Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended) **October/November 2015**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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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.

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Part 1

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

Passage A: Overcoming fear

The first jump from an aeroplane is a jittery nightmare of fear. More than likely, the act of jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane with a heavy parachute on one's back generates more real fear than anything, short of armed combat.

The teaching method in fashion when I made my first jump, almost ten years ago, involved crawling out of an open door of an aircraft and hanging from the wingstrut. The jumpmaster calculated the force of the wind against an airspeed of over a hundred kilometres an hour, and added in a nine-hundred-metre drop. He shouted at the student to let go of the strut at the point where all these variables might combine to deposit him or her in the centre of the drop zone.

On that first jump I was the second student out of the plane. A young woman went first, and when she reluctantly let go, I saw her body hurtle down through empty space like a sack of cement. When she let go of the strut, gravity tilted her over into an exaggerated belly flop – arms straight out and slightly above the head, legs held just above the back – spread-eagled like a frog. She was already a tiny speck before the static line attached to the plane pulled the parachute open for her. From far above it looked like one of those flowers blooming in time-lapse photography in a nature documentary.

The plane circled around, and it was my turn to confront the fear of falling. The jumpmaster had stressed the importance of holding my back arched. When the jumpmaster judged that I was in the proper position he shouted 'Go!'. This was a command I obeyed with extreme reluctance. The plane disappeared overhead. I held position from the waist up, but my legs were moving at a flat-out pace. I think, looking back on it, that my fear, ignoring the hard facts of physics, was screaming, 'Run or you'll die!'

Nevertheless, I didn't go into much of a spin. The chute opened splendidly, and I floated slowly to earth in an utter silence punctuated only by the bass drumbeat of my heart. It didn't matter that I'd failed to hold position. The point of the first jump is simply doing it. The niceties come later, if the student decides there is going to be a later. Jumping once is about defeating fear rather than demonstrating skill, boldly breaking through the bars and escaping the confines we set for ourselves. Afterwards, my skydiving classmates and I were giddy and ecstatic, like a group of children getting off a roller coaster, with an excitement fuelled by a sense of accomplishment.

Some of my classmates who went on to further jumps might have been looking to recapture that first incredible adrenaline rush – as I know I was – but this is a process of diminishing returns. As the novice becomes accustomed to the fear, the thought process changes gradually. During the first jump you think – 'I know thousands have done it before, but this time it's me, and I'm going to die.' This gives way to a more casual attitude – 'Okay, some people have been injured, some have even been killed, but I'm careful, and that'll never happen to me.'

My experience suggests that the novice skydiver discovers, over the next few jumps, that one can never feel again that first thrill of pure and primal fear. He or she also learns to appreciate the skill involved in skydiving, and begins to understand that the mechanics of flying are pleasurable in themselves. This is the reason some people become hooked on the sport. The woman I watched fall off the strut that day nearly a decade ago has now logged over a thousand jumps.

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Part 2

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

Passage B: Stunting

The greatest stunt performer alive is Vic Armstrong, who has stood in for Indiana Jones, James Bond and Superman. Yakima Canutt was the greatest, but he died in 1986. Vic sees him as 'the daddy of all stuntmen' and he adds, 'He found a way to make stunts better, safer and more spectacular. We owe him.' One of Vic's stunts can be seen as a tribute to Canutt. As Indy in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, he leaps off his horse onto a moving tank. Although the stunt only took a few seconds to film, like most stunts it took a very long time to prepare, in order to get the right speed and rhythm on the horse to keep it exactly level with the tank. It was very convenient that Vic looked just like Harrison Ford, was almost the same age, and had the same build.

Vic has now retired, at the age of 43, which is old for this job. The injuries, aches and pains were beginning to mount up. But now he is a stunt-coordinator, and when a film director like Scorsese or Spielberg wants something dangerous done on screen, it's Vic they call to make it happen. He misses doing the stunts himself, though, especially the strange calm he used to feel just beforehand. And he misses the bond with the horses, teaching them how to fall and not hurt themselves. He acknowledges, however, that he saw plenty of deaths on the set. As stunting runs in the family, and his wife and children are all involved, he is inevitably anxious about any form of stunt, new or old.

Vic, in his prime, would happily jump off viaducts and between tall buildings; he would crash buses, drive cars through hotels, and do anything at all with horses, which was his speciality. But he hated fire. He says, 'There's a trick to setting yourself alight, if you want to survive, but fire jobs can always go wrong, leaving you scarred for life. They are the most unpopular of stunts performed by those of us in the trade.'

He laments that things are not what they used to be in the movie business, and that stunting has suffered and lost some of its magic. Computer-generated special effects have replaced many of the kinds of stunts they used to perform, like having to fly, on super-thin painted wires. The wires can now be erased by computer, so they are much thicker. But he hopes there will always be a place for stunt performers: 'Audiences deserve something unique to each film, not a repeat digitally spliced in from a previous movie.' He describes a stunt as something which tells an important part of the story in mime, without dialogue, as in the silent movies. 'Like a circus act, a good stunt creates a sense of awe that such a thing can be done; it's a form of poetry.'

Vic thinks he was lucky to have got into the business in the golden era when one could take more risks, experiment and make one's own decisions, and feel a greater sense of achievement. He enjoyed dicing with death and creating hair-raising sequences. He feels that nowadays audiences expect to be shown the impossible and are not impressed by it. In the old days, the stunt team would be part of the film set for weeks on end; now they are just called in for a few days. They used to make their own devices, such as a kind of fan for reducing the speed of a fall, and now all the equipment is provided. He says that, ironically, consideration of health and safety rules has actually made the job more and not less dangerous.

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