UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/21**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **May/June 2013**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

You may annotate this Reading Booklet Insert and use the blank spaces for planning. This 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

This story, set in Alaska during the gold rush of the 1890s, tells of the experience of Tom Vincent, who does not realise the power of the elements.

Out in the cold

When travelling, a companion is considered desirable. In the Klondike, as Tom Vincent found out, a companion is essential. 'Never travel alone' is a saying in the north. He had heard it many times and laughed, for he was a sturdy young fellow, with faith in himself and in the strength of his head and hands.

It was a bleak January day when he learned respect for the frost. He had left Calumet Camp on the Yukon River to go to Cherry Creek, where his party was prospecting for gold. The frost was sixteen degrees below zero, and he had nearly fifty kilometres of lonely trail to cover, but he did not mind. In fact, he enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence, his blood pounding warmly through his veins, and his mind carefree and happy.

He had set off at seven a.m., and by eleven had covered half the distance. Seated on a fallen tree, he unmittened his right hand, reached inside his coat and fished out a biscuit. He had barely chewed the first mouthful when his numbing fingers warned him to put his mitten on again. This he did, surprised at the bitter swiftness with which the frost had bitten. He could feel himself beginning to chill, so he leaped to his feet and ran briskly up the trail. This made him warm again, but the moisture he exhaled crusted his lips with ice crystals and formed a miniature glacier on his chin. Now and again sensation abandoned his face, and he rubbed it till it burned with the returning blood.

After an hour, he rounded a bend and came upon one of the most formidable dangers of northern travel. The creek itself was frozen solid, but from the mountain came the outflow of several springs. These never froze, being protected from the frost by the blanket of snow, and the water formed shallow pools, their unbroken surface giving no warning of the lurking danger beneath. The instant he broke through, Tom felt the cold water strike his feet, and he struggled to the bank. He was quite calm and collected. The only thing to do was build a fire. For another precept of the north runs: 'Travel with wet socks down to seven below zero; after that build a fire'.

It is impossible to build a fire wearing heavy Alaskan mittens, so Tom bared his hands, gathered a number of twigs, and knelt down to kindle his nest of fire. From a pocket he drew out his matches and a strip of thin birch bark. He separated one match from the bunch and scratched it on his trousers. The bark burst into bright flame, which he carefully fed with the smallest twigs, cherishing it with the utmost care, gently nurturing it. His feet had started to grow numb, but the fire, although a very young one, was now alive.

However, at the moment he was adding the first thick twigs to the fire, a grievous thing happened. The pine boughs above his head were burdened with months of snowfall, and collecting the twigs had disturbed its balance, causing an avalanche which blotted out his fire. He realised how great his danger was and immediately started to rebuild it, but his fingers were now so numb that he could not bend them, and when he lit a match it burnt his fingers and he had to drop it.

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He stood up, now desperate. He could not feel his feet, although his ankles were aching painfully, and he feared that frostbite had set in. His hands were worthless. If only he had a comrade to start the fire that could save him! He was thinking quickly. What if the match did burn his hands? Burned hands were better than dead hands. When he came upon more twigs, he got his last match into place on his palm and forced his nerveless fingers down against it. At the second scratch the match caught fire, and he knew that if he could stand the pain he was saved. The blue flame licked the flesh of his hands, though he could not feel it.

An anxious five minutes followed, but the fire gained steadily. Then he set to work to save himself. Alternately rubbing his hands with snow and thrusting them into the flames, he restored their circulation sufficiently to be able to get dry socks and boots out of his pack. He cut away his moccasins and bared his feet, rubbing them too with snow. He rubbed until his burned hands grew numb. For three hours he worked, till the worst effects of the freezing had been counteracted.

All that night he stayed by the fire, and it was late the next day when he limped pitifully into the camp at Cherry Creek.

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[Turn over

Part 2

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

Passage B

George Orwell describes his experience as a volunteer soldier in the Spanish civil war of the late 1930s.

Life in a trench

Firewood – always firewood. Throughout that period there is probably no entry in my diary that does not mention firewood, or rather the lack of it. We were nearly a thousand metres above sea-level, it was mid winter, and the cold was unspeakable. The temperature was not exceptionally low, but even if it was not really cold, I assure you that it seemed so. Sometimes there were shrieking winds that tore your cap off and twisted your hair in all directions; sometimes there were mists that poured into the trench like a liquid and seemed to penetrate your bones; frequently it rained, and even a quarter of an hour's rain was enough to make conditions intolerable. The thick skin of earth over the limestone turned promptly into a slippery grease, and as you were always walking on a slope, it was impossible to keep your footing. On dark nights I often fell half a dozen times in twenty metres; and this was dangerous, because it meant that the lock of one's rifle became jammed with mud. For days together, clothes, boots, blankets and rifles were more or less coated with mud. I had brought as many thick clothes as I could carry, but many of the men were terribly underclad, and most of them had only one blanket.

So firewood was the one thing that really mattered, but there was practically none to be had. Our miserable mountain had not even at its best much vegetation, and for months it had been ranged over by freezing militiamen, with the result that everything thicker than one's finger had long since been burnt. When we were not eating, sleeping, on guard, or doing chores, we were in the valley behind the position, scavenging for fuel. All my memories of that time are of scrambling up and down the almost perpendicular slopes, over the jagged limestone that knocked one's boots to pieces, pouncing eagerly on tiny twigs. Three people searching for a couple of hours could collect only enough fuel to keep the dug-out fire alight for about an hour. The eagerness of our search turned us all into botanists. We classified, according to their burning qualities, every plant that grew on the mountain-side: the various heathers and grasses that were good to start a fire with but burnt out in a few minutes; the wild rosemary and other tiny bushes that would burn when the fire was well alight; the stunted oak tree that was practically unburnable.

Of course, we were all permanently dirty. Our water, like our food, came on mule-back from Alcubierre, and each man's share worked out at about a litre a day. It was beastly water, hardly more transparent than milk. Theoretically it was for drinking only, but I always stole a pannikinful for washing in the mornings. I used to wash one day and shave the next; there was never enough water for both. It was of course impossible to take one's clothes, and especially one's boots, off at night; one had to be ready to turn out instantly in case of an attack. It was too cold for lice as yet, but rats and mice abounded.

Copyright Acknowledgements:

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