**Assessment Task for Reading**

**Topic: Shopping Addiction**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ reading skills.

This set of materials contains the following:

* **The reading texts**
* **A set of questions**
* **Suggested answers**

Reading Texts

**Text 1**

**Ad 1**

|  |  |
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| If you asked a cross-section of society in, say, Tokyo, Sydney, New York or Edinburgh, what they did in their spare time, a large number would answer that they go shopping. For many of these people, going shopping is their favourite leisure activity. But, realistically, these people don’t need most of the things that they buy, so why is it an attractive pastime?Some psychologists believe that shopping today is the equivalent of ancient hunter-gather societies. We ‘hunt’ for things and ‘gather’ (=buy) them to prove that we are socially successful. This analogy may seem a little farfetched but how else can we explain the incredible growth in consumerism? For many people, what they buy defines them. For example, a person’s choice of clothes instantly tells other people a lot about them: how much money they have, what sort of social groups they belong to and so on. Psychologists have also done research that shows people who enjoy shopping have chemical changes in their brain when they buy something. These chemicals produce feelings of well-being so the shopper wants to recreate the feel-good sensation by buying more things.Given that so many shoppers are willing to spend money for things they want but don’t need, there are, inevitably, plenty of shopkeepers willing to take their money from them. A lot of shopping trips take place in shopping malls every day in modern cities. These temples to modern consumerism are designed to be as welcoming as possible and include facilities like cinemas, restaurants and cafes where faithful followers can sit down and relax in their pilgrimage. So, malls are designed to get the maximum footfall but the shop owners still need to persuade us to actually spend money. In recent decades, retailers have become more ‘sophisticated’ in the way they present and sell their goods. Shopkeepers have always done things like pricing goods at $99.9 instead of $100 but other techniques have been added to their box of tricks. In open plan, self-service shops, the goods are positioned to pull us into them. For example, a supermarket will put destination goods, i.e. the things you went in for, at the back of the store. While you are searching for your rice and cooking oil, you will have to pass the impulse buys which are usually displayed within easy reach. These are things that you didn’t go in for but you buy on a whim. Another ploy in self-service shops is to put the goods with the greatest profit margin at eye-height. Wares that make the shop less money will be down near your feet and more difficult to find. The malls are doing their tricks well. They have successfully turned shopping into an enjoyable pastime for many people. For some, however, shopping is much more than that but a destructive addiction that can turn into a financial disaster. ‘Like other addictions, compulsive shopping basically has to do with lack of control over one’s impulses,’ says Donald White, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa. He adds, ‘Research suggests that around 10% of people may have a genetic predisposition to an addictive behaviour, which may be triggered by certain environmental factors. They will get some kind of high from an addictive behaviour like shopping.’ Fuelled by the rapid growth of shopping malls and widespread advertising, consumerism has escalated in recent years and become a measure of our social worth. To some people, shopping is an attempt to try to ‘buy’ happiness – to feel admired, accepted and empowered. However, it is not the case in reality. Research shows that about 85% of the shopaholics have experienced self-denial, credit problems or even impaired relationships with friends and family. Although shopping addition can get people into serious problems, it is treatable. If shopaholics truly want to put a stop to how their spending habits are taking over their life, therapy can provide insights into how they can get rid of the bad habits.  | 51015202530354045 |

**Text 2**

|  |  |
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| **Is Your Debt RuiningYour Life?**‘My over-spending began about seven years ago when I first started work. I was living on my own for the first time in my life. I got my first credit card and buying nice things for my new home cheered me up. At first, I was buying things that I needed but soon I was shopping for the sake of it. I didn’t need the stuff I was buying but I just wanted more and more things. Very often I never used the things I bought. I would take them home and I’d hide them in my bedroom.My credit card debt started to mount. At first I paid off the total amount every month but I soon couldn’t afford to do that. When I reached the maximum debt on that first card, I just got another one so I could carry on spending. This went on for about five years – I just kept getting further into debt and applying for more credit cards. It was a vicious circle: I’d worry about the enormous debts then buy more useless things to make myself feel better and then I’d feel disgusted and guilty. The “price” I paid for shopping was really high.It took me a long time to face the fact that I was a compulsive shopper. Eventually, a very good friend told me I had to stop burying my head in the sand and get help. I was quite angry with her because I didn’t want to admit that I had an addiction but, in my heart of hearts, I knew she was right. That was when I found out about Debt Advisors.I can honestly say that going to Debt Advisors has turned my life around. A counsellor helped me understand that I had started shopping because I was unhappy and that it had become an addiction which stopped me from facing my problems. Once I started to understand my compulsion, I could deal with my spending. I cut up all my credit cards eighteen months ago and I have started to pay off all my debts. It’s going to take a long time before I’m debt free but for the first time in years I feel in control and positive about the future. It’s a great feeling!’***This is the story of Ms D, who came to us eighteen months ago when she realised that her spending was out of control. If you or someone you know has a debt problem, call Debt Advisors for free and confidential advice on 32841032.*** | 510152025 |

**END OF READING TEXTS**

**Questions**

**Refer to Text 1 and answer Questions 1-7.**

1. In Paragraph 2, the writer thinks the idea of shoppers as ‘hunter-gathers’ \_\_\_\_\_\_ consumerism.
2. doesn’t provide a clear definition for
3. doesn’t explain the growth in
4. could be the explanation for
5. proves to be the explanation for

2a. What do the words ‘temples’ (Line 16), ‘followers’ (Line 18) and ‘pilgrimage’ (Line 19) in Paragraph 3 refer to?

