

FUKIEN SECONDARY SCHOOL

S.5 Final Examination (2020-2021)

English Language Paper 1

Reading

(1 hour 30 minutes)

**Reading Passages**

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Date: 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: 10:45a.m. - 12:15p.m.

Class: S.5 \_\_\_\_\_ No.: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Write all your answers in the Question-Answer Book.
2. DO NOT write any answers in the booklet because they will not be marked.

**PART A**

Read Text 1 and answer questions 1-21 in the Question-Answer Book for Part A.

**Text 1****Sealed with a kiss**

1 [1] When Jasmine received an old-fashioned love letter through the post, her heart skipped a beat. The  
week before, she had had a heated row with her boyfriend. The crisp envelope, addressed by hand,  
suggested maybe he wanted to make up. 'I read the letter and tears pricked my eyes, because what he said  
really was beautiful,' said Jasmine. 'But then I looked a bit closer. Something wasn't quite right. All the  
5 letters were written identically, yet the spaces between the words didn't seem natural.' Jasmine  
confronted her boyfriend about the note, and he confessed that he had used an online robot-writing  
service. Simply go online and pick your card or paper, select the font and pen, type in what you want to  
say, and the robot will write the message for you, address the envelope and post it. (For an extra fee,  
some robot-handwriting services will even mimic your own handwriting, based on a sample.) 'His excuse  
10 was that he has terrible handwriting and didn't want me to think less of him,' explained Jasmine, her  
cheeks turning pink. 'But really, if you can't even be bothered to write a love letter yourself, and choose  
to outsource your emotions to a robot, what's the point? I dumped him the next day.'

[2] Fans of robot-writing services, such as Jasmine's ex, point out that using an online service is cheaper,  
quicker and easier than going to a shop, choosing a card, paying for it, writing the card, adding the  
15 address and finally posting it. With the click of a mouse and a few keystrokes, all these tasks are  
performed at once. You can also set schedules for cards or letters to be sent automatically, to make sure  
that you don't miss an important birthday or anniversary. The ultimate solution for those starved of time,  
and perhaps—some would say—lacking in romance.

[3] In a world where emails, Snapchat messages and online conversations are the norm, this disregard for  
20 the sentimental value might seem commonplace. Yet ask most people, and they will tell you that they are  
thrilled at the thought of receiving a handwritten letter or note. According to a recent survey in the USA,  
81 per cent of people believe that a handwritten letter is more meaningful than electronic forms of  
communication. Amongst millennials, the number is even higher, at 87 per cent: not surprising, perhaps,  
for a generation that has been starved of handwritten correspondence.

[4] Although we love the idea of old-fashioned letters, few of us actually write them by hand. More than  
25 75 per cent of people surveyed said that they had not written a card or letter to someone in the last month.  
It requires effort: finding the right pen and paper, thinking of what to say, addressing the envelope and  
then posting it. And because we don't do it often, the act itself becomes daunting. Then there are those,  
like Jasmine's ex, who are embarrassed by their own handwriting. It's a dying skill, even though keeping  
30 a handwritten journal is one of the traits shared by many successful business leaders.

[5] Lori Whittaker, luxury stationery manufacturer and lifelong fan of handwritten letters, believes there  
has been a recent resurgence in letter writing. 'Young people are increasingly moving away from home  
for work or study. Generations that once grew old together are separated, but some people have begun  
putting their thoughts and emotions down on paper. It's a very special way to keep in touch and people  
35 who receive those letters are thrilled.'

[6] There is no denying that for the recipient, a handwritten letter is a special gift. We are constantly  
bombarded with electronic messages, notifications and emails, so much so that these everyday forms of  
communication have little impact on us and are almost meaningless. On the other hand, a handwritten  
letter gets our attention in a way an instant message never could. It shows that someone cares enough  
40 about us to make the effort to write by hand.

[7] And for the writer, too, there are benefits. 'First, you need to find somewhere quiet where you won't  
be disturbed, and set aside a chunk of free time,' says Lori. 'Then you might want to select a special pen,  
and some beautiful paper with a matching envelope. Just preparing for the event can become a ritual.  
When you actually get to the act of writing, you'll probably spend a lot longer pondering what you really

45 think and how you want to express those thoughts. Writing a letter is a much more careful and considered process than hastily shooting off a text message or email.’ Some writers even say that the slower, more reflective activity of letter writing can be meditative, almost a form of mindfulness.

[8] It is also true that thoughts and emotions shared on the page probably go deeper than other forms of communication. ‘When we write on paper, we open ourselves up to sharing more intimate details,’ says  
50 Professor Kenny, a proponent of handwriting as a form of therapy. ‘On paper, we express things we would be too embarrassed to say to someone’s face, and electronic forms of communication seem too shallow for sharing such intimacies.’

[9] And then there’s the historic value of written letters: recently, a letter written by a passenger on the *Titanic* sold for US\$166,000. Even if your letters are not destined for such heights, they would certainly  
55 be a legacy for generations to come, so that others might get a glimpse of your personality.

[10] ‘Imagine you receive an email or a Snapchat message from that boy or girl you’ve been admiring from afar for years. Now imagine you receive a handwritten letter from that person instead. How much more exciting would that be?’ says Lori. ‘I’m guessing almost everyone would keep that letter, maybe even for the rest of their lives.’ Jasmine would probably agree.

**END OF READING PASSAGE**

**PART B**

Read Text 2 and answer questions 22-47 in the Question-Answer Book.

