Sample task 3: Eating bugs

Instructions for Section C
Section C consists of two questions. Read the background information below and the material on pages 56 and 57, and then complete both Questions 1 and 2. For the purposes of this task, the term ‘language’ refers to written, spoken and visual language. Your response to Question 2 will be assessed according to the criteria set out on page 3 of this book.

Background information
Channel 9’s news website is nine.com.au. ‘Coach’ is a section of the website devoted to health and fitness issues. Staff journalist Stuart Marsh wrote the following opinion piece promoting insects as a food source.
Reader JH contributed the comment that follows the article.
Eating bugs is the protein source of the future, so get used to it

By Stuart Marsh

Aug 17th, 2016

Eating up for dinner?

In my hand is potentially the greatest post-workout food ever found. It contains every amino acid, is 70 percent protein, contains almost no fat and is high in iron, calcium, vitamin B12 and fibre.

You may think I'm describing the latest form of protein powder or muscle bar, but what I'm holding is a bug, a single cricket to be precise – and it just may be the muscle-building food of the future.

Humans have been eating bugs for as long as we've been eating. If it crawled, buzzed or burrowed around our homes, it's bound to have ended up in our mouths – but thanks to the rise of airborne disease carried by insects like cockroaches, eating bugs has fallen out of favour.

Spend some time abroad however, and you'll see that our aversion to eating creepy crawlies is strictly a Western one: in Vietnam they snack on grasshoppers when drinking beer, in Thailand they sizzle up tiny woodworms with noodles, and in Cambodia a deep-fried tarantula is a delicacy reserved only for special guests.

Even here in Australia, Indigenous Australians have been eating wiggly grub mahogany (essentially a form of large, wriggling maggot) for as long as they have been around.

And now, thanks to our ever-increasing thirst for foods that are "ancient" and "mystic" (just think about any superfood you've seen in the last three years), Western society is back onto bugs.

Jane Abma is co-founder of a company called Primal Collective that packages and sells roasted crickets. She believes that the potential – and need – for us to eat bugs is higher than ever before.

"We believe insects are the protein of the future," Abma tells Coach.

"People all over the world (particularly in South-East Asia and Central America) enjoy insects as part of their everyday diet, so it's not as crazy as it sounds."

Bugs are a nutritional powerhouse

Of course it wouldn't make sense to eat insects if they didn't a) taste fantastic or b) give you so much nutrition that you couldn't ignore them.

While the taste verdict is still undecided, the nutritional side of creepy crawlies makes them more deserving of a superfood title than any other hyped berry or herb.

Take crickets for example – in just a 5 gram serving (roughly a teaspoon's worth of little legs and wings) there's 2.9 grams of protein – enough to make any bodybuilder get excited. It's this muscle-building potential that's really fueling the buggy banquet movement amongst fitness fanatics.

"As far as percentage protein goes, crickets are very high: 68 percent, in fact," Abma tells us.

"Eating bugs is definitely increasingly popular in areas like the US – in the last few years we've seen products like cricket protein bars and powders come onto the market. More recently, similar products have started to appear in Australia."

"We are finding that there is an increasing number of people trying to find higher hits of protein, or more sustainable options (or both)."

Speaking of sustainability...

Think about where your last source of protein came from. It may have been eggs with breakfast, chicken for lunch or even a hearty steak for dinner. All of these things require livestock, which require farms – and a lot of food, water and land.

As Abma explains, while eating crickers sounds pretty gross, it's actually pretty environmentally friendly.

"Crickets in particular are far more sustainable than other protein sources such as beef, salmon or chicken," says Abma.

"For example, to make one kilo of crickets you need about one litre of water, versus 22,000 litres for the equivalent of beef."

"Crickets require about six times less feed and produce 80 percent less greenhouse gasses than cows, adding to the list of benefits for the future of our environment."

What about the 'frock' factor? You (surprisingly) get over it pretty quickly

After tasting the crickets ourselves here in our office, the verdict is that they taste amazingly "normal". Once you get over the fact that you're eating bugs, they're surprisingly easy to eat, and taste a little bit like the crumbs at the bottom of a chip packet.

As Abma explains, because the crickets have been roasted, there's no squiting abdomens or thoraxes exploding in your mouth and spraying bug guts all over your teeth.

(You're welcome for that mental image.)

"We've had lots of great (and hilarious) feedback via social media and from people at health events trying them out at our booths," says Abma.

"I think after they get over the fact that yes, it's an insect and yes, it's whole and there are legs and wings involved, they are pleasantly surprised by the crispy crunchy and nutty flavour."

"There's also no green juice or guts spilling out, which is what a lot of people panic about."

So with all these great reasons to eat insects, it's high time to let go of any prejudices you might have, open your mind and try something new.