Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/13**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2021**

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.

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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

Text A: Chasing the Northern Lights

This text is an article about a night-time climb to witness the Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis).

Night falling, calf muscles burning and a heavy pack pulling on my shoulders were all good reasons to sit down and rest. To the west, a crimson glow lit the inlet, and beyond this massive body of water, the mountains were painted with fading light.

The aurora occurs when bursts of solar energy sweep past Earth and energise magnetised particles in our upper atmosphere. In order to see this unusual light show, you need to consider the time of day and the presence of clouds. Just picture a white crayon drawn on a piece of purely black paper compared to on a piece of light blue and white paper. One picture is clearly more dramatic and rewarding than the other.

The aurora forecast tonight was good, and news had spread fast among photographers, outdoor enthusiasts, and sky-watchers. As watching an aurora requires a bit of sacrifice, we had all given up our sleep to find a good place for spectating.

After hiking for a few hours, we set up camp on a high ridge. Despite having tents, we laid our sleeping-bags out on the ground for best viewing. The show started at 23:00 and got progressively more brilliant and active throughout the night. My arms ached from holding my camera above my head.

I took a few photographs and then put my camera away. I'd realised I also wanted to live in the moment. No camera can capture the huge spectacle that dominates the heavens. At around 03:00. the entire sky filled with freely-moving bands of colour, a cosmic neon light show zigzagging erratically from horizon to horizon, streaming and gyrating.

Words and images fail to describe such an experience, the essence of which relates deeply to our perspective on life. When you're looking up into the night sky, seeing a 360-degree view of brilliant lights literally changing by the second, it makes you realise how insignificant you are and how immense the world is. And yet there's a strange sort of comfort in that realisation. Maybe that comes from knowing that you share your awe with your fellow humans out on this cold ridge. You are warmed and embrace your place in humanity.

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

Text B: The decorative artist

This text is an online article by a decorative artist.

I'm a self-taught artist – what's called a 'decorative' artist as opposed to a 'fine' artist. Fine artists paint canvases to hang in galleries. I paint canvases and then slide them in serving trays, or make table runners, or whatever.

Basically, I paint to decorate stuff. Sometimes I paint stuff to hang on walls, or I might just paint a mural on the wall itself.

I started painting after a 20-year self-imposed hiatus induced by a college art teacher who didn't like my work. I gave up painting, believing I had no talent.

That was the one and only art class I've ever taken.

So, I do understand when people think they can't paint. Years of painting and drawing as a child were tossed aside because I let one person's opinion destroy my confidence.

Other than helping my children with homework assignments, I hadn't painted for years. Then the toy shop where I worked needed a sign for their teddy bear display. I painted some bears on poster board. When my husband saw my teddy bears, he got angry. Seriously angry. 'How dare you have such talent and not be using it!' Um ... okay. So I started painting our walls at home.

Why paint our walls? I have no idea. It just seemed like the thing to do at the time.

Friends and neighbours saw our wall murals and wanted them in their homes. Over time, I took advice and a small loan and started a mural business, despite only having 'on the job' training. I made many mistakes but the great thing about paint is you can always start again and nobody is the wiser.

Being self-taught means I've spent much time experimenting and discovering and trying something different. Talented? Perhaps. But mostly my 'talent' comes from determination and a lot of hours spent holding a paintbrush.

Here's the way I look at it – everyone loves to express themselves through painting. Or at least they did as children, before they started comparing their own paintings to those of their classmates. I love teaching others how to paint, especially those who think they can't. I love it when someone gives themselves the chance to try a paint project and love witnessing their joy when they succeed.

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

Text C: Night-time photography

This text is taken from a longer narrative. The writer, Alastair, is talking about taking photographs at night.

My plan was to take photographs by the light of the harvest moon. The harvest moon is the full moon that appears closest to the autumn equinox[1] in September. All full moons make their appearance around the time of sunset. But, unlike the rise of other full moons, there is no period of darkness between sunset and the majestic ascension of the harvest moon. This gigantic, orange globe, which sits contentedly on the horizon like a celestial pumpkin, earned its name because its glowing cast over the earth allowed farmers to continue harvesting even after the sun had set.

You don't need to be ambitious when heading out into the evening to take photographs. In fact, the simpler your idea, the more likely it is to succeed. I settled on an extremely easy plan. I would follow a railway line out of town and use it to guide me as I weaved my way across the countryside, and then I'd catch a late train home from a village station when I'd had enough.

I wanted to begin in the town to document just how different the town is from the open countryside at night. Streetlights suck the night and all its raw beauty from the world. However, even in the town I felt myself paying more attention to the world than I do during the day. I was walking east, in the direction of the rising moon; I could see its copper glow on the horizon, and my camera captured how it silhouetted the rooftops and chimneys as it crept up into the sky.

Other senses take over after dark. I felt the warmth radiating from the engine of a recently parked car. A man passed, walking a dog, and I caught the scent of soap. I turned into a quiet and deserted residential street, from which I could hear the low hum of the distant main road. A train rushed past. I stopped to listen to its receding sound, and then followed along in its wake, feeling energised.

Taking photographs as I went slowed my progress and I began to feel the cool air penetrate my clothing. Photography at night takes a long time because you have to use a camera that has a long exposure. Whenever I decided to take a picture, I had to frame it, manually focus and then stand for 30 seconds waiting for the exposure to finish. My tripod kept my camera in position, while I enjoyed standing still and observing the world around me more carefully.

A fellow enthusiast hurried past. He nodded quickly and smiled: 'Just over there. Amazing colours behind the trees. I think you'll catch them.' He scurried ahead. I could see he too was following the train-line. He seemed preoccupied. I hoped I would catch up with him later.

The darkness at the edge of the town was distinct. The houses and the streetlights came to a sharp halt and in front of me was the abrupt blackness of an empty field.

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Clouds drifted swiftly across the fat round moon, by now about a hand's breadth above the horizon.

I stepped into the field, crossing the boundary into a different world. I only used my torch briefly to work out the terrain. The point of this walk was to savour and record the differences and uncertainties of the night. I didn't want to artificially beam a thin shaft of weak light across my adventure. It took some moments to adjust to the darkness and the stillness, but, as I walked along the margins of the ploughed field, my eyes began to adjust. Planes circled in the sky, sweeping slowly across the constellations. I set up my tripod to capture how the sky was much lighter than the land, and how the trees at the edge of the field jutted, black, up into the rusty suburban sky.

[1]equinox: the autumn equinox falls on a date between 21 and 24 September in the northern hemisphere and marks the start of autumn.

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