UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **May/June 2011**

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen.
Do **not** use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.
Dictionaries are **not** permitted.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

This document consists of **5** printed pages and **3** blank pages.

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Part 1

Read **Passage A** carefully, and then answer **Questions 1** and **2**.

Passage A

A Town Struck by Tragedy

For some days my wife and I had intended to make an excursion along the south bank of the river, past the colourful fields of grapevines, sweetcorn and sunflowers, as far as a little market town that was the centre of a well-known wine-growing district. The day before our visit, we read in the newspaper about the tragedy that had hit the town and felt that, as tourists, we would be intruding and that perhaps we should not go. However, we agreed that if we kept a low profile and dressed soberly, no one would take exception.

When we arrived, market day had just ended. We parked the car at the far end of the stalls that were laid out along the quayside and walked quietly towards the centre of the town. We had almost reached the first buildings when a coach full of tourists drew up and some forty or fifty elderly people tumbled out. They were making a great deal of noisy chatter and all of them seemed to be competing to try to attract each other's attention. It was most distasteful. Cameras at the ready, they started their assault on the unsuspecting little town, scattering in all directions, shattering the midday peace. They were like an excited gang of young children.

We realised that they could not have known what had happened two days previously. They had not read that the great, concrete grain silo that stood on the waterfront and was the centre and symbol of the trade of the town had blown up without warning. Fortunately, the directors of the company, all well known and respected in the locality, had just finished their meeting in the building when the accident occurred. An elderly man walking past, reminiscing over his many years of work for the company, was thrown to the ground by the blast.

We had learned that the explosion was like a thunderbolt. The dry grain inside the silo had ignited and, for one ironic moment, had created a firework display of golden rain in the night sky. The building imploded so that there were just jagged shapes of concrete now lying haphazardly along the quayside. When we looked upwards, we saw that the edges of the silo were serrated and spiky.

Walking back through the town, we were aware of a thin coating of dust that lay over everything, making our progress hazardous. Otherwise, it seemed like other attractive places of its type. There were several shady squares and tree-lined walks that were havens of peace. Pretty stone buildings reflected the taste of at least three centuries. A fine church, full of historic monuments, looked out on a neat parking area and a promising restaurant that was empty today. The town, with its museum and public gardens, stretched upwards into the gentle hills that guarded the river. One neat cottage took our fancy. It was so small that we could hardly imagine anyone living there, but the garden was full of bright flowers and a line of ripe tomatoes, and there was not a weed to be seen. There was a strangely quiet atmosphere, as if some Pied Piper had played his flute and led the people away to a safer place.

When we returned to the market area, the elderly interlopers were back in their coach, waving aimlessly as the engine burst into life. An old man was gazing blankly at the ruins beyond the coach. He was expressionless, and we could only guess at the emotions of the past, present and future that were passing through his mind.

Aware of us, he said in his own dialect, 'I was born in this town. For thirty-five years I worked there.'

'I'm sorry,' I said, wondering whether he might be the owner of the neat cottage where we had paused on our walk.

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'Now everything is gone. Only the beauty of our town remains, and that is tarnished for ever. There is nothing else.'

However, as we returned to the car, we saw a notice dated a week previously. It announced a public meeting to be chaired by the mayor to debate a major tourist plan for the town. There would be a small marina, two ten-storey hotels, a casino, amusement arcades and millions of euros to be spent. The plan seemed a strange idea to us and we wondered how the townspeople would react. And the old man who spoke to us? His blank stare remained with us for days after our visit.

1 Imagine that you are the old man in the final paragraphs (When we returned…after our visit).

Write a letter to your sister, who lives in a different part of the country.

In your letter, you should:

- describe, in your own words, what has happened to the town;
- express your thoughts and emotions about the past, present and future.

Begin your letter, 'Dear Sister…'.

Base your letter on what you have read in Passage A and be careful to use your own words.

Write between 1½ and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to fifteen marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to five marks for the quality of your writing.