**Text 2**

# Kitchen

By Banana Yoshimoto

The place I like best in this world is the kitchen. No matter where it is, no matter what kind, if it's a kitchen, if it's a place where they make food, it's fine with me. Ideally it should be well broken in. Lots of tea towels, dry and immaculate. White tile catching the light (ting! ting!).

I love even incredibly dirty kitchens to distraction — vegetable droppings all over the floor, so dirty your slippers turn black on the bottom. Strangely, it's better if this kind of kitchen is large. I lean up against the silver door of a towering, giant refrigerator stocked with enough food to get through a winter. When I raise my eyes from the oil-splattered gas burner and the rusty kitchen knife, outside the window stars are glittering, lonely.

Now only the kitchen and I are left. It's just a little nicer than being all alone.

When I'm dead worn out, in a reverie, I often think that when it comes time to die, I want to breathe my last in a kitchen. Whether it's cold and I'm all alone, or somebody's there and it's warm, I'll stare death fearlessly in the eye. If it's a kitchen, I'll think, 'How good.'

Before the Tanabe family took me in, I spent every night in the kitchen. After my grandmother died, I couldn't sleep. One morning at dawn I trundled out of my room in search of comfort and found that the one place I *could* sleep was beside the refrigerator.

My parents — my name is Mikage Sakurai — both died when they were young. After that my grandparents brought me up. I was going into junior high when my grandfather died. From then on, it was just my grandmother and me.

When my grandmother died the other day, I was taken by surprise. My family had steadily decreased one by one as the years went by, but when it suddenly dawned on me that I was all alone, everything before my eyes seemed false. The fact that time continued to pass in the usual way in this apartment where I grew up, even though now I was here all alone, amazed me. It was total science fiction. The blackness of the cosmos.

Three days after the funeral I was still in a daze. Steeped in a sadness so great I could barely cry, shuffling softly in gentle drowsiness, I pulled my futon into the deathly

silent, gleaming kitchen. Wrapped in a blanket, like Linus, I slept. The hum of the refrigerator kept me from thinking of my loneliness. There, the long night came on in perfect peace, and morning came.

But ... I just wanted to sleep under the stars.  
I wanted to wake up in the morning light.  
Aside from that, I just drifted, listless.

However! I couldn't exist like that. Reality is wonderful.

I thought of the money my grandmother had left me — just enough. The place was too big, too expensive, for one person. I had to look for another apartment. There was no way around it. I thumbed through the listings, but when I saw so many places all the same lined up like that, it made my head swim. Moving takes a lot of time and trouble. It takes energy.

I had no strength; my joints ached from sleeping in the kitchen day and night. When I realized how much effort moving would require — I'd have to pull myself together and go look at places. Move my stuff. Get a phone installed — I lay around instead, sleeping, in despair. It was then that a miracle, a godsend, came calling one afternoon. I remember it well.

*Dingdong.* Suddenly the doorbell rang.

It was a somewhat cloudy spring afternoon. I was intently involved in tying up old magazines with string while glancing at the apartment listings with half an eye but no interest, wondering how I was going to move. Flustered, looking like I'd just gotten out of bed, I ran out and without thinking undid the latch and opened the door. Thank god it wasn't a robber. There stood Yuichi Tanabe.

'Thank you for your help the other day,' I said. He was a nice young man, a year younger than me, who had helped out a lot at the funeral. I think he'd said he went to the same university as I did. I was taking time off.

'Not at all,' he said. 'Did you decide on a place to live yet?'

'Not even close,' I smiled.

'I see.'

'Would you like to come in for some tea?'

‘No. I’m on my way somewhere and I’m kind of in a hurry.’ He grinned. ‘I just stopped by to ask you something. I was talking to my mother, and we were  
85 thinking you ought to come to our house for a while.’

‘Huh?’ I said.

‘In any case, why don’t you come over tonight around seven? Here’s the directions.’

‘Okay ...’ I said vacantly, taking the slip of paper.

90 ‘All right, then, good. Mom and I are both looking forward to your coming.’ His smile was so bright as he stood in my doorway that I zoomed in for a close-up on his pupils. I couldn’t take my eyes off him. I think I heard a spirit call my name.

95 ‘Okay,’ I said. ‘I’ll be there.’

Bad as it sounds, it was like I was possessed. His attitude was so totally ‘cool’, though, I felt I could trust him. In the black gloom before my eyes (as it always is in cases of bewitchment), I saw a straight road leading from me  
100 to him. He seemed to glow with white light. That was the effect he had on me.

‘Okay, see you later,’ he said, smiling, and left.

Before my grandmother’s funeral I had barely known him. On the day itself, when Yuichi Tanabe showed up  
105 all of a sudden, I actually wondered if he had been her lover. His hands trembled as he lit the incense; his eyes were swollen from crying. When he saw my grandmother’s picture on the altar, again his tears fell like rain. My first thought when I saw that was that my love for my  
110 grandmother was nothing compared to this boy’s, whoever he was. He looked that sad.

Then, mopping his face with a handkerchief, he said, ‘Let me help with something.’ After that, he helped me a lot.

Yuichi Tanabe ... I must have been quite confused if I  
115 took that long to remember when I’d heard grandmother mention his name.

He was the boy who worked part-time at my grandmother’s favorite flower shop. I remembered hearing her say, any number of times, things like, ‘What a nice boy they have  
120 working there ... That Tanabe boy ... today, again ...’ Grandmother loved cut flowers. Because the ones in our kitchen were not allowed to wilt, she’d go to the flower shop a couple of times a week. When I thought of that, I remembered him walking behind my grandmother, a  
125 large potted plant in his arms.

**END OF READING PASSAGE**

