Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **May/June 2015**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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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 Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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

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CAMBRIDGE International Examinations

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Part 1

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

Passage A: Dream Home

Sunitra's family are spending the long summer holiday hundreds of miles from their home in a caravan, while her mother and father try to arrange to buy a plot of land on which to build their new house.

The momentary buoyancy Sunitra felt writing the first part of the email to her friend Jo sank in her chest, leaving an aching hollowness. The eerie mewing of a large bird of prey circling outside struck a desolate chord. 'Honestly, Jo,' she wrote, 'I'm really missing you and all the gang. I hate it here. I can't wait for the summer to end and to come home. How many students say that about the holidays!'

She glanced out of the caravan window at the empty vastness. Beyond the tussocky grass an indistinct, rutted track wove through some low scrub and stunted trees to cross a swollen stream before heading towards a slab of forestry that dominated the slopes of the distant mountains. She glanced away, idly fiddling with the mouse, wondering how much to tell her friend. When she looked back, a mist was creeping up the valley, consuming first the weather-beaten plank bridge, then the scraggly thorn bushes, and finally blanking out the trees.

Sunitra thought again of the rows she had had with her parents over this crazy scheme to move many hundreds of kilometres away to the middle of nowhere. They had enthused about building their own home on a plot of land. They had honeymooned in this area, trekking a long distance path, sleeping in a tent and cooking under the stars, rarely meeting anyone. That had been sixteen or so years ago. Didn't they realise they had a responsibility to *her* now, as well as to themselves? Dad might have grand plans for a luxury house with 'stunning views', but views didn't talk, didn't dance, didn't *do* anything.

She was feeling miserable. If this scheme got off the ground, Dad would be obsessed with working all the time on the house and Mum would be doing long shifts in her new job at the hospital 30 kilometres away. She, however, would be in a static caravan every evening with nothing to do except watch TV and do her homework. Even if there was somewhere to go, neither of her parents would be in a position to drive her. Sunitra loved the fun shopping trips she had now on Saturdays with friends – hours whiled away in coffee lounges, easy laughter and jokes strengthening the bonds between them.

Her screen-saver flickered, bringing her attention back to the email. A more intense pang of loneliness thumped her in her stomach. She and her friends had such great times at school; the nearest 'college' (as her mother called it) to the proposed new home was in the same town as the hospital, and a bus would call each day at the end of the track to collect her. The chances were that she wouldn't even be able to understand what the other students were saying, and how many of them were likely to be her age?

Sunitra re-read what Jo had said. Jo's parents had not been impressed with the end-of-term report with its comments about being 'easily distracted' and the need for commitment. They had grumbled initially, threatening to ban the part-time evening job Jo was due to start in the next term. Jo had got round them, however. The email also revealed that Jo's family were soon to take off for a beach holiday, away from the heat, dust and noise of summer in the city. How wonderful for her!

Last night the wind had blown up the funnel of the valley, tugging at the flimsy caravan. The three of them had huddled inside watching debris swirling outside, before the wind had finally scooped up a plastic bucket, then flung it down the track. When Sunitra had gone to retrieve it, the wind pounded in her ears and smacked her eyes. Suddenly hail had tumbled out of the sky, each hailstone a tiny bullet bruising her skin. She had caught up with the bucket at the stream where the water rattled over the stones. As she had bent to retrieve it, she saw that in its frenzy the stream had scoured out part of the bank, revealing mis-shapen pebbles, white against the peat like the remains of a skeleton.

Her parents had come out of the van, opening their arms to the wind and rain, childishly running around, ecstatic about being at one with the elements. She thought, 'If I have to live here, I will go mad.' What could she say to Jo?

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Part 2

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

Passage B: Self-Build Homes

For millennia people have been building homes for themselves. Even today, in villages where there are long-standing relationships, co-operative building is a part of life, like harvesting. Individuals give help unquestioningly, knowing that assistance will be given in return on their homes.

In some developed countries 'self-build' has evolved for the practice of creating an individual home. The unique requirements of a family can be catered for: to choose the style; to build an environmentally friendly 'passive house' with a heat recovery system; or to live in a home that they would not be able to afford on the open market. Some enthusiasts argue that a family can save 30% by self-building, although this will depend on how much work the family does itself.

Finding a suitable plot of land can be hard. A developer may outbid the individual prospective builder wishing to construct his or her dream home in order to erect three dwellings. This is especially problematic in densely populated areas.

Few build the houses without help. Most employ an architect and contract a builder to construct them. Others use companies which design and supply Swedish timber-frame homes where the planning and design are taken care of, and even planning applications are sought for the families.

Clearly those who self-build with little professional help need patience. It is estimated that the quickest project using a contractor takes 26 weeks from moving on to site. Building a dream home in spare time while having a full-time job will extend that timescale considerably. It may also prove to be frustrating if one lacks skills in areas like plumbing, brick-laying and plastering.

Timber-frame houses may get round some of these problems and are very popular worldwide where 70% of new homes are of this type. They are more energy efficient than brick and block constructed homes, comprising several layers of insulation and can be externally clad with a range of materials, including brick, to blend with surrounding houses. They have a long history, going back to the 12th century, and with modern materials designed to resist damp, a new timber-frame house can be expected to be long-lasting.

However, getting a loan for a self-build is complicated and involves more paperwork than for a traditional property. Planning permission will be expected. Although it is possible to run a self-build loan alongside an existing one – for example, where a family remains in an existing home whilst building the new one – some lenders charge higher interest rates than on traditional loans.

In Europe some communities have pioneered self-build.

With their own hands, the townspeople of Marinaleda, Spain have built 350 homes over three decades on land obtained through a mixed policy of purchase and land seizure. Residents pay a 'mortgage' of just €15 a month, but cannot sell on. The council employs professional stonemasons to provide advice on harder tasks. Future residents do not know which home will be theirs, which promotes community spirit.

The Dutch city of Almere is a new town, begun in the 1970s on land reclaimed from the Zuiderzee. Eventually there will be thousands of self-built homes there. Huge areas of land were sold at generous discounts to those wanting to build, saving up to €50,000 for some. In return the city made €187 million to be reinvested in roads and other infrastructure projects. There are minimalist planning rules – the homes only have to be under a certain height, be within a specified area and have their own parking spaces.

Perhaps inspired by the Almere project, a Housing Association in Liverpool, England is running a scheme that will see 32 homes built for low-income families. The self-builders work as contractors, putting in 500 hours of 'sweat equity' in place of a deposit. Once more, people are building communities, getting to know each other as they actively build their homes together.

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