

**Etapă județeană/sectoarelor municipiului București a olimpiadelor naționale școlare –
2023**

Probă scrisă

Limba engleză

CLASA a XII-a - SECȚIUNEA B

SUBIECTUL A – USE OF ENGLISH (40 points)

I. Read the text below and do the tasks that follow. (20 points)

The history of reading is a topic that probably interests all readers. Reading what someone else has written brings with it a sense of continuity and solidarity. This sense of solidarity is strengthened when we get to know how others read. What we read and how it affects us can reflect our personalities and our experiences as individuals. The history of readers and reading can offer much insight into the nature and history of the society as a whole. The topic is a fascinating one, and one that has several absorbing aspects.

In the 4th millennium BCE, with agricultural prosperity and increasing complexity of social structures, urban centers started developing in Mesopotamia and an unknown individual changed the course of human history by using some **squiggles** on clay to represent a goat and an ox. There, at the birth of the concept of writing – the representation of spoken sounds using visual signs – its inseparable twin, the art of reading, was also born. Writing was initially used to keep records of transactions that involved several entities and were carried out across vast distances. The earliest known clay tablets used picture-like signs to depict lists of goods. Around 2600 BCE, the cuneiform script developed and writing became more **versatile**. It was used to document laws and narrate deeds of kings, in addition to keeping records of transactions. In the cuneiform script, each syllable was represented by a different sign, and the number of characters one had to learn in order to be able to read ran into hundreds. To be a scribe in ancient Mesopotamia was an enormous achievement. If a king could read, he made sure to boast about it in his inscriptions. An elaborate system of schools trained young scribes from an early age. The ancient pioneers of writing and reading were aware – and in **awe** – of the potential of this new form of communication. In ancient Mesopotamian culture, birds were considered sacred because the marks their feet made on wet ground resembled cuneiform characters. Back then, people believed the patterns made by the wandering feet of birds were messages from the gods, waiting to be deciphered.

As the ancient writers discovered their power to make and alter myth and history, the first works of literature were written. The earliest known author named in history is a woman, the Akkadian princess and High Priestess Enheduanna, who composed temple hymns around 2300 BCE and signed her name onto the clay tablets on which she inscribed her works. It was around this time that writers began to explicitly address the absent “dear reader” in their writings in specific acknowledgement of reading as a mode of inter-temporal communication.

A. Answer the following questions, according to the text.

8 points

1. According to the first paragraph, what makes the history of reading a fascinating story?
2. What is a possible definition of reading according to the second paragraph?
3. Why was being a scribe in ancient Mesopotamia such an accomplishment?
4. Why would the “dear reader” explicitly addressed in the writings around 2300 BCE be considered “absent”?

B. Choose the synonym for the words given below, according to their meaning in the text.

6 points

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. squiggles: | a. squirms | b. scrawls | c. wiggles | d. graffiti |
| 2. versatile: | a. functional | b. compatible | c. convertible | d. many-sided |
| 3. awe: | a. esteem | b. admiration | c. horror | d. distress |

C. Rephrase the following sentences so as to preserve the meaning.

6 points

1. The history of reading is a topic that probably interests all readers.

In all _____ the history of reading.

2. Back then, people believed the patterns made by the wandering feet of birds were messages from the gods, waiting to be deciphered.

The patterns made by the wandering feet of birds _____ the gods, waiting to be deciphered.

3. As the ancient writers discovered their power to make and alter myth and history, the first works of literature were written.

It was the discovery _____ the ancient writers write the first works of literature.

II. Use the word given in brackets to form a word that fits in each gap.

10 points

I suppose, though, that I was lucky in other ways. In 1989, when I turned sixty-five, I should have, according to various (1) _____ (**GOVERN**) regulations and so forth, been asked to retire, or at least accepted the position of director emeritus. Such a (2) _____ (**DEMOTE**) would have left me somewhat emasculated but still able to (3) _____ (**PART**) in the daily life of the lab. But to my surprise, there was no letter from some (4) _____ (**BUREAUCRACY**) reminding me of the imminent (5) _____ (**DIMINISH**) of responsibilities and inviting my retirement. I was, it seemed, an (6) _____ (**EXCEPT**). Not that it would have bothered me (7) _____ (**TERRIBLE**), had I been asked to (8) _____ (**ADHESION**) to the rules. By that time, after all, I scarcely needed NIH's name or (9) _____ (**ASSOCIATE**) to support me; had they insisted on holding me to the same standards they did everyone else, I would have accepted one of the offers from Johns Hopkins or Georgetown that were extended to me (10) _____ (**ANNUAL**).

