Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/21**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **May/June 2017**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

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

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** on the Question Paper.

Passage A: Harrold Sparrow

Harrold Sparrow has worked in the same pet shop for years. A new company has taken over the shop and is making changes. All staff have been invited to re-apply for their jobs. Harrold arrives at work early as usual and begins his morning routine of checking the animals…

If it hadn't been for the situation at home, Harrold wouldn't have considered reapplying for his own job. The offer of a generous severance payment was tempting, but alone again in his newly empty flat, what would he find to do now?

Pet shops had changed, morphed by the marketing magicians into digitalised emporiums for pampered poppets and their well-meaning owners. He tutted softly, expertly stroking and soothing a young rabbit he was monitoring. The writing had been on the wall, so to speak, for a long time – and now on the windows, doors and shelving he thought wryly, wincing at the latest excruciating batch of promotional stickers splatter-gunned around the shop. H is for Happy Hamsters, read one sign more reminiscent of a children's illustrated alphabet. F is for Fun-loving Ferrets. Harrold raised an eyebrow.

Soon, newly installed speakers would pipe today's offers between endless loops of animal-related song titles. What was wrong with leaving people to ask if they were interested? Harrold sighed.

He was a good listener, equally happy to offer advice on the best seed mix for rodents or the most efficient way to clean filters in fish tanks. Careful to match person to pet, talking through their requirements, Harrold was invariably honest. Not everyone was the pet type. It was sometimes a case of politely helping people realise that or, for more persistent parents with demanding children, closing early as they came up the street.

The new rota for working lunch-hours at least saved him the misery of 'eating' alone again today. It didn't look like Beryl was coming back; he was no more unhappy to stay in the shop. Let those still with families have an extra half-hour.

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Initial interviews were held at Head Office the next evening after work. Events were well underway by the time Harrold had finished checking cages. He arrived late at the venue to raucous applause and whooping as a bespectacled youth clicked the last slide of a presentation and asked if anyone had questions.

Harrold hesitated only a moment too long to avoid Lisa, the new Saturday girl, pressing a t-shirt and neon marker pen into his hand. She whispered instructions to decorate the t-shirt with his name & U.S.P., 'You know, your Unique Selling Point, your motto, that sort of thing.'

Increasingly animated presentations followed from a series of loud t-shirts – each adorned with their own crudely-penned catchphrase. Harrold noted with mild surprise that he'd been working alongside 'Lisa-the-LIZARD-lady' for weeks without realising (possibly as she'd been 'scaling great heights to help customers'). Still captive, Harrold wrote 'SPARROW' on his t-shirt, resisting the impulse to add a number as a protest.

His own presentation went down surprisingly well. Questions rolled in about the species of parrot he was most fond of (Yellow-Headed Amazon)… nearly poached to extinction… smartest creatures on Earth… an affinity for learning song. Each, he explained, has their own personality and makes a loving member of a human family flock… He'd never seen yellow-heads outside captivity, he confirmed wistfully, though no bird is ever truly domesticated… call of the wild… doors left open accidentally…

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He changed the subject. Parrots are great talkers, can be very affectionate, if inclined to be a little temperamental, a bit like…

'*Harrold SPARROW, Bird Nerd*?' asked the bespectacled youth with expert comic timing.

Harrold didn't think it was meant unkindly and even smiled over the hoots of laughter as Lisa mischievously added his new pet name to the back of his t-shirt with her pen.

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The television he'd left on greeted him when he got home. In some small way, he thought familiar things might help to bring Beryl back. When she'd lived downstairs, before old Mrs F passed away last month and she'd come to live with him, Beryl had grown used to the soaps on TV. From time to time, she'd still whistle theme tunes. The adverts were on now – DIY toolkits, tropical breaks, win-a-million lotteries – dreams of better things. Unaware he'd done it again, Harrold sighed. A chill reminded him he'd left the window open, just in case. He tutted out of habit and the reply took him unawares.

Outside the window was Beryl, with not so much as a ruffled feather, eyes brighter than he'd seen in a while. Harold spoke gently; Beryl hopped from the branch, across the window ledge and onto his hand.

Relieved, he began to pull the window shut, then paused, and left it ajar – just in case.

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Part 2

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

Passage B: Parronts and their parrots

The writer of this letter is responding to an online post in the discussion forum of a magazine concerned with animals and their welfare.

Dear 'Freedom flight-er',

Please find below my response to your ill-informed ranting and frankly ridiculous suggestions in the discussion forum of this otherwise excellent publication. In the manner of the birds, with whom I am privileged to spend time, I have adapted my usual style of expression to imitate yours.

So, I'm a parront – get over it! Whilst your spell checker might not like it, you'll find that modern dictionaries online explain it's a perfectly acceptable term for a responsible owner of a pet parrot, a caregiver of a parrot of any species. And when you've finished displaying your ignorance with jokes about Long John Silver, perhaps you might remember that stereotype of a pirate with a parrot on his shoulder has its basis in fiction, rather like your argument for not keeping parrots as pets. Firstly, I'm not selfish or cruel and I wouldn't like to live in a cramped cage any more than you would. We've a purpose-built aviary that takes up most of my garden.

Simply liberating pet birds born in captivity is not a viable option; your suggestion is naive at best. They don't know how to be wild, don't understand weather patterns and think all cats are friendly and fluffy. Without supervision…need I say more? They're used to being cleaned for, protected and looked after, just like a small child. I assume you wouldn't suggest I set my toddler free too?

Responsible parronts learn their trade by spending time observing their birds. They research, by talking with other owners, how to help keep their pets happy and calm any stress or mood swings. Personally, I would never consider buying one taken from the wild. Indeed, an oversupply of many parrot species commercially, thanks to improvements in captive breeding techniques, means aviculture is becoming self-sufficient. Prices of many parrots have crashed in recent years, helping to make illegal trade less lucrative. Parronts of over-populated species are not allowing their parrots to breed this season, as they can't find suitable recipients for young birds. Most of us would be first in the queue to adopt any bird whose owner couldn't cope rather than see it suffering from malnutrition, being kept in an unclean cage, or left home alone for hours on end. Parronts sounds like parents for a reason: our parrots are family.

It's true parrots like company. In the wild that's from other birds, but parronts make a good substitute and our birds are kept safe from environmental hazards like storms. Captive breeding in zoos provides back-up populations that might well yet be needed if numbers in the wild keep dwindling.

For the record, I'm not decorating my home with a real living creature – would you want the same wallpaper for fifty or sixty years? Parrots never should be bought on a whim; increasingly larger, more expensive birds are being microchipped by breeders to help track down those abandoned by owners who turned out to be seeking more of a holiday romance than a lifelong commitment. My parrots have toys to amuse them and we supplement their food to ensure their diet is as close as possible to what they'd find foraging naturally, avoiding sunflower seeds and pre-prepared commercial diets based on cereal grains, particularly maize. Parrots weren't designed to handle these high carbohydrate, high fat, low fibre foods.

If you're really 'bothered about birds' and genuinely want to help these intelligent, magnificent creatures, perhaps instead of spending time penning poisonous propaganda, you might like to try contacting one of the genuine animal welfare organisations running programmes designed to rescue, rehabilitate and release the parrots caught in the wild bird trade. One of the most endangered groups of birds on earth

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with more than ninety species under threat globally, parrots need well-informed, committed humans championing their cause, not over-sentimental charlatans looking to stir up trouble just to feather their own nest.

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