[Total: 20]

2 Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the elderly tourists in paragraph 2;

(b) the explosion and its effects on the area in paragraph 4.

Select words and phrases from these descriptions, and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.

[Total: 10]

[Turn over for Part 2]

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Part 2

Read **Passage B** carefully and re-read **Passage A**.
Then answer **Question 3**, which is based on both passages.

Passage B

Jiuzhaigou – Bus Ride to Paradise

This passage describes some beautiful lakes in China that have been opened to mass tourism.

This is the other China. High in the mountains of Sichuan Province, in Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve, rare plants and animals find sanctuary, and millions of visitors have discovered cool, clear, sapphire-and-emerald-tinted waters, far removed from the sooty industrial sprawl that consumes lands and lives below.

Jiuzhaigou means 'valley of nine villages' because it once harboured nine, but other numbers are more significant now. Some 80 hotels are clustered at the mouth of a Y-shaped, 35 km long valley in the Min mountains of central China. 280 buses wait to shuttle 18,000 visitors each day up the very pretty route, past a chain of flower-coloured, ribbony lakes and fingery waterfalls, underneath escarpments covered with maple, spruce or bamboo forests. The air rings with water music as snow-melt and spring rains pour down the valley, tumbling in broad waterfalls from one brimful lake to another. Some are eight metres high, and the Arrow Bamboo Falls span nearly 170 metres. Boardwalks circuit the little lakes and reedy creeks, and the buses stop to let parties of trippers stroll at their own pace. Then they queue to catch another bus and continue along the valley.

Glaciers carved the two valleys that join the Shuzheng Valley – the Zechawa and the Rize, which climb to around 3,000 metres – into the classic U shapes one knows from Yosemite, Jiuzhaigou's 'sister' park in the United States. The geology of this part of the Tibetan Plateau is not granite but seabed like the US Rockies, so its limestones as they dissolve colour the waters emerald or turquoise in a certain light, or enhance the mirroring of an azure sky. The lakes were formed when avalanches blocked the creeks and sculpted the lakes but, according to legend, sky goddesses dropped their cosmetics into several and mermaids swam in others. Calcium carbonate deposits on the bottom sometimes assumed fanciful shapes – sleeping dragons, for example.

The road ascends from about 2,000 metres at the valley entrance and splits at Nuorilang, where a tourist centre and cafeteria are set up. The left fork ends at a wilderness lake, wiggly and long. The right fork ends in a 'primeval forest' (in the language of the brochures), which translates as groves that were not levelled by loggers before the area's tourism possibilities were recognised. Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve, China's flagship of its type, was designated a World Heritage site in 1992 by UNESCO, after logging threatened to degrade it.

Costumed Tibetans sell trinkets and postcards at the end of each fork, and the boardwalks loop more ambitiously than usual. Along the bus route there are lakes with names like Golden Bell, Sparkling, Double-Dragon and Five-Flower Lake. Mirror Lake, like the others, reflects the clouds, the birches and the willows and pines, the different tinctures and hues of sunrise and sunset on rock faces and cliffs. Although the names sound promotional, Buddhist mysticism animated these lakes and rivers with spirits that the mineralised waters might characterise, whether mermaid or monster.

Morning stillness reflects heaven and earth, tinted by mineral deposits and aquatic plant life in Five-Flower Lake. The Chinese call this landscape magical. 'Nowhere else under the sky,' they say, 'can match Jiuzhaigou.'

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3 Summarise:

(a) what makes the Jiuzhaigou valley and lakes attractive to tourists, as described in **Passage B**;

(b) what made the town attractive to the writer and his wife, as described in **Passage A**.

Use your own words as far as possible.

You should write about 1 side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to fifteen marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to five marks for the quality of your writing.

[Total: 20]

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Copyright Acknowledgements:

Passage B © Edward Hoagland; (amended) *China's Mystic Waters, Visitors are enthralled by the Jiuzhaigou reserve*; National Geographic Magazine; March 2009.

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