Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2020**

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: How cutting down trees can help the environment

Some forest conservationists believe that you need to reduce a dominant species of tree in order to protect other species.

It's frequently suggested that culling is an appropriate method for maintaining populations of animals and controlling numbers of invasive species. For example, such measures have been taken to control the grey squirrel, which has stolen habitat and food from the red squirrel. Large numbers of deer can also cause destruction of natural habitats. In these situations selective culling is a method of maintaining a manageable level.

The same argument can be applied to trees in forests.

This type of conservation is judged by some as a misguided attempt to save what is seen as the most important, pretty or useful of the species, with little regard for the natural progression of wildlife and the environment.

However, we must consider how this method attempts to restore balance within the environment, not just allowing the survival of the fittest and fastest to adapt, but of a well-rounded spread of species that all rely on each other for survival, including us!

The natural balancing of our woodlands was successfully maintained by various mammals in the forests. Many of these mammals no longer exist or lack the freedom they once had. Years ago, larger animals would naturally bring down trees and eat specific varieties of tree and vegetation. These mammals helped to keep habitats varied and dynamic because they roamed freely. However, since the intervention of humans, specific native and non-native species either dominate woodlands or are restricted in their movements.

As a result, conservation groups have started to remove areas of dense woodland, replacing it with wildflowers, heather and other different species. This strategy has had a positive impact on woodland ecosystems.

It can seem incredibly destructive to cut down a 2-year-old oak or birch, but leaving them to flourish would result in fewer habitats for wildlife. The silver birch self-seeds very efficiently which causes overcrowding. Dense woodland then prevents sunlight hitting the woodland floor, which reduces the variety of vegetation that can survive. It is this vegetation that allows a habitat for insects and subsequently birds to thrive. Blue tits and nightingales are commonly found around thickets that have few trees, as these birds have easier access to their food sources, insects and berries.

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

Text B: Japanese cherry blossom season

The season in which Japanese cherry blossom trees blossom is a time much enjoyed and celebrated by many people.

Once I experienced cherry blossom season in Japan and shared in an immense rush of carefree happiness. When the first branch with five blossoms unfolded in Okinawa, in Japan's southernmost tip, the nation erupted in glee. Party season was officially on!

Along with the excited Japanese, I swooned over explosions of soft pink flowers. Flower-viewing picnics flooded parks and religious sites, while companies dispatched junior staff at dawn to save prime spots for office parties. Traditional Japanese rice balls were staple festival food. Squid skewers sizzled on grills, as laughter grew louder into the night. Paper lanterns illuminated trees, glowing like incandescent bonfires.

Celebrations could get out of hand and I have read about city councils enforcing curfews, but I witnessed how little this abated enthusiasm. Even the shops were infatuated. Consumerism in Japan is astonishing. Shelves were flushed pink with soft drinks, cakes, biscuits, ice-cream, textiles, clothing, stationery and homewares. One fast-food outlet produced a hamburger on a pink cherry-scented bun with pink mayonnaise.

The Japanese have celebrated cherry blossom season for over a thousand years and it inspires art, music and poetry to this day. A traditional blossom song is still taught in schools, while '5 centimeters per second', a 2007 anime film, takes its title from the gentle movement with which blossom falls. It is a bittersweet tale of a young man and woman who meet in spring, then become separated over the years.

For the Japanese, cherry blossom season is a cyclical marker of time. They can reflect on the revolving carousel of family, friends, lovers and colleagues over a lifetime of basking under powdery canopies. As I discovered, these delicate blooms emit an innocent blush while wielding a mighty nostalgic punch.

Japan's recent industrial growth has delivered dazzling technology and prosperity, but also environmental degradation that continues today. About three-quarters of Japan is mountainous and uninhabitable. Most people live in crowded cities in flat, coastal regions. Once a year though, Nature declares its sovereignty in the cities and bestows its gift of the year's biggest social and cultural event.

The jubilation lasts only one to two weeks. Warm weather coaxes buds out of hibernation, then ushers in rainstorms that knock the petals off. When the last petals drop in the most northern part of Japan the show is over.

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

Text C: Walking in the jungle

The narrator is one of a party going on an organised trip through the jungle in the company of their guide, Maria.

The trail we're taking is twisting, quiet and remote. We pass simple wood-plank homes and racks of peas drying in the sun. On one curve, we slow down for a small brown-and-black anteater which crosses before us, then stands on its hind legs, front legs outstretched at its sides, to look back at us.

Then we get to the waterfall.

We hear the roar before we reach it, then are rewarded with a wide, bright blue-green pool fed by a cascade. Towering above are mud and rock formations that look like hidden elephants. 'This is such an adventure!' one of us says. We follow a trail heading up through the jungle to the right, and look down on the pool.

'It's perfect, but how do we get into it?'

'You have to jump,' our guide Maria says, holding out her arms in a circle the size of a manhole cover. Then she laughs impishly at our surprised faces and agrees to an alternative: climbing down the eight-metre steep bank of brittle shrubs and loose dirt. Then we swim upstream, over fallen logs, to reach the pool below the crash of falls. We are cradled in frothy, azure luxury – the best swimming hole I've ever been in.

A couple of hours later we are on a boat trip where we eat vegetable tacos as Maria constantly spins round, showing us crocodiles on the banks. Howler monkeys groan from treetops on either side of the river. We also pass a temple with dark tunnels where fruit bats huddle and squeak above us, and eventually reach a wide shaded area where 30-metre-tall trees share space with temples well over a thousand years old.

Once off the boat, Maria, who learned to hunt by bow and arrow as a child in the 1970s, leads us through the jungle, over root-laced trails – and occasionally off them. We pass over a series of log bridges, and ford one river by foot. I quickly see how over-packed I am. Some of our party are gamely walking barefoot with just one small bottle of water each. My bag, meanwhile, is filled with four water bottles, some chocolate cookies, hard-boiled eggs, some electrolyte powder, and a waterproof jacket I was never going to need. Then, in the first 15 minutes, my strap breaks.

But it's a fun walk. After two hours, at Maria's brisk pace, we reach a camp at a shady crest above a reed-filled lagoon just as dusk approaches. Crocodiles are out of sight on the muddy beach below. Nearby is the start to a new home Maria is building with materials she hauls in on foot.

Maria has built a fire and mentions that a TV crew came to shoot a 'how to survive the jungle' show once, but a few of the participants quit after getting infected by some ivy. 'But it's easy to survive here,' she insists. To demonstrate, she chops off an arm-size branch of a native tree, letting us sip the sweet, running sap. She whittles the bark and boils fragrant shavings of the branch, soon producing a bubbling gold broth. 'Jungle coffee,' she says. I have two cups' worth. It's delicious.

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The darkness is all-encompassing now. Above, stars flicker gently through the shadowy outline of treetops. I wonder when we'll be starting back, and what sort of lurking life will come out at night, but Maria is distracted. She catches and hands over a sudden visitor – a beetle with fluorescent yellow-green lights that glow from its eyes like a penlight. Its head sharply clicks between three positions. *40*

And then she starts leading us back in the dark.

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