Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **February/March 2015**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passages for use with all questions on the Question Paper.

You may annotate this Insert and use the blank spaces for planning.
This Reading Booklet Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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Part 1

Read **Passage A** carefully, and then answer **Questions 1** and **2** on the Question Paper.

Passage A: The Prospect of Gold

The writer describes a visit to a remote canyon which was once the scene of a gold rush.

Persuaded by the tour operator's invitation to 'Take a trip in safety and luxury along the most dangerous road in the world', I settled into the comfortable front seat of a four wheel drive vehicle and fastened my safety belt. The air conditioning offered relief from the searing heat of this early spring day. We would be following the route taken by thousands of prospectors who had converged on the area from all over the world in feverish pursuit of gold over 150 years ago. For 22 kilometres we climbed steeply, but speedily, away from the town along the main highway, seeing no sign of life or habitation.

Suddenly, we turned onto a track barely the width of our vehicle and stopped by two signs. One bearing a skull and crossbones warned of the perils to come; the other was an information board about the gold rush. In one photograph, a prospector was shown standing proudly on a small piece of land he had staked out as his own. This was the start of the road that had been hewn by hand out of solid rock by the men suspended precariously on ropes over the precipice. They, like thousands of others, were desperate for access to the canyon, believing the rumour that untold riches were there for the taking.

Almost immediately, we entered the canyon. The road turned so sharply round a rocky outcrop that we felt we were being thrown out into the void. I looked back. The narrow gap through which we had just passed seemed to clang shut behind us. To our right, two hundred metres below us, the turquoise river writhed and frothed over the rocks, its roars echoing from side to side. To our left, a sheer rock face loomed over us. Ahead of us, a section of the track had been partially washed away by the winter rains. We could not turn round. It was as if we had been lured into a trap. We scrambled out and picked our way across the unstable ground, while the driver slowly manoeuvred the vehicle behind us with only centimetres to spare. There were no safety barriers and the rusting, broken-backed carcass of a vehicle far below told its own story. The road before us vanished into the distance, clinging for 9 kilometres to the sides of the precipice.

Eventually, we dropped to the river bed, reaching the end of the track and the site of a settlement long since deserted. It was a barren place. The makeshift homes for the miners and the handful of women who lived there for a few years had vanished. Exhaustion and broken dreams had led to the abandonment of the dwellings. The winter floods had destroyed what was left. All that remained was the courthouse which was a museum. Court records showed that fights and disputes over claims to land were depressingly frequent. One old photograph showed a wagon, heavily laden with supplies and drawn by six emaciated packhorses, crossing a parched river bed. In another, several young miners posed, old before their time, staring dully into the camera, their faces lined and haggard.

Before we started our perilous return journey, we were given the opportunity to pan for gold ourselves. It was an arduous, repetitive task. We dipped the large sieves into the river, scooped up gravel, and swilled it around in the current, allowing the lighter material to be swept away. Gold is heavy and had it been present, it would have settled in the bottom.

Reason told us that we would discover none, but soon I succumbed to gold fever. The sieve swam before my eyes. I could feel my pulse racing. A kaleidoscope of fragmented fantasies about my imagined wealth swirled around in my head. I was only vaguely aware of the spasms in my back, the blouse clinging damply until, with all energy sapping away and overcome by the heat, I was forced to stop, my throat rasping drily. Like most of those refugees from the civilised world who had preceded the tourists, I had found no gold - my hopes, like theirs, swept away by the current. At least I could stop after twenty minutes knowing that I would return to the comforts of civilisation.

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Part 2

Read **Passage B** carefully, and then answer **Question 3** on the Question Paper.

Passage B: Into the Valley of the Kings

The archaeologist Howard Carter discovered in 1922 the buried tombs of the pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings at Luxor, Egypt. This is a journal entry he might have made before he began his last excursion.

I remain convinced that there is a great secret to be found in the depths of the Valley. Somewhere there, I know, is a perfect, untouched tomb just waiting for a truly determined man to unearth it. It will be my greatest achievement, but the preparations it has required have been extensive and daunting.

First I had to secure financial backing. Archaeological expeditions require considerable amounts of money because it can take years before anything of value is found. Everything involved in a dig is expensive, partly because everything takes so much time, and because this one in particular is on a grand scale. I am fortunate in having the moral and financial support of my friend and benefactor, Lord Carnarvon. I promised him that something magnificent would be found, if only we had sufficient time to do the job properly.

Once I knew that the money was available, I applied for a permit from the Egyptian authorities. Getting permission for anything is slow everywhere. The process can only be speeded up in the time-honoured way: this was achieved by visiting the office of the Director of Antiquities every day, leaving him small – or not so small – gifts. In this way, a permit was finally procured. Even in Egypt the climate varies with the season, and back-breaking work may be undertaken only in the cool season from October to April, so that is when I concluded our labours must commence.

Meanwhile, a team had to be assembled consisting of a foreman – with whom I can communicate – and several dozen selected workmen he must keep in order, ensuring that they turn up regularly for a day's hard work shifting sand. Equally important are the guards I have employed, because what we hope to find will be of incalculable value and very desirable to modern-day grave robbers, descendants of those who despoiled the Valley's tombs thousands of years ago.

Because we intend to work in the Valley for long periods, subsistence supplies needed to be procured, packed, and then shipped down the River Nile to Luxor where our camp was to be. We have laid in stores of not only food and drink for a hundred men labouring in the sweltering desert sun, but of a variety of tools and receptacles for their digging. The large clay jars for drinking water are heavy, so a drove of hardy donkeys have had to be procured. For myself I have also provided writing materials, cameras and film, protective clothing, a collection of reference books so that I can understand what it is that I have found, and a vital large-scale map of the area, divided by gridlines so that areas which have been investigated and yielded nothing may be struck off. Candles are an important part of my equipment, together with electric torches, to enable me to see into any spaces when they are first uncovered.

Before this, I had to visit the Valley myself again with my foreman, to determine the best site for the camp. I had immersed myself in the lives of the ancient Egyptian workmen to ascertain the likeliest places for tombs. We travelled deep into the gorge, looking for a place sheltered from the sun and large enough for our tents and our workshop, but also secret enough not to be seen by a passing camel train. No one must know that I am excavating here, or rivals might appear. Tents were then assembled securely with sand storms in mind.

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Finally, I engaged the services of two antiquities scholars of international renown and swore them to secrecy. They will, in due course, be the means of broadcasting to the world my amazing discoveries, and at the same time they will be able to vouch for their authenticity.

Now that all my preparations are made and everything is in place, I am ready for the challenge of a lifetime!

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