Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core) **May/June 2014**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

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

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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Read the following passage carefully and then answer all the questions on the Question Paper.

Johnny Langenheim, the writer, describes a visit to the remote Solomon Islands.

The Wild Side of the Solomon Islands

We rise on a great South Pacific wave, and there it is: a spinner dolphin within arm's reach of my perch at the front of the speedboat. And it's not alone. Thirty or more of the creatures are darting and leaping in front of me now, each one seeming to return my grin as we head for the wild western side of Tetepare. Beyond us stretch 1,600 kilometres of ocean – all the way to Australia's Queensland coast. But for now, I'm unaware of this, mesmerised instead by the silvery flash of the dolphins as they pilot us toward shore.

Even though Tetepare – at 120 square kilometres – is the largest uninhabited island in the South Pacific, it is not widely known, just like the Solomon Islands' nation to which it belongs. Having gained independence only in 1978, the Solomons today are a sleepy backwater, with most of their half-million people engaged in farming and fishing. Yet a closer look at this chain of nearly 1,000 islands turns up unexpected treasures.

How fitting, then, that the promise of treasure gave the country its name. In 1567, Spanish navigator Alvaro de Mendaña set out from Peru on a quest for the mythical continent of Terra Australis, source of King Solomon's gold. What he found instead were the Solomons, where he set up camp on the island now known as Santa Isabel. De Mendaña and his crew spent several months scouring the area for riches, but left empty-handed. The name, however, stuck.

The Solomon Islands' real treasures are their ecosystems – both terrestrial and marine – which offer close encounters with nature that you don't have to share with dozens of other camera-toting tourists. This is the easternmost corner of what is known as the Coral Triangle, an area rich in reef-building corals. So it's hardly surprising that the Solomons' developing tourism industry is based almost exclusively on diving. Most people head to Western Province – a mosaic of volcanic islands fringed by coral reefs, lagoons, and bone-white beaches which creates the essential image of the South Seas.

The jumping-off point for most diving holidays in the Solomons is the provincial capital of Gizo, an unremarkable stretch of concrete shop fronts and offices with a lively fish market. Head out from here, however, and things get seriously beautiful. Even the popular, mid-range diving resort called Fatboys, just 10 minutes away by boat, has a castaway feel to it, not to mention a world-class reef right under its jetty.

Only a few visitors get as far as Tetepare, however. And this is the true appeal of the place: its remoteness, coupled with the abundance of creatures that thrive there in the absence of people. My guide is Allen Bero from the Tetepare Descendants' Association (TDA). He and its 3,500 other members, all descendants of the original inhabitants, are the present-day custodians of the island.

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Leaving the dolphins behind, we close in on Tetepare's coastline, etched in sharp relief against a pale blue sky. Whereas most of the Solomons' forests have been aggressively cleared, Tetepare retains the largest stretch of undisturbed lowland rain forest in the country. The waters around the island are also protected. 'Back in the 1980s, some of the landowners wanted to log Tetepare – but most of us disagreed,' Bero explains. 'We opted for conservation instead.' Supported by international conservation groups, the TDA now monitors the numerous species that abound here – they have an incredibly difficult job.

Tetepare is a nesting site for the endangered green turtle as well as the critically endangered species of turtles, such as leatherbacks, which lay their eggs on the island's black-sand beaches. Placid dugongs graze on sea grass in the lagoon, while huge coconut crabs forage by night. The world's largest skink (a type of lizard) and 73 species of bird, including pygmy parrots, can be found on the island, while sharks, dolphins and myriad reef fish inhabit the surrounding waters.

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