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2b. Why does the writer use the three words stated in 2a in the text?

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3a. In Line 21, ‘sophisticated’ means…

1. honest
2. responsible
3. generous
4. experienced

3b. Why does the writer put the word ‘sophisticated’ in quotation marks when s/he describes the shop owners?

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3c. Which of the following best describes the attitude of the writer towards these shop owners? Give evidence from the text for your answer.

1. appreciative
2. sympathetic
3. disapproving
4. understanding

4a. Refer to Paragraphs 5-6. Which of the following words best describe what you feel about the information presented in the two paragraphs? Circle the words.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| reliable | personal | objective |
| exaggerating | authoritative | emotional |

4b. Give reasons for your answers to 4a.

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1. Which of the following is TRUE about shopping addiction?
	1. Most people get addicted to shopping because of their genes.
	2. Most shopaholics are not aware of their own problems.
	3. Most shopaholics usually feel high when they shop.
	4. Most shopaholics usually feel guilty when they shop.
2. The writer is mainly interested in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. what people buy and where they shop
4. the origin of modern consumerism
5. the shopping behaviours in different countries
6. the reasons for excessive shopping and its associated problems
7. What is the best title for Text 1?
8. A Shopper’s Paradise
9. Spend, Spend, Spend
10. Modern Shopping Malls
11. Consumerism and Consumers’ Rights

**Refer to Text 2 and answer Questions 8-10.**

8a. Which of the following best describes the way Paragraphs 1-4 is written?

1. first person narration
2. second person narration
3. third person narration

8b. Who does ‘I’ refer to? What kind of problems does ‘I’ have?

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8c. Based on your answer to 8a, explain why this kind of narration is effective in the text.

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9. In Paragraph 2, why is the word ‘price’ (Line 12) put in quotation marks?

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1. What does the phrase ‘in my heart of hearts’ (Line 15) tell us about ‘I’?
2. She did not believe in her friend.
3. She did not believe that her friend was angry with her.
4. She knew that her friend was a compulsive shopper, too.
5. She knew what her friend said was true but she did not want to admit it.

**Refer to Texts 1 and 2 and answer Question 11.**

11a. What kinds of texts are Texts 1 and 2? Match the texts with the most appropriate answers.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Text 1 |  | A. a shopping guide |
|  |  | B. a magazine article |
| Text 2 |  | C. a leaflet  |
|  |  | D. a diary  |

11b. Which writer(s) would you expect to agree with the following statements? Tick the appropriate boxes.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   |  Writer of Text 1 |  Writer of Text 2 |
| Shopping can be addictive. |  |  |
| It is too easy to get credit cards nowadays. |  |  |
| People feel good when they buy things. |  |  |
| Some people are more easily to be addicted to shopping because of their genes. |  |  |
| Shopping addiction can be treated. |  |  |
| People should avoid excessive shopping. |  |  |

11c. The two texts share a common message. What is it?

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11d. Although the two texts share a common message, they are written for different readers and in different styles. Discuss who would probably read the texts based on your answers to 11a and compare how the writers present the message in them.

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**END OF QUESTIONS**

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| **SUGGESTED ANSWERS** |
| 1. | C |
| 2a. | The words ‘temples’, ‘followers’ and ‘pilgrimage’ refer to ‘shopping malls’, ‘shoppers’ and ‘shopping trips’ respectively.  |
| 2b. | The writer wants to show that shopping is as important as a religion to some people / that shopping is like people’s going to worship. |
| 3a. | D |
| 3b. | The writer wants to show that the shop owners are ‘sophisticated’ in a negative sense, i.e. cunning. |
| 3c. | CThe writer describes the ways to attract people to shop as a ‘box of tricks’. (Or any trick mentioned in the text.)  |
| 4a.  | reliable, objective and authoritative |
| 4b. | The use of statistics/figures shows that the information is based on some research data but not personal views, thus making the two paragraphs more objective. The use of quotations from experts in the field further adds authority and reliability to the text.  |
| 5. | C |
| 6. | D |
| 7. | B |
| 8a. | A |
| 8b. | ‘I’ refers to Ms D. She is having a debt problem. |
| 8c. | It makes the information more personal. By using ‘I’, readers, in particular those who have debt problems, may identify more readily with the events described.  |
| 9. | Ms D wants to tell the reader that the word ‘price’ carries a double meaning, i.e. the amount of money Ms D paid for shopping and the bad experiences caused by shopping.  |
| 10. | D |
| 11a. | Text 1 – B; Text 2 – C |
| 11b. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Text 1 | Text 2 |
| Shopping can be addictive. | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| It is too easy to get credit cards nowadays. |  | 🗸 |
| People feel good when they buy things. | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Some people are more easily to be addicted to shopping because of their genes. | 🗸 |  |
| Shopping addiction can be treated. | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| People should avoid excessive shopping. | 🗸 | 🗸 |
|  |  |  |

 |
| 11c. | People should avoid excessive shopping because it is addictive and may cause serious problems. / People who are addicted to shopping should seek help or receive therapy. |
| 11d.  | Text 1 is a magazine article. It targets at the general public who want to know more about shopping addiction. The writer presents the message in an objective way by using different sources of information, including research results, figures and quotations of scholars to support his views and make his arguments convincing. Text 2 is a leaflet targeting at those who are addicted to shopping and have debt problems. Although it shares the same message as that in Text 1, the writer presents it in a personal way by telling a story through first person narration, which makes the reader identify with the character more easily.  |

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**