) by addressing readers directly
   (C) through the use of humour
   (D) by employing irony

51. ‘Nor can it be said ...’
   What part of speech is ‘Nor’ in this sentence?
   (A) adverb
   (B) preposition
   (C) conjunction
   (D) article

52. In the study mentioned in the text, how were students’ stress levels measured?
   (A) by asking them how they felt
   (B) by analysing their body chemistry
   (C) by taking their temperatures
   (D) by comparing their test scores

53. Which word could replace 'an injunction' in the text?
   (A) a directive
   (B) a caution
   (C) a ruling
   (D) a question

54. Which of these words from the text is different in meaning to the others?
   (A) ‘anxiety’
   (B) ‘stress’
   (C) ‘alertness’
   (D) ‘jitters’

55. What conclusion should the researchers draw from the study?
   (A) Students perform best by consciously attempting to relax before an exam.
   (B) Experiencing low levels of stress leads to improved performance on exams.
   (C) Students who do not think about their stress perform better on exams.
   (D) Stress improves exam performance when it is used intentionally.
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