UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core) **October/November 2011**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the reading passage for use with both questions of the Question Paper.

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Read the following passage carefully and then answer all the questions in the Answer Booklet.

The writer, Paul Theroux, travelled through Asia by train about 35 years ago. In this passage he describes his journey from the north of Pakistan as far as the city of Lahore.

The *Khyber Mail* to Lahore Junction

Rashid, the conductor on the sleeping car, helped me find my compartment, and after a moment's hesitation he asked me to have a look at his tooth. It was giving him aches, he said. The request was not surprising. I had told him I was a dentist. I was getting tired of people asking me so many questions: Where do you come from? What do you do? Married or single? Any children? This nagging made me evasive, secretive, foolish, an inventor of far-fetched stories. Rashid made the bed and then opened up, tugging his lip down to show me a tooth rotted with decay.

'You'd better see a dentist in Karachi,' I said. 'In the meantime chew your food on the other side.'

Satisfied with my advice (and I also gave him two aspirins), he said, 'You will be very comfortable here. German-built carriage, about fifteen years old. Heavy, you see, so no shaking.'

It had not taken long to find my compartment. Only three were occupied – the other two by army officers – and my name was on the door, printed large on a label. By this stage of my travels, I could tell on entering a train what sort of a journey it would be. The feeling I had on the Khyber Mail was slight disappointment that the trip would be so short – only twelve hours to Lahore. I wished it were longer: I had everything I needed. The compartment was large, well lighted and comfortable, with a toilet and sink in an adjoining room; I had a drop-leaf table, well-upholstered seat, mirror, ashtray, chrome bottle holder, the works. I was alone. But if I wished to have company I could stroll to the dining car or stand in the passage with the army officers.

Nothing is expected of the train passenger. In planes the traveller is condemned to hours in a tight seat; ships require high spirits and sociability; cars and buses are unspeakable. The sleeping car is the most painless form of travel.

I began to understand why people find travelling in a sleeping car so attractive. It allows complete privacy, combining the best features of a cupboard with forward movement. The pleasure of travelling in this way is increased by the views from the window: a swell of hills, the surprise of mountains, the loud metal bridge, or the sight of people standing on platforms under yellow lamps. The notion of travel as a continuous vision, a succession of memorable images, is possible only on a train, a vehicle that allows residence: dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer.

'What time does the Khyber Mail get to Karachi?'

'Timetable says seven-fifteen in the night,' said Rashid. 'But we will be five and a half hours late.'

'Why?' I asked.

'We are always five and a half hours late. It is the case.'

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I slept well and was awakened at six the following morning by a Sikh with a steel badge pinned to his turban that read *Pakistan Western Railways*.

'Are you wanting breakfast?'

I said yes.

'I'm coming at seven o'clock.'

He brought an omelette, tea and toast, and for the next half-hour I sprawled, reading my book and finishing my tea. Then I snapped up the shade and flooded the compartment with light.

In brilliant sunshine we were passing rice fields and stagnant pools full of white lotuses and standing herons. Farther on, we startled a pair of pistachio-green parrots; they flew up, getting greener as they rose. Looking out of a train window in Asia is like watching an unedited travelogue without the soundtrack: people patting pie-shaped mud bricks and slapping them on to the side of a mud hut to dry; men with bullocks and submerged ploughs, preparing a rice field for planting. Just outside Lahore, I saw a town of grass huts and cardboard shelters where everyone was in motion – sorting fruit, folding clothes, fanning the fire, shooing a dog away and mending a roof.

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