Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core) **October/November 2015**

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

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

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

Passage A: The Dangerous Reef

The narrator is travelling in a boat that is carrying wounded soldiers to safety after a battle in the North Sea.

As we got nearer to the shore, the reefs began to appear and Mr Riach sometimes called down to us from the mast, to change the course. The brightness of the moon showed us these dangers as clearly as in the day, which was, perhaps, more alarming. It showed me, too, the face of the captain as he stood by the steersman, listening and looking as steady as steel. I saw they were brave men and admired them more.

By veering to one side or the other to avoid a reef, but still hugging the wind and the land, we had begun to come alongside the Isle of Mull. The tide was very strong, and threw the boat about. Two extra pairs of hands were put to the wheel, and it was strange to see three strong men throw their weight upon it, and the wheel like a living thing struggle against them. Mr Riach announced from the top of the mast that he saw clear water ahead.

'Keep the boat away from the reef,' shouted Mr Riach. And just at the same time the tide caught the boat and threw the wind out of its sails. It spun round into the wind and the next moment struck the reef with a thump that threw us all flat upon the deck, and came close to shaking Mr Riach from his place upon the mast.

I was on my feet in a minute. The reef which we had struck was close to the south-west end of Mull. Sometimes the waves broke clean over us; sometimes they only ground the poor boat upon the reef, so that we heard it beat itself to pieces. What with the great noise of the sails, and the singing of the wind, and the flying spray in the moonlight, and the sense of danger, I was so terrified I could scarcely understand the things I saw.

I saw Mr Riach and the seamen trying to save the boat and ran over to assist them. As soon as I started to help, I felt calm. It was no easy task and the breaking of the heavier waves continually hampered our struggles. Meanwhile those of the wounded who could move came clambering out onto the deck and began to help, while the rest that lay helpless in their bunks horrified me with their screaming, and begged to be saved.

The captain took no part. He seemed stunned. He stood holding onto the mast, talking to himself and groaning out aloud whenever the ship hammered on the rocks. His boat was like family to him and when anything threatened it he seemed to suffer too.

We had one of the wounded men keep a watch upon the seas and give us warning. We had the boat just about under control, when this man called out shrilly:

'Everyone, hold on!'

We knew by his tone that it was something out of the ordinary; and sure enough, there followed a wave so huge that it lifted the boat right up and, with the sudden tilt, I was thrown clean over the side into the sea.

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

Passage B: Mystery of Sydney II disaster solved

The sinking of the Australian ship Sydney II and the loss of its entire crew of 645 is Australia's worst naval disaster. The publication of a long-awaited report on the sinking of the Sydney has finally ended the mystery that began when it sank on 19th November 1941.

The Sydney encountered a disguised enemy vessel, the Kormoran, in the waters off Western Australia. The Australian ship approached, trying to determine whether the vessel was friendly. It wasn't. The Kormoran fired when they got close. The Sydney fired back and, in the end, both ships went down.

After the wrecks of both ships were located an Australian commission conducted an inquiry. The commission's finding was that the Sydney obviously thought the other ship was friendly and requested it to respond with a secret call sign. However, the crew of the Sydney were surprised when the other ship opened fire and destroyed Sydney's bridge and much of its superstructure. This was followed by a torpedo strike that crippled the Sydney and its forward guns.

The report goes on to say: 'It can never be known what was in the mind of Captain Burnett, the commanding officer of the Sydney, when he decided to take his ship so close. Nor can it be known what advice, if any, he was given by other officers on the bridge. What is known is that, in trying to identify the sighted ship, Captain Burnett was performing his duty.'

Despite the battle lasting about 35 minutes, it is likely that all the senior officers were killed by the initial shots. The torpedo tore into the front of the Sydney, flooding the ship. The Sydney limped away and sank sometime in the next few hours.

An 11-day delay by Australia's government in announcing the ship's loss led to many theories about the fate of the crew: that the ship was actually sunk by a submarine, that survivors were machine-gunned in the water or that the government hid bodies after they washed up on the beach. The commission found no substance in any of these theories.

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