

FUKIEN SECONDARY SCHOOL
S5 First Term Uniform Test (2020-2021)
English Language
Paper 1: Reading
(1 hour 30 minutes)

Reading Passages

Date: 22nd October 2020

Name: _____

Time: 8:30a.m. - 10:00a.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 AText 1

Read Text 1 and answer questions 1–21 in the Question-Answer Book.

	‘Friends’ is back in the spotlight. Why is that?
1	[1] In 2004, the final episode of the sitcom ‘Friends’ aired on network television in the United States. This episode, titled ‘The one where they say goodbye’, had a viewership of 52 million in the country, and more internationally. In New York City, about 3,000 people watched the episode on a big screen in a public park near the Hudson River. The programme had been on for a decade. By the end of its run, the main characters—Monica, Joey, Phoebe, Ross, Rachel, and Chandler—had become household names. The actors playing them negotiated a pay cheque of US\$1 million per episode for the final two seasons. And that was in the early 2000s! To say that ‘Friends’ was a phenomenon would be an understatement.
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15	[2] That was over 15 years ago. One would expect that the sitcom would fade into obscurity as newer and more relevant programmes were made. After all, there are plenty of new programmes to choose from. Quite the contrary, ‘Friends’ is experiencing an astounding comeback among younger viewers. A recent survey conducted by <i>Teen Pop Magazine</i> found that ‘Friends’ was the most popular sitcom among Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2015). Of these viewers, nearly 85 per cent did not realize that ‘Friends’ was an old programme—they thought they were watching a fresh, new sitcom set in the 1990s. How did this happen? Why is ‘Friends’ speaking to the younger generation in such a profound way?
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	[3] The appearance of ‘Friends’ on streaming services could be one of the reasons. It may be that streaming services, such as Netflix, originally purchased the rights to ‘Friends’ in order to appease the older viewers who originally watched the programme. After all, Millennials and Generation X, in their younger years, spent countless hours watching the exploits of the six friends. To re-watch the series has great nostalgic value. That explains why Netflix shelled out as much as US\$80 million to keep the programme on their site for a single year. However, once on the streaming services, new viewers stumbled across the series and made it their favourite. The style of watching is different now, as well. Instead of having to wait to find out what happens to their favourite characters, viewers are able to binge-watch the entire series in a single sitting (OK, maybe not a single sitting—after all, there are 236 episodes over ten seasons). It’s easy to get swept up in the story when you can

30	watch ten years pass in ten days.
35	[4] And, of course, the programme is funny. Monica, Joey, Phoebe, Ross, Rachel, and Chandler are loveable and flawed characters. Most of the jokes are based on their imperfections. Monica is a perfectionist. Phoebe is a clueless hippy at heart. Joey, as hard as he tries, just isn't very bright. Ross is a socially awkward geek. Rachel wears her heart on her sleeve, which gives others a bad impression. Chandler suffers from a distinct lack of cool. The humour of 'Friends' comes from these characters stumbling through the world, and the ways their personalities clash and complement one another. Their struggles are entirely relatable. There are also zingy one-liners that carry across different seasons. Fans of the programme get to know the characters' classic catchphrases, like Joey's 'How you doin'?' or Chandler's 'Could I <i>be</i> ... any more ...'. This is another way that fans are made to feel connected to the show through the myriad episodes. These lines feel familiar, and fans laugh because they're in on the joke. There are also heart-warming moments mixed in, adding more depth to the programme.
45	[5] There's another reason that 'Friends' may be speaking to Gen Z. It harkens back to an uncomplicated time. The friends meet in person at a local coffee shop. They spend time, face-to-face at one another's apartments. They drop by unexpectedly. There is no texting, no Instagram, no Snapchat, no TikTok, no WhatsApp. 'Friends' depicts a way of socializing that no longer exists in the same way. To spend time with these characters is to experience that simple lifestyle. Imagine if we could all live in beautiful New York City apartments, paying just hundreds of dollars in rent, and spending our free time sitting around with our pals.
55	[6] In addition, the idea of a close-knit group of friends is appealing to many people in Gen Z. According to a survey by global health company Cigna, 79 per cent of Gen Z respondents reported being lonely. That is higher than any other generation surveyed, and the problem seems to be getting worse each year. It certainly doesn't solve the loneliness problem to watch a bunch of happy socialites on television, but it can temporarily dull the pain. Television has always offered viewers a brand of escapism, whether it's people with dull 9-to-5 jobs watching police dramas, or middle-class viewers witnessing the lives of the rich and famous through reality programmes. For younger viewers, 'Friends' might be just the salve they're after.
60	[7] 'Friends' does occasionally remind its viewers that it is stuck in another era, though.

65 70	Comedy was different in the 1990s and early 2000s. What was once acceptable now makes people shake their heads in disbelief. The world has changed ... 'Friends' has not. Viewers today are much more sensitive about sexism, homophobia, fat phobia and abusive behaviour. In the 1990s, it was acceptable to constantly make fun of Monica for having been an overweight teen. Viewers laughed when Ross was uncomfortable with a male nanny. Plus, nearly all of the characters were white ... in the very diverse city of New York. Now, viewers have a much better understanding of the harm caused by these attitudes and portrayals. New viewers cringe at these moments, but, looking at viewership numbers, they don't seem to be changing the channel. [8] 'Friends' isn't the only programme that has stood the test of time. Shows such as 'Seinfeld' or 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air' still remain popular, despite being well over two decades old. However, 'Friends' eclipses them all in its ability to connect with different generations, which will ensure that it remains a popular pick for many years to come.
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Text 2

Read Text 2 and answer questions 1-18 in the Question-Answer Book.

