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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2023**

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: Mountain River Cave

This text is about the world's largest cave, located in Vietnam.

Vietnam is home to many spectacular landscapes. From cascading rice terraces to mazes of rivers with rice paddies, there are many sights to see. A little-known fact, however, is that Vietnam is also home to the world's largest cave, Mountain River Cave, located in the heart of Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park. The cave was formed between 400 and 450 million years ago, stretches for over 5 kilometres and reaches heights of 200 metres.

Mountain River Cave was first discovered in 1990 by a local called Ho Khanh who would trek the jungles of the national park in search of food and timber to sell. He saw a dark opening, and when he peered tentatively inside, he saw clouds and heard the strange gurgle of a river. He was wary about investigating further, so he went home and forgot where he'd found the cave entrance.

The cave was re-discovered years later in 2008, by Ho Khanh again, just before August when heavy rains would have made the cave inaccessible. This time, Ho Khanh took note of the path and led two caving experts to the cave for the first expedition. Fortunately