



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Cambridge Lower Secondary Sample Test
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English Paper 1

Insert

Stage 9

Text A

Honey for money

Honey, golden and sweet, has always been held in the highest regard. Almost every society on earth has traditionally known and used it. One example of this is in the prehistoric cave paintings near Valencia, in Spain, dating back 15,000 years which depict men gathering honey for food.

Where honey comes from

Flowers need bees to visit them so that plants will be pollinated. To attract the bees, flowers supply nectar, which is a solution of sugars that bees collect, and then concentrate into honey. The aroma, taste and colour of honey are determined by the plants from which the bees have gathered nectar. Sunflowers, for example, give a golden-yellow honey; clover gives a sweet, white honey; agave species give honey a bitter taste that is popular in some societies. Dark honey usually has a strong flavour and often has a high mineral content; pale honey has a more delicate flavour.

How honey is made

Honey contains a wide range of sugars. It also contains small amounts of other substances such as minerals, vitamins, proteins and amino acids. The temperature in a bees' nest, where honey is stored, is usually about 35°C. This temperature, and the ventilation produced by bees fanning their wings, cause water to evaporate from the honey. When the water content is reduced to about 20 per cent, the honey is ripe. Then, the bees seal the cell with a wax cap, known as propolis, so the honey will not ferment. In this way, the bees prepare for themselves a concentrated food source. This nourishment sustains them through periods when there are no flowers.

When honey is harvested

Honey inside the sealed cell is regarded by beekeepers as ready for harvest. Honey at this stage is pure and perfect: whether it is in a wild nest, a homemade hive or the most expensive factory-made hive. The subsequent harvesting and processing of honey determine whether this quality is retained. If the beekeepers are working far away from roads and industry, they can command a premium price for the honey because it can be certified as organic.

The financial value of honey

Beekeeping has skyrocketed in popularity and profitability in recent years for both hobbyists and professionals. While honey is the obvious source of income for beekeepers, there are many other streams of revenue connected to beekeeping: selling the beeswax to use in products such as candles and lip balms; selling the pollen granules as a superfood; selling propolis to use in commercial products such as chewing gum.

Text B

My life with bees

When we decided to get honeybees, I jumped right in with both feet. I ordered the bees. I cut, ground and filed an old lawnmower blade into a hooked hive tool. I scavenged the local landfill for cans to build a homemade smoker and built two complete hives plus most of the parts for the other three, minus the frames. You have to be really organised and hardworking.

Bear in mind that everything didn't come out perfectly. My boxes were a little too narrow and the bees attached some extra comb to the sides. The spring I used for the smoker bellows was a little weak, so it didn't puff out clouds of smoke like the fancy store-bought model. That didn't matter. What mattered was that I made them with my own hands, and they worked. At the end of the season I extracted 200 kilos of honey from those five hives! I will never forget it.

Why should you build your own beekeeping equipment? The sheer pleasure of doing it is reason enough. Continuing the tradition of people working with their hands and solving their own problems is another good one. By the time you are finished, you will have a better understanding of the parts that make up the construction of the hive, how they are constructed, and how they all work together as a unit. You can find and use sources of scrap wood that will save you money and keep waste out of the landfill. I guess the harder question to answer would be: Why not?

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