Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/23**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **May/June 2018**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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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.

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Part 1

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

Passage A: A Small Fortune

Harris misses his daughter, Alia, who refuses to visit him. This passage describes how Harris is taken in by his extended family.

Harris was on his way to post another letter to Alia when it began: tight chest, breathlessness, symptoms familiar to someone who never practised keep-fit and saw no merit in it, but this time he felt truly terrified. His heart beat fluttered and a hot, prickling sensation crawled up his body, swiftly followed by icy chills. No one noticed.

'On my last legs,' he'd written earlier.

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The doctor was brisk as she examined him later, finding nothing. She fixed him with a beady look. 'Are you depressed? Lonely?' she demanded.

Afterwards, Harris stayed indoors for three days; fearful exertion might trigger another attack, perhaps fatal. His distant cousin, Nawaz, offered to fetch his daily newspaper.

Day four, he phoned Nawaz. 'Cousin …' his voice croaked, breaking off into a strangulated silence. The normally immovable Nawaz dropped everything. Within minutes, he burst through Harris's door to find him lying on the couch.

'It's the final curtain,' Harris murmured.

Nawaz gave him a hug. 'No, you just think so because you're all alone in this huge place. You're coming straight home with me. Stay for a few days this time, until you're better.' In a matter of minutes, Harris was whisked up and transported to the small flat where Nawaz and his growing family lived, conveniently situated above a takeaway pizza place.

As Harris entered the lounge, he was greeted by a vision of noisy domestic chaos that was oddly comforting. Against the backdrop of the blaring TV, the younger kids saluted him like a returning hero, bouncing into his arms. The aroma of rice, just cooked, greeted his senses. Safeena finished feeding the baby in the kitchen and produced a cup of stewed sweet tea and slices of sponge cake for him. He took up his spot on the sofa and readied his lap for a tray of kebabs that appeared as if by magic, followed by his favourite pudding.

'Anything you need, just tell us,' said Nawaz.

'Cousin, you're too kind.' Harris's eyes filled up.

'Family's family, isn't it?' said Safeena from the sink.

'Forget it,' Nawaz said gruffly.

Within days Harris was on the mend. He nestled open-beaked like an overgrown cuckoo in the midst of Nawaz's family, watching telly, dangling and dancing the baby over his head until she required changing, then handing her back to Safeena who produced a constant stream of delicious meals. There was no need for him to cook any more. Harris understood. He was a guest in their household and accepted his role graciously. He shared his extensive knowledge on an impressive range of subjects, from religion to DIY, from the education system to politics. They welcomed politely his rearrangement of the lounge furniture. Safeena's passing friends were riveted by his ideas.

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He was forbidden by Safeena from attempting the simplest chore. If his eyes so much as swivelled kitchen-wards, Safeena would materialise from nowhere, intercepting him before he'd even switched the kettle on. He didn't fight it: crossing the lounge was a hazardous run, booby-trapped with the boys' electric toys and sharp outcrops of plastic play-bricks. It was safer to stay moored on the sofa. The children adored him. He showered them with pocket money for treats when their parents weren't looking.

'You're spoiling them,' Nawaz grumbled.

'Just a little something to keep them happy, that's all.'

'What would we do without you?' said Safeena.

What indeed? Harris glowed inside. It was a delicious feeling. He began to wonder what else he could do to help the family. He ordered online cut-price books for Jameela, a proper cricket bat and ball for the boys and boxes of chocolate and crisps, all delivered more cheaply to the business address downstairs, he beamed.

Some weeks later, unable to sleep, Harris overheard raised voices from the box room – Nawaz's deep bearish growl interjected with Safeena's squeaky indignation. Curious to discover the nature of their altercation, Harris listened in. As Safeena's voice grew louder he caught the odd word, 'more salt in my cooking … eating us out of house and home! Electricity bill … on all day … You mean, costing us a small fortune … '

Nawaz responded with a low growl.

Harris was shocked it was this bad, but not surprised. Nawaz really should be more considerate and probably did eat too much for a man of his build. As for salt, well he'd found that a pinch slipped in the pot was all it needed. He tactfully coughed to offer a distraction, then rolled over to sleep.

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Part 2

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

Passage B: Loneliness

Not an expert on the subject, but with strong opinions nevertheless, the writer shares her views on loneliness.

Can I just say I'm not lonely for the record, please? Yes, I live on my own, and no, I don't see my sons very often – they have their own lives. I don't fill my day with volunteering or feel the urge to find 'friends' online. All of those things have nothing to do with loneliness anyway. They're just part of the confusion that exists between loneliness – real loneliness – and social isolation. The two concepts are interrelated, of course, but too often treated like the same thing. Social isolation is objective and describes the absence of social contact. Loneliness is subjective. It is the difference between how often you see the people you want to see and how often you want to see them. It is also the quality of the contact you want with them matching the quality of contact you have. Many 'cures for loneliness' focus on giving people someone to talk with, counsellors and therapists included, but they can't compensate for the absence of friendships with people who value us, share our interests and priorities. I've been my loneliest in my late teens at university – surrounded by flatmates, but unhappy and feeling isolated. The relationships with those around me weren't providing the emotional support I needed. My sister found her early twenties worse – that period after leaving education when you're trying to work out what you want to do and looking inwards. Introspection can lead to loneliness.

People perceive loneliness as a problem associated with age, so we focus on lonely old people, continuing the myth. Think 'loneliness' and you're most likely to visualise someone in their 70s or 80s, the image favoured by the media, whilst studies show the predicted probability of feeling lonely decreases with an increase in age. Younger people report higher levels of loneliness. Seeing idealised versions of other peoples' lives on social media makes them feel worse about their own … and lonely. For both young and old finance has a bearing: loneliness decreases as one's economic standard of living increases. It's true that there's a greater likelihood of people feeling more lonely when they live alone, or if they've recently moved countries, but telling them to get out to meet people isn't the answer. Neither of these factors causes loneliness, they just make it worse.

Loneliness is a taboo subject, possibly because we see it as a personal failing and don't want to be associated with those sad media images, or presented as someone who 'needs help'. Labelling yourself lonely is a self-fulfilling prophecy, breeding more loneliness by confirming you don't fit in. Loneliness is contagious too. Lonely people become less positive in their social interactions and the feeling can spread like flu. Stereotypes, however true, result in more pop songs than we'll ever need to wallow in about the feeling of intense loneliness that accompanies the break-up of a relationship or misunderstood adolescence.

Sorry, I know we should take it seriously. Health problems likely to be developed by those suffering loneliness are comparable with those of smoking and obesity. Combatting the issue effectively though involves understanding what works for which people, not just making assumptions. For some, there's likely to be a genetic component to feeling lonely; loneliness can also be a symptom of other factors such as low self-esteem. Whilst there is a causal link with feeling isolated from society, loneliness is far more complex and personal. Practical support like the provision of transport may help isolation, and those experiencing loneliness may also require social support, but targeted to specific needs and interests. For example, older men have been found to respond to schemes that help maintain or pass on skills. But it's time we acknowledged there's a difference between loneliness and being alone. Solitude has much to recommend it.

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