Cambridge Assessment International Education
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**
Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core) **May/June 2019**
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 **4** printed pages.

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Part 1

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

Passage A: On the highway: the Mongolian Car Rally

In this extract, the writer describes the problems and rewards of taking part in the Mongolian Car Rally.

After a 17 hour journey, we pulled into Altai in mid-afternoon, our Renault car perched rather sadly on the back of a lorry. We looked for a crane and eventually spotted an ancient Russian truck with one at the back. After a bad-tempered negotiation with Boris, the truck driver, our vehicle was lifted and dumped roughly on the ground. It seemed that, before we had departed, sack after sack of heavy watermelons had been loaded onto the bonnet of our car, leaving it concave and badly dented. Having been offered an extra 50 dollars, Boris began, half-heartedly, trying to press out the dents.

I checked into the Altai Hotel, a dreary place, and met three young Americans also on the Mongolian Car Rally. We agreed to drive in a convoy the following day.

At 6 am it was time to depart and, with the Americans leading in their Nissan Micra, we swept eastwards. Almost immediately we made a wrong turn onto a sandy road that stretched interminably towards a hazy horizon. We realised that we were lost in the brooding wasteland of the Gobi Desert, a stony and inhospitable place rutted and scarred by ancient tracks and pathways.

The Americans fumbled about with their maps and compass, and we all agreed that we were probably way off track. We would have to camp for the night and try again the following day. An enormous full moon illuminated the desert and we debated the probability of snakes and scorpions inhabiting the many holes in the desert floor. There was a determined and collective zipping shut of tent doors as we settled in for a cold and watchful night.

The next morning we were on our way, taking a north-east route expecting to reach the road to Bayankhongor by midday. Speed was a central feature of the day as we rocketed across the bone dry and rocky landscape. There was no sign of habitation and only an occasional sighting of wild camels turning their haughty gaze at us as we crashed and bumped our way past in a cloud of dust.

I tried to drive with caution, but the car was soaking up a lot of punishment and by mid-afternoon the exhaust system was parting from the manifold. The front suspension had collapsed, which meant that the front wheels, on turning, would hit the wheel arches. As we pulled into the small town of Bayankhongor late that afternoon, weary and caked in dust, it was obvious that repairs were essential.

By nightfall the car had sturdy new shock absorbers and the exhaust system had been reinstalled. I had ordered that the front wheel arches should be cut away to give greater clearance. A quick look at the map confirmed that, with luck, I was only two hard driving days away from Ulaanbaatar; suddenly a dash to the finishing line looked possible.

Two days later we crossed the finishing line at Ulaanbaatar, during the evening rush hour, in a downpour. I cannot think that there is a better adventure and I would urge anyone looking for a real sporting challenge to attempt the Mongolian Car Rally. Many

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drivers I met on the way were clearly having the time of their lives, leaving a trail of pandemonium behind them.

I dumped the Renault in a compound with all the other cars. The doors were ill-fitting now, the result of a twisted chassis, the hinge had severed on the hatchback door, and the bodywork could never be repaired. The 'sturdy' shock absorbers, fitted only a couple of days previously, were no longer of any use. The car had survived everything Mongolia had thrown at it, but structurally it was game over. *40*

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Part 2

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

Passage B: Why hot-air ballooning is Richard Branson's favourite way to travel

The following article explores the adventures of a famous hot-air balloon enthusiast.

In July 1987, Richard Branson and his team set out in a hot-air balloon from Maine, USA, with the goal of reaching Western Scotland. The journey required the balloon to fly in the jet stream, a feat never attempted before. The mechanism that was supposed to eject the capsule from the balloon failed and they were forced to continue flying over the Irish Sea, repeatedly dipping into the water. Suddenly the balloon rocketed to 1200 metres above sea level. Branson didn't expect that he would survive.

He calmed himself and used the balloon as a parachute, jumping out once he was 15 metres above the water. He was saved by the British Royal Navy. Branson tried to give up ballooning, but kept coming back to it.

In 1991, Branson was the first to cross the Pacific Ocean in a hot-air balloon. However, the journey began as a complete disaster: they lost two-thirds of their fuel and they were only 1600 kilometres into their journey. Miraculously, hitting the jet stream, the balloon shot across to the Canadian Arctic, breaking existing records for flight duration and distance, reaching speeds of 390 kph.

Branson made four attempts at the most difficult ballooning feat: circumnavigating the world. One attempt saw Branson crash-landing in the Sahara and being taken hostage. Branson called it: 'the most luxurious kidnapping ever'. Another time he accidentally crossed the Himalayas over Mount Everest and K2.

'I regret none of it,' he claimed recently, 'but there are a lot of important things right now on this planet and I don't really want to kill myself in a stupid way. If the question is how I wish to be remembered, I would say not as somebody who spent his life in a balloon.'

These days Branson, a successful businessman, devotes his immense energy towards charitable and humanitarian efforts, including legal reforms, the resolution of global conflicts, and saving the environment.

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