Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/11**

Paper 1 Reading **May/June 2024**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: Unusual modes of travel

Travelling the world can be thrilling – search online and you'll find lots more interesting ways to get around than cars, buses or planes. From trains made of bamboo to wicker toboggans, or even sleds pulled by trained dogs, these unusual types of transport offer an unforgettable experience.

Here are some more you might not have heard about ...

Coco Taxi – Havana, Cuba: these tricycles, worked by pedal power, have a back seat for two people behind the driver. Some have a tiny motor that helps the driver when going up a slope. These cute yellow taxis shaped like hollow coconuts can be seen in Havana and in Varadero. Though prone to accidents, they are faster at negotiating traffic than regular taxis. The black taxis are used by locals, while the yellow ones are used by tourists.

Monte Toboggan – Madeira, Portugal: originally a fast means of transport down to Funchal for people living in Monte, these toboggan sledges appeared around 1850. Still in use by locals today, they attract thousands of tourists every year who want to enjoy this exciting ride, sliding at high speed on narrow, winding streets down to Funchal. These two-seater wicker sledges glide on wooden runners and are pushed and steered by men dressed in white cotton clothes and straw hats, according to custom, using their rubber-soled boots as brakes. The downhill journey lasts about 10 minutes on a total course of 2 kilometres, reaching speeds of 48 kilometres per hour! Simple, yet effective. It's the perfect contrast to the high-technology cable car going slowly up to Monte.

DUKW – London, UK: these amphibious trucks (known as DUKW – pronounced 'duck') though originally designed as military vehicles to run over both land and water, now offer friendlier rides past famous London landmarks before launching into the River Thames to get views from the water.

Remember, it's not only the place that attracts tourists but also the unusual modes of transport found there – usually just as safe and often more reliable than regular options (though do your research beforehand). Prices can vary and so we recommend you agree on one before beginning any journey, booking your tickets or driver in advance wherever possible to avoid long queues or disappointment.

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B: The Hyperloop high-speed transport system

This online article, written in 2021, gives the writer's opinion of a proposed new transportation system.

I presume you've all heard of the Hyperloop concept – a supposedly less-polluting transport service carrying passengers inside giant low-pressure tubes in convoys of small pods at insane speeds. The 'train', powered along by magnets, floats on an air-cushion. No? Well don't worry, you can forget it: it's never going to happen.

Having read all the publicly available documents promoting its cost-effectiveness to run, it's quite clear that there's a huge gap between the exciting theory of this futuristic transportation, and it actually existing. Too many unknowns need to be discovered gradually, at great expense, before the technology can be applied to the design of a reliable transportation mode.

The science behind Hyperloop appears sound enough, but we know that in reality things can go wrong. Multiple things could go wrong with Hyperloops (below, or even way above, ground since they can climb and simply go straight over obstacles apparently). A big question is the air-cushion, whose flow could be stopped by any sort of disturbance external to the tube. For example, oil pipelines fail, and it sure isn't the oil inside that's breaking them.

Another enormous fault with the concept is that nobody nowadays needs to save one hour to get from one city to another. Mobile wi-fi means there's no such thing as unproductive time anymore. This has clearly escaped 'Hyperloopers', dazzled by the elegant design. That isn't to say that suction-tube transport can't work, but rather that we don't know enough to agree that it will work reliably and efficiently. Travelling in a tube might also not be the comfortable experience imagined, due to nausea-inducing acceleration.

Hyperloop companies won't be the first to try transporting people in a sealed tube, they point out reassuringly. In 1867, the inventor Alfred Ely Beach wanted to build an underground train system that relied on pneumatic tubes. But Beach abandoned his passenger system, instead focusing on the easier task of moving mail. More sensible investors in Hyperloop projects argue its potential as a cargo transportation system between countries, perhaps beneath water. Think about it, if a pod full of cereals ever broke, would it even make the news?

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C: Riding the rails: learning how to drive a dog-sled

In this article, journalist Lyn Marshall looks back at her adventure holiday in Alaska.

As the sky gradually turned indigo in the fading light, the scraping of ice and frantic unheeded commands to my sled dog-team broke the stillness. Thundering down the frozen waterway, I snatched anxious glimpses over my shoulder. Where was Mike, my guide? Would his tracker still pick up my signal with the gap between us increasing by the minute?

Out exploring that Friday evening, an irresistible scent had wafted by my lead dog's keen nose. Following primal instincts over my feeble instructions, he'd wheeled around, leading his obliging pack in the opposite direction at full speed! Applying all my weight to the hook brake saved me from fishtailing wildly from side to side but did nothing to slow the dogs' enthusiastic charge.

From my evening chats with Mike over the last few days, I knew that if we lost each other entirely, I was in trouble. I had nothing – no extra clothing, no shelter, but more importantly, nothing to start a fire. We'd seen wolf tracks regularly, so fire seemed particularly important to me at that moment.

* * *

It was March, the tail end of the long, cold winter. Roads were closed, rivers were frozen, and access into the region was limited.

Still spellbound from gazing at the enormity of the Alaskan wilderness, I'd stepped down from the mail-plane into the miniature perfection of Eagle, a fascinating, history-packed hamlet of timber dwellings, home to just 85 residents. I was immediately wrapped in the customary bear hug by Mike's wife, Scarlett, and cocooned in layers of Arctic-grade outerwear.

Mike and Scarlett live sustainably, hunting, fishing and gathering, consciously leaving a minimal carbon footprint. They've enjoyed many years of wilderness expeditions using traditional dog-sleds and now provide opportunities for adventurous souls to experience their eco-lifestyle first hand.

Driving a dog-sled is harder than it looks. As Mike's passenger, I realised it involved constant corrective manoeuvres anticipating the dog-team's next move (they only ever do what they want to) and possible camber (tilt in the trail).

In theory lessons, Mike's diagrams emphasised that the 'ice highway' can be anything from porcelain smooth to oversized ice cubes (slam into one of those and you'd need your emergency messaging device), but winding through spruce forests tracing soft, snow-covered lines is a precious delight. Criss-crossing a small lake's glassy surface, I looked down to see exquisite designs – crystal bubbles of all shapes and sizes suspended in time, cascading into the dark depths.

There were, of course, many thrills and spills. Losing control on one adrenalin-charged downhill run, I tipped sideways onto the snow. My happy, yappy team continued on, their inept operator hanging on single-handedly, thankful for the padded trousers provided.

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Each evening, we settled in at a different location, often an old miner's cabin, where our teams were secured and cared for. The teams are your lifeline, your escape route, so their health and wellbeing are paramount. Only after this did we collect snow for our water and cut firewood.

The most memorable night? Using only nature's materials, we shovelled and hacked, creating a shelter against the sub-zero temperature. A reflective wall of logs threw the pit-fire's heat under our makeshift roof as Mike spoke with passion about life out here, the joy of relative freedom and the Aurora Borealis in the night skies that were nature's artwork: a ceiling of stars on dark nights, or flooded with rippling, emerald green curtains. As I burrowed down for the night, fire crackling in the stillness, the howling of wolves drifted to us. It was a moment of complete and utter contentment.

* * *

Exactly how far I travelled through the twilight with my errant team, I'll never know. Our detour didn't have a dramatic end in the fangs of a wolf pack. Only when fatigued did the team slow, gliding to a halt with Mike rounding the bend sometime later to locate me.

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