Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**
Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core) **May/June 2016**
READING BOOKLET INSERT **1 hour 45 minutes**

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

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

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

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

Passage A: **The Old Stone House**

In this extract from a mystery story, the narrator, who is a journalist, describes finding a deserted house in the middle of a forest.

One autumn day I was travelling through a remote countryside area, when suddenly I saw an old stone house. Its marks of age contrasted so sharply with its unfinished condition that I stopped and looked closely at the deserted structure. It was sheltered by a forest which had greatly expanded since the construction of this building. The branches of some of the tallest trees almost met across its decayed roof. At first, it gave the appearance of picturesque solitude almost approaching desolation. However, I saw that moss was clinging to the roof, which was still supported by scaffolding. I also noticed that of the ten large windows in the blackened front of the house, only two were fitted with frames. A feeling of some tragic mystery from the past began to creep over me, and my curiosity made me take a closer look at the place.

The heavy front door which had endured years of dripping rain, but which had never been fitted, leaned against the side of the house. Close beside it yawned the entrance, a large black gap through which nearly a century of storms had rushed with their winds and rain. The woodwork was green with moisture and slippery with rot. I instinctively glanced at the scaffolding above me, and noticed with surprise that it had partially fallen away. It was as if time were weakening its supports and making the collapse of the whole structure a threatening possibility. Worried in case it might fall while I stood there, I did not wait long beneath it. With a shudder I stepped into the house and began to inspect its rotting, bare and unfinished walls. I found them all in a similar condition. A fine house had once been planned and nearly completed, but it had been abandoned before the fireplaces had been tiled, or the woodwork painted. The staircase which ran up through the centre of the house was without banisters but otherwise finished and fairly well preserved. Not being able to resist the temptation to explore the rest of the house, I climbed the stairs.

Here the doors were fitted and the fireplaces completed, and as I wandered from room to room I wondered more than ever what had caused the desertion of so promising a building. If, as appeared, the first owner had died suddenly, why was an heir not found? What could be the story of a place so abandoned and left to destruction that its walls gave no indication of ever having offered shelter to a human being? As I could not answer these questions I allowed my imagination to run free, and was just forming some weird explanation of the facts before me when I felt my arm suddenly seized from behind.

Was I then not alone in the deserted building? Was there some solitary being who inhabited this desolate place and who had intruded within its mysterious walls? I had scarcely the courage to ask, but when I turned and saw what it was that had alarmed me, I did not know whether to laugh at my fears or feel increased wonder at my surroundings.

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

Passage B: Great Zimbabwe

This passage gives information about Great Zimbabwe which over 500 years ago was a great city and the home of the Shona people, some of the original inhabitants of Zimbabwe.

The impressive ruins of Great Zimbabwe cover an area of some 80 hectares and lie 30 kilometres from Masvingo. Scientific studies have proved that Great Zimbabwe was founded in the 11th century on a site which had been sparsely inhabited in the prehistoric period by the Shona people. In the 14th century, it was the principal city of a major state, extending over the gold-rich land; its population was more than 10,000 inhabitants. In about CE 1450, this capital was abandoned, not as a result of war, but because the surrounding area could no longer provide food for the overpopulated city, and deforestation made it necessary to go further and further to find firewood.

The ruins of Great Zimbabwe are a unique testimony to the lost civilization of the Shona people. A unique artistic achievement, this great city has struck the imagination of African and European travellers since the Middle Ages, as can be seen by long-standing legends. The entire Zimbabwe nation has identified with this historically symbolic group of buildings. It has adopted the steatite bird, possibly a royal symbol, as its emblem.

From the 11th to 15th centuries, the wealth of Great Zimbabwe was associated with gold trading, which was controlled by Arab merchants, and extensive trade activities on the east coast of Africa. In addition to jewellery, archaeological excavations in Great Zimbabwe unearthed glass beads and fragments of porcelain and pottery of Chinese and Persian origin. This is an indication of the extent of trade within the continent. A 14th century Arab coin from Kilwa (an island off Tanzania) was also found; it was reissued in 1972.

The territory includes the three main areas of Great Zimbabwe. Firstly, there are the Hill Ruins, which form a huge granite mass facing north-east/south-west and are generally considered to have been a royal city and the residence of successive chiefs. Next comes the Great Enclosure which lies below the hill to the south and dates from the 14th century and is where families lived. Finally, the Valley Ruins are a series of dwellings scattered throughout the valley. Discoveries made in these areas have given us precise information about the farming activities and cultural life of the inhabitants at the time of Great Zimbabwe's heyday and about earthenware and other craft activities.

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