	A few little changes <i>How Little Women and Little Fires Everywhere were tweaked for the screen</i> [1] When a new film or television adaptation of a popular novel is announced, fans usually roll their eyes. After all, the book is always better than the film, right? In January 2020, the UK communications company Broadbandchoices studied the ratings of 279 books and their screen adaptations. On average, the film and television adaptations had a 0.8 lower rating than the original books. However, maybe an adaptation can be used to do something new and exciting. Why do we have to tell the same stories in the same ways? Could a centuries-old tale be able to say something inspiring to a new generation? Can an adaptation be given another layer by changing one key character detail? [2] <i>Little Women</i> and <i>Little Fires Everywhere</i> are adaptations that break the mould. Both manage to capture the essence of the originals while modifying the message for their viewers. In the case of the 2019 film <i>Little Women</i>, director Greta Gerwig adjusts Louisa
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15	May Alcott's 1868 original to highlight feminist concepts. The 2020 television miniseries <i>Little Fires Everywhere</i> is based on the 2017 Celeste Ng novel by the same name. Kerry Washington and Reese Witherspoon are both actors and executive producers. The series explores race in a deeper way than the novel, adding a new dimension to the story. Viewers today are very tuned in to political issues. Including these discussions in TV series and films makes them all the more powerful.
20	[3] <i>Little Women</i> adaptations are a dime a dozen. The story has appeared on stage, film, television and radio. There are over 20 different versions, of wildly different styles and quality. The Gerwig-directed version is probably the most successful to date, grossing US\$206 million and earning six Oscar nominations. It owes a lot of this success to the fact that Gerwig captured feminist sentiments in an already popular and captivating story. There is familiarity, plus a little extra flare. The last decade has been an active one for feminism, from the #metoo movement to growing awareness of intersectional feminism. It makes
25	sense that there's a hunger for stories about the lives and experiences of women, which, in past decades and even currently, have been notably lacking in media.
30	[4] <i>Little Women</i> tells the story of four sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy—as they grow up in Massachusetts. The American Civil War is raging in the background. Meg is a caring force. Jo is the fiercely independent writer. Beth is the quiet and contemplative type. Amy is into all things proper and lovely. <i>Little Women</i> has always had feminist elements. Just to tell a story featuring only girls and women used to be considered somewhat radical. In the novel, the girls' mother, at one point, says to Jo, 'I'm angry nearly every day of my life,' a nod to the unfairness of her station. There are, however, distinctly un-modern and un-feminist moments in the original, such as the girls' mother telling them 'The best thing
35	in the world a woman can have is the love of a good man'. In the film, Gerwig gave the characters more depth and autonomy, and also some stronger words. Amy, for example, has a lengthy speech about the economics of marriage, explaining why a woman has no choice but to consider her suitor's finances.
40	[5] There is one particularly striking difference between the plots of the film and the novel. In the novel—spoiler alert—Jo is married by the end. In the film, she commits to a solitary existence for the sake of her art. And, in fact, the audience sees that Jo is successful in bringing her novel into the world. Greta Gerwig reportedly knew she wanted to make this change before production began. In Gerwig's eyes, this ending is truer to the character. And,

45	indeed, that may be right. Alcott always said that <i>Little Women</i> was a semi-autobiographical work, based on the lives of herself and her sisters growing up. She is represented by Jo. Alcott herself remained unmarried, knowing it was difficult, if not impossible, for a woman at the time to have a literary career as well as a husband. She fought to retain copyright of her work. She also supported generations of her family financially. So, why was Jo married in the novel? It seems that fans yearned for this traditional ending. Obviously, that was as
50	much of a ‘happy’ ending as a woman could hope for. So Alcott’s publisher pushed for that ending in order to please fans.
55	[6] The <i>Little Fires Everywhere</i> adaptation similarly makes changes to delve deeper into socio-political matters. Celeste Ng’s original novel examined how economic standing affects the relationship between two women, Elena (the wealthy one) and Mia (the starving, nomadic artist). That, in itself, makes it a work worth reading. In the television series, Mia is played by a Black actor (Washington), adding the extra layer of race relations to the mix. Ng never actually specified the race of Mia, though Elena was always a white character. In an interview with the <i>L.A. Times</i> , Ng said, ‘I wanted to make Mia a woman of color. I knew that I wanted to look at race,’ but she didn’t feel like the right person to portray a Black
60	woman’s experiences. For the television programme, the producers hired writers from many different backgrounds, including Black female writers, to ensure that the characters’ perspectives were rendered accurately. This one change—making Mia a Black character—had large implications. More weight is added to the scenes, such as Mia being offered the role of house manager for Elena, or Mia feeling uncomfortable with her
65	daughter being indulged in the wealthy white family. Rather than racism, these moments are what give the audience access to the story’s intentions.
70	[7] What makes <i>Little Women</i> and <i>Little Fires Everywhere</i> so special is that they function as a sort of collaboration between the original author and the screen adaptor. Each party brings their own expertise, coming from their own time and place, and best understanding their own medium and audience. Rather than simply copying the original novels, these adaptations aim to contribute to a contemporary conversation. They take timeless stories and make them timely.

End of reading passages