



ST. NICHOLAS COLLEGE
NAXXAR BOYS' SECONDARY SCHOOL
HALF YEARLY EXAMINATIONS 2015

TRACK
3

FORM 3

ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION

Read the following text and answer the questions in the main paper.

Shoemaking craft lives on in Paris – 3,000 Euro a pair.

For 60 years, Raymond Massaro has been living and breathing fashion. Carrying on a business started by his grandfather 114 years ago, the Parisian makes shoes for the rich and famous, as well as for fashion house Chanel. 1

Massaro, whose shoes fetch 3,000 Euro a pair, takes pride in the traditions of his craft, even using the old pedal-operated sewing machines from his father's era. "Why am I still doing this? It's not a question of money," said Mr. Massaro, 78. "It's a question of passion". 5

But it hasn't always been that way. "When I was young, I didn't want to be a shoemaker", he said. "My father was a shoemaker, his three cousins were shoemakers and my grandfather was a shoemaker; I wanted to do something else. My father made me become a shoemaker, and I thank him every morning." 10

Mr Massaro had hoped to be a Professor of French or History. "But I am doing a kind of history. I've constructed the shoes of Napoleon. I've redone the shoes of Louis XIV and I've made a mould for Pope John Paul II. It's a little bit of history. I do it my way." He has maintained the standards that came before him. "Everything is hand-made," he said, smoothing out the wrinkles of his laboratory coat. "A shoemaker's work is to achieve perfection. We are really craftsmen. The business is only 10 people. Everything is done here," he said, pointing to the backroom where the workshop is located. "The head of the workshop has been with us more than 30 years. Once someone starts working here, they don't leave. It's the guarantee of good work. We're a **tight-knit team.**" 15 20



Mr. Massaro's staff **turn out** about 1,500 pairs of shoes a year, 150 of which are of Chanel. Standards of craftsmanship are such that his 3,000 regular clients believe the price is well worth it. He has made shoes for the Kennedy family, Elizabeth Taylor and the Duchess of Windsor but he said his biggest challenge was understanding why someone was willing to spend such a large sum of money on footwear. "I have to understand their psychology and ask myself why they come here. Is it for a personal reason or to be more comfortable? Is it for a night out or for something particular? That's the hardest part of my job – knowing how to approach the client. Once the 25 30

customer decides on a style of shoe, an imprint of their foot is taken and a mould is made. Making the shoes takes about 40 hours,” Mr. Massaro explained. 35

With racks of carefully crafted men’s and women’s shoes behind him, he holds up the famous two-coloured Chanel sandal, an icon of the fashion industry. “It has been copied a million times,” he said. “My father and I worked with Coco Chanel to create this sandal about 50 years ago. The sandal’s **unique cut** and the use of colour breathed life into an era when most women wore grey,” Mr Massaro said. 40

With no son to take over the family firm from him, Mr Massaro has sold his company to privately owned Chanel, ensuring his craft will continue beyond his long overdue retirement. “If one day I retire, the business will still exist. This office will still exist,” he said, explaining that his father had worked at the same place. “Right now we are preparing this season’s collection to present at the beginning of next month. Each year we make a new collection for Chanel and we consult with Chanel designer Karl Lagerfeld. This is our twenty-fifth year working with Karl. He’s a workaholic and a genius who inspires us. He’s renovated Chanel, while keeping their look. I admire him greatly.” 45

Pointing excitedly at a pair of shoes with a jewel ball wrapped around the heels, he explains it was made for Marlene Dietrich. Opening a box, he pauses, holding up a pair of elegant satin low-heeled shoes he made for Barbara Hilton. 50