III. Translate the following text into English.

10 points

Apoi am citit trei pagini fără să mă opresc. Erau foarte bine și foarte limpede scrise, dar în mansardă era cald, și eu mă gîndeam că peste o lună voi fi în Dumbrava Sibiului. Până seara citisem douăzeci și șapte de pagini și îmi mai rămăseseră o sută nouăzeci și una. Aceasta pentru că la patru și jumătate m-am dus să fac dușul rece; la cinci și jumătate m-am convins că sufăr de foame și am coborât să mănânc; la șase jumătate am citit o revistă; la șapte mi-a fost sete, la șapte și un sfert mi s-a rupt creionul, la șapte jumătate am devenit melancolic auzind ciripitul păsărilor, la opt m-am socotit persecutat (...).

(Mircea Eliade, *Romanul adolescentului miop*)

SUBIECTUL B – INTEGRATED SKILLS (60 points)

Read the text below and do the tasks that follow.

Umberto Pelizzari was about 25 metres beneath an azure Sardinian sea when he spotted an ideal place to moor the boat. Taking the anchor with his bare hands, he fastened it sturdily to the bottom, then surfaced slowly, calmly preserving the only air he had with him – that in his lungs -- and scissoring the powerful legs that had borne him scores of times up from other, more profound reaches of the deep.

Pelizzari, one of the world's best-known free-divers, had students waiting for him on the boat off the northern point of this island, due west of the glamorous Emerald Coast. Watching him secure their anchor in this unconventional way, they saw little reason to be afraid. Having broken nearly all the world records in breath-hold diving in the 1990's, Pelizzari now wanted to share the magic, self-control and dizzying excitement of penetrating the depth and solitude of the ocean with little more than a mask, fins, some weights and sheer force of will.

Until recently, free-diving, or apnea, had been dominated by a relatively elite, competitive community of iron-lung athletes. These masters of the underwater universe seemed to defy the constraints of physics by descending thousands of metres, using no breathing apparatus whatsoever. Up to the 1960's, scientists had thought the chest would collapse at depths greater than 38 metres. Today, Pelizzari would consider that a dip in the pool. He is among only a handful of people on the planet able to sink to inky, silent reaches of more than 150 metres on a lungful of air. At those levels, he says, the heart can slow to seven to nine beats per minute from an average of 70 for a person at rest, while the atmospheric pressure compresses the lungs to the size of a grapefruit. I wondered what could possibly be the allure? 'It's not about being Superman,' Pelizzari said, shielding his eyes from the bright Sardinian sun. 'Relaxation and concentration are the most important parts of my method.'

This meditative emphasis is, it turns out, somewhat unique in free-diving, a sport that is sometimes punctuated by daredevils driven to outdo each other and organisations that reward them for setting new records. Since retiring from competition in 2001, Pelizzari has set about developing an education method that instead places a premium on security, relaxation and strong sensations. 'If your only other experience in water was with a snorkel on the surface for ten minutes, and you are instead able to snorkel under water at ten metres for one minute – and relax while doing so – you are going to have a great time,' said Glenn Venghaus, an instructor on one of Pelizzari's courses.

I found this approach difficult to follow when I tried free-diving in Sardinia's blue waters. Seeing free-diver friends far beneath the waves, playing with an octopus hidden in a fantastic granite cave, or swimming among clouds of tiny black fish – I wanted to do the same. Yet the thought of not having enough breath to resurface, and the fear that my eardrums would pop under the pressure preoccupied me so much that I had trouble seeing how anyone could find pleasure from diving deep. I did manage it in the end, though. With each dive on a single breath I went deeper, eventually making it to 13.3 metres – my emotional equivalent of Pelizzari's 150 metres. My reward was to experience a serenity I had never known in deep water, and the exhilaration of discovering that I could rest in the depths without fear.

I. For each question decide which answer (A, B, C or D) fits best according to the text. 10 points

1. In the first paragraph, what does the writer observe about Pelizzari?
 - A. the time it took him to find a suitable place to secure the anchor
 - B. the depth he managed to reach when underwater
 - C. the speed at which he moved through the water using just his legs
 - D. the ease with which he controlled the amount of air he used

2. According to the text, why did the students see little reason to feel afraid?
 - A. They were unaware of the dangers free-diving might entail.
 - B. They were aware of Pelizzari's competence.
 - C. They knew Pelizzari would follow the rules.
 - D. They had brought the right equipment with them.

3. What contrast is made between Pelizzari's technique and other forms of free-diving?
 - A. His technique makes free-diving more demanding physically.
 - B. It takes longer to get to the deepest levels using his technique.
 - C. Individuals are less competitive when using his technique.
 - D. There are fewer opportunities to practise his technique.

4. What difficulty did the writer have when she first went free-diving?
 - A. She ran out of breath after a short time.
 - B. Her apprehension made enjoyment impossible.
 - C. She was put off by watching others doing it.
 - D. Her eardrums were badly affected by being underwater.

5. What does the writer mean by "my emotional equivalent" in the last paragraph?
 - A. She felt she had reached a level she was proud of.
 - B. She felt upset that she could go no further.
 - C. She felt an exhilaration she had not anticipated.
 - D. She felt inadequate compared to Pelizzari.

**II. Starting from the text above, write an essay reflecting on *water*. (250-280 words)
50 points**