Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading **February/March 2023**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Question 1(a)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: *Hippos*

Scientists have been wrong about hippos before. Their name in Ancient Greek, hippopotamus, translates to 'river horse' yet modern science links the animals to pigs. Recent studies of hippo DNA suggest they're more closely related to whales. Hippos also don't sweat blood as once thought – their skins secrete special scarlet fluid containing antibacterial sunscreen.

The stubby-legged rotund creatures have surprised biologists with running speeds of over 30 kph. With a chambered stomach to break down plant matter, the animals are widely regarded as herbivores, but recently scientists have started to uncover some exceptional behaviour that could change opinion of the animals again – observing them feeding on meat.

One detail that cannot be misunderstood is that hippos are huge – mature males can weigh an intimidating 3200 kg. This contributes to their reputation for aggression, evidenced in brutal battles over mates, slashing and biting with their incisor teeth (measuring up to 40 cm in length).

Yet hippos only prey on grass. They consume around 40 kg a night, spending most of their day wallowing to cool off and digest their food.

Some experts maintain that the animals are not predators but have been driven to scavenge meat when particular nutrients are scarce. Hippos face increasing pressure from encroaching human settlements and tussles over territory may facilitate carnivory, as might growing competition for fresh water and food. After declines of up to 20 per cent over the past two decades, the species is now listed as vulnerable.

Others believe the hippos' meat-eating behaviour isn't on the rise but has simply been overlooked previously since they mostly feed at night.

'We assumed we knew everything about hippos,' said scientist Dr Joseph Dudley, 'and that recent evidence of cannibalism and attacks on other species by hippos signals some evolutionary leap. It's not new simply because we've only just discovered it. Antelope and cattle have been known to feed on carrion and fish.

'Biomechanical limitations hold most of those other animals back from more frequent carnivory,' Dudley suggests. 'They aren't built for taking down prey or biting into flesh. Hippos are another story.'

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Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B: ***Why you need to question your 'hippo' boss***

As Richard and his colleagues sit in an important meeting to discuss future projects at the TV company where they work, they nervously consider the hippo in the room. Thankfully for all concerned, there isn't actually a large semi-aquatic mammal in the room with them. No, instead this 'hippo' is an acronym – the letters standing for the 'highest paid person in the office', a person who is dominating proceedings.

In many companies there are jokes about who is the hippo, but this tendency for lower-paid employees to defer to what higher-paid employees say when a decision has to be made, even when all the data says the hippo is wrong, is a real problem for businesses. Having a hippo in the office demotivating staff isn't funny: it can threaten the culture of a company and mean bad ideas get pushed through.

'You can't argue or ask questions,' says Richard. 'They're the highest paid and have the most power, so their opinion carries more weight. They ask for ideas but dismiss them. They're too impatient to get the job done to consider alternatives to their own plan.'

Most of us have worked for an overly dominating hippo at some time in our careers: a boss, manager or project leader who we feel unable to criticise, whose every idea we have to praise. Often, like the real animal, human hippos have little ears and a big mouth – they need to speak less and listen more.

And how often is the unchallenged boss's decision correct? Rarely, according to a recent study looking at the video-games industry. The report found that projects led by junior managers were more likely to be successful than those with a senior boss in charge, because other employees felt able to give critical feedback.

Hippos may think they know best, but they spend too much time wallowing in comfortable offices to know what is happening with customers in the real world.

The report's suggested solution is for the leader of any new project to be kept secret, thereby encouraging junior managers to be more willing to offer their honest opinions. Such a 'blind review process' would work best in a large business, creating opportunities for leaders to learn from their staff, and to engage in the type of meaningful dialogue every company should have.

Meanwhile, Richard says he remembers one project that a former hippo pushed through: 'It failed commercially, costing the company millions.'

Read **Text C**, and then answer Questions **2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C: *Into the Delta*

The narrator, Susan, recalls first arriving from the town of Seronga with a large group of tourists for a two-day safari along a river delta with the Okavango Polers Trust (OPT). Susan went on to work with the OPT, staying in the area for over nine years.

After a quick briefing, we boarded our mokoro. Expertly crafted from the trunk of an ebony tree, a mokoro is a dugout canoe, propelled by a 'poler' standing upright in the rear, pushing a long wooden pole off the riverbed.

Our poler explained that all fifty members of the OPT were local men. Many owned their own boat and had learnt their poling skills as children, catching fish and travelling between villages by water. To preserve the delicate ecological balance of the delta, fishing was now tightly controlled, but as poling was more lucrative, few were complaining. When more polers could afford to convert to fibreglass canoes, fewer mature trees would need to be cut down.

Travel was through channels made by hippos. These channels were often clogged with vegetation, so polers had to push hard to get through. Sometimes a male hippo decided that he didn't want commuters using 'his' channel, rising unexpectedly out of the water, huge mouth gaping and honking warnings at the traffic. Hippos always had right-of-way and polers had to be alert. Sometimes they'd spend days opening new channels to avoid aggressive hippos. There were some terrifying near misses!

I will never forget the utter tranquillity of swishing through the water lilies in the open lagoons that first day. I consciously took a 'snapshot' memory, breathing in its essence as an antidote to my stressful life. As I lay back on my backpack, the mokoro seemed to glide, gently floating as though blown through the perfectly clear water. The poler for our group – an old man called Baruti – commanded respect from the other polers and had a persuasive, easy manner with locals and tourists alike. When we washed up on the shoreline at midday, he didn't participate in the frantic setting up of our temporary camp but directed operations calmly, explaining that we would have lunch and then rest (like the animals did) sheltering from the heat of the day.

Late afternoon, we re-loaded the boats and headed for hippo territory. Hippo calls carried eerily across the still waters as our polers skilfully manoeuvred our fleet to the very edge of their pool. Experience guided the approach towards the shadowy outlines huddled together, spouting, chuffing and grunting in the water. One imposing male took exception to a mokoro edging a little too close to him, causing its brash young poler to scuttle back hastily into the shelter of the reeds – to the raucous amusement of the others.

Around the campfire that night, we discovered we were the first group to book directly with the OPT since it was started by Baruti as a community-owned eco-tourism business. As our wood-fire smoke drifted skywards, I was inspired by the genuine friendliness of the polers, their dreams of working for themselves and a better future. I discovered they had already cleared wasteland nearer Seronga to use as a permanent camp, planned a solar-powered shower block for guests and hoped to buy a truck.

Next week, more polers would sit exams to get licences to be guides. They'd need to demonstrate they had the skills to cater for the broader range of tourists seeking more authentic and affordable ways to explore the area that they hoped to attract. Part of the exam was identifying animals by their English names. I had books on native species and photos I'd taken on my travels, so offered to stay a few days to help with lessons.

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Classes were well attended. Comparing ‘facts’ in the books with stories of animal behaviour from experienced polers was interesting. Apparently, hippos go under water for about four minutes. However, this was vehemently denied by one very young poler, who’d insisted that when he hunted hippos they stayed underwater for hours. His older colleagues could have told him that the hippos had probably gone into the reeds and surfaced there, but we moved on, respecting his contribution.

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