

Read **Text A** and answer **Question 1** and **Question 2** on the question paper.

Text A: The Raven

Rex and his wife Julie run a bird rescue centre in old buildings attached to their family farm. People visit the rescue centre at weekends and during school holidays.

- 1 The young bird seemed too big for the box in which he'd been transported to our rescue centre. I lifted the raven out to inspect him: he was huge, with a comically large head that looked out of proportion to the rest of his body and an enormous, slightly downward-curving beak. His feathers were a dull black, but his squawks of protest revealed a bright-red throat. Most striking of all were his intelligent black eyes. 5
- 2 We'd acquired the raven from the parents of two boys. The boys had taken him from his nest and raised him at their home, teaching him to copy their voices. He was weeks old but the size of an adult bird and mischievous, as ravens can be. He'd begun stealing shiny items from increasingly annoyed neighbours, becoming such a menace that the boys' embarrassed parents contacted us. 10
- 3 My plan, as always, was to get the bird back into the wild, but this one would be tricky. Birds not only have to learn to find their own food, they also must learn to spot predators – difficult when a bird's been in captivity from an early age with no parents to teach by example. It's important when rearing wild birds that they're kept as wild as possible, not treated like pets, so they have a chance of survival once released. This raven was called Odin and had no fear of people. 15
- 4 Odin would follow anyone, alarming unsuspecting visitors who suddenly found themselves being stalked by a huge, scary-looking black bird. Being a nuisance seemed to be Odin's purpose in life. We hoped that in the weeks that followed he'd join the wild ravens flying over daily, but Odin refused to leave. 20
- 5 We finally realised he was a hopeless case when he stole a sandwich, taking it off into a field. A wild raven landed close to him and approached. Odin gave a petrified croak, scampering for the safety of the barn, and the intruder flew off with his prize. 'We'll never get rid of him,' I thought.
- 6 Trees near the entrance to the visitor centre became Odin's favourite spot. He loved hiding there, undetected, before jumping out to land on people's shoulders and peck affectionately at their ears. This is fine for anyone used to birds, but disconcerting for those who aren't – especially children, who squealed loudest. Odin rarely missed an opportunity including when one afternoon, attracted to the children's play area by shouts of alarm, I found him dancing round, beak open, eyes gleaming, revelling in the mayhem he was causing. 25
- 7 As well as pecking people, Odin had mastered the irritating art of imitating my voice. On several occasions, he'd escaped from his cage and convinced my busy wife, Julie, that I was calling her from the farm. When she arrived at the empty spot, Odin would be there enjoying her confusion. 30
- 8 Odin's behaviour was getting worse and demanded serious measures. To prevent the delinquent bird from escaping again, I made sure he was secure, cementing large concrete blocks around the perimeter of the cage to hold it firmly in place. 'See how much mischief you do now,' I muttered, leaving him croaking furiously at me. Of course, the ideal solution would have been for him to fly away to his own kind. But by now I was convinced that Odin was never going to leave us. 35

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- 9 Later that month, I was nearly proved wrong. As night fell, local radio issued storm warnings. Overnight there were strange crashes and thumps, sounds of splintering timber and roof tiles smashing into the yard.
- 10 We'd expected the worst, but the scene at dawn was a picture of carnage, like an army of giants had wreaked havoc outside: most of the trees in the area had been blown over, the whole world seemed torn apart, unfriendly and unfamiliar. It was then that I noticed Odin's large heavy cage – it had been lifted from its concrete blocks and tossed onto its side. Odin had gone, presumably panicked. Judging by the damaged outbuildings, I imagined many birds had been killed by the storm, including Odin. 45
- 11 Days later, by chance, another local farmer came to help us. Julie and I had already made a brave start on rebuilding the sheds, mournfully avoiding the remains of the cage. When I mentioned wistfully it had housed our raven, the farmer told me about a black bird that had been following his tractor the previous day. 'Had a massive beak,' he said. 'Didn't stop talking. Amazing.' 50
- 12 There was only one bird that could be. 55
- 13 We arrived at the field as dusk was falling. There was no sign of Odin, but plenty of trees still left here in which he might be resting. I walked over to them, shining my torch upwards. Weak cheeping revealed the smallest shadow of a bedraggled Odin perched precariously at the top of the tallest tree and shivering violently. Seriously shaken by his experience, he wasn't in a trusting mood. At the risk of appearing a complete idiot, I called up in a hopefully endearing voice, 'Odin, come to Daddy.' The bird's response was immediate. With a croak of relief he dropped from the tree like a bundle of black rags, landing at my feet. Normally he hated being picked up, but on this occasion our indestructible raven was more than willing to be scooped into my arms and taken home. 60

Read **Text B** and answer **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text B: Sneakers

- 1 There is one style of footwear which in recent decades has become a global success. Sneakers (also known as trainers or runners in some parts of the world) began life as a rubber-soled sport shoe, then evolved with a bang into everyday footwear for office workers, doctors, students and even presidents – in fact, sneakers made by the big brands are the footwear of choice for people from all walks of life. 5
- 2 Currently, over 1.2 billion pairs of sneakers are made each year and the global sneaker market is predicted to reach US\$120 billion by 2026. With such huge growth, it's easy to see why they're big business. And competition among the giant sporting brands is fierce. Sporting endorsements became an essential marketing tool for many of the biggest brands, with multi-million dollar contracts being signed with top athletes. 'Who wouldn't want to be seen with the same shoes as their sporting hero?' says 16-year-old Jason Carey who queued overnight to purchase a pair of sneakers advertised by his basketball idol. It doesn't stop there. Famous actors and musicians can be photographed wearing a certain pair of sneakers, and those sneakers immediately become a status symbol, turning them into a 'must have' fashion item costing hundreds, even thousands, of dollars. 10
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- 3 The original appeal of sneakers was comfort, and cutting-edge technology seeks to maintain this: gas cushioning and midsoles which absorb more shock than ever before provide exceptional levels of comfort. But technical wizardry has taken its development even further, leading to concern that innovation can artificially enhance sporting performance and contribute to world records being smashed, prompting World Athletics to ban certain models. 20
- 4 Although there are many who are happy to buy a cheap, unbranded pair of sneakers which they'll eventually throw away and replace, other individuals called 'sneakerheads' collect branded sneakers and actively pursue different models. You'll see them in their thousands at any Sneaker Con, international sneaker conventions where sneakerheads can trade sneakers or simply bond with a community of sneaker enthusiasts. One attendee, Kitty Sullivan, who admits to owning 'a silly number' of sneakers, explains: 'You have the core sneakerheads who love the fascinating history of the footwear through the decades; there are those like me who'll wear a different pair every day; and then there are those driven by the money.' And it's true, a significant personal income can be made from resale of sneakers, particularly limited editions – sneakers produced in small quantity and on sale for a short time – which are exceptionally rare and extremely desirable. 25
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- 5 Just as fashion and celebrities come and go, so too do sneakers. Many of them made of plastic and nylon, bonded with toxic glue, end up in landfill to be replaced by a constant stream of new designs. Sneakers certainly leave a heavy carbon footprint in their manufacture and disposal. Although the famous big brands are making moves to be more environmentally friendly, they're slow and selective. 35
- 6 Meanwhile, smaller more sustainable footwear brands, such as Vida, are edging in and gaining popularity. 'If you really care about the environment, you need to think about what you put on your feet,' states Matthew Chang, director of Vida. Every Vida sneaker is made from 100 per cent recycled material. 'They come with a large price tag, but we expect them to be valued for their quality and durability. That's why we keep our designs simple and classic,' adds Matthew. 'And when their life has expired, they can be returned to the company for recycling.' 40

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