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Exam Skills Trainer 1

Reading

Strategy

Read the gapped text first to gain an overall idea of the structure and meaning. To decide which paragraph fits in a gap, read the paragraphs before and after each gap to identify the context. Then read the paragraphs that have been removed, looking out for paraphrasing of vocabulary and connections between people, places and things.

- 1 Read the Strategy above and the gapped text in exercise 2. Follow the instructions in the Strategy to find the paragraph that fits gap 1. What references to 'paper' are made in the missing paragraph? What connections exist between the missing paragraph and the paragraph after the gap?

- 2 Read the text. Match paragraphs A–F with gaps 1–6.

The story of paper

The Gutenberg printing press is regarded by many as the most important invention of the last millennium. Developed in Germany in the 1440s, the new machine revolutionised printing and brought about far-reaching changes in Europe. However, the press would never have existed were it not for a much earlier invention: paper.

1

Paper soon spread to the Arab world from Asia, but it did not take off in Europe because of a preference for parchment. Made from animal skin, parchment was rather expensive, but as there were so few people who could read and write at the time, this was not considered a problem.

2

The first paper was made from cotton soaked in water and chemicals to release cellulose from its fibres. This process is known as pulping, with pulp being the liquid in which the cellulose floats around. Once the cellulose was extracted from the pulp, it was left to dry in long flat sheets that were later cut into pieces.

3

But then disaster struck. The demand for paper in the West caused the supply of cotton and rags to dry up. So short of raw material were the paper mills that they used the bloodstained uniforms taken from dead soldiers on the battlefield to boost production. It was clear that an alternative to cotton was needed.

4

Today, the main raw material is paper itself, due to the practice of recycling. Aptly enough, much of the world's paper recycling takes place in China, the country of its birth. It's a hugely successful process which has helped to keep paper affordable and sustainable. However, new technologies have posed another threat to paper.

5

But then the printer came along, an invention that put paid to the idea. Recipients chose to print out important information on paper as a back-up instead of just saving it on their computers. Paper sales continued to boom and for a while it seemed that paper would be safe.

6

Old habits die hard, however, and some people prefer to read hard copy rather than text on a screen. For this reason, the demise of paper books seems extremely unlikely in the near future. For the time being, paper production will continue, although it will never be as profitable as it was in the past.

- A Over the centuries, paper manufacturing was innovated time and time again with the aim of increasing efficiency and lowering costs. New machines were invented for pulping the cotton and different chemicals were added to the pulp. When paper was at its cheapest in 1702, the first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared.
- B The 'paperless office' was first predicted in the 19th century by Thomas Edison. The concept gained momentum in the 1970s with the advent of computers, which would make it possible to visualise documents on a screen. Thanks to the new machines, paper appeared to be doomed.
- C Developed by the Chinese around 2,000 years ago, this material was originally conceived for a very different purpose: to cover and protect valuable possessions. Once its potential as a writing medium was discovered, it soon replaced the much heavier bamboo and costlier silk that had previously been used for writing on.
- D Not for long. In 2013, paper sales reached their peak and since then they have been falling due to the expansion of digital technologies. Lower prices have encouraged many to abandon paper books and newspapers in favour of cheaper online versions. It would seem that history is repeating itself, and digital is doing to paper what paper did to parchment at the end of the Middle Ages.
- E At first, paper makers in Europe were blind to the solution in front of their eyes. The Chinese had been using wood to make paper for centuries, and as early as 1719, a French botanist had observed wasps making paper nests by chewing wood. It took another 130 years for wood to become an important source for paper production in Europe.
- F The attraction of paper did not become apparent until the start of the Commercial Revolution in the late 13th century, when a cheaper medium for drawing up contracts and keeping accounts was required. As trade and commerce expanded, parchment was gradually replaced by paper, and Europeans began to manufacture it in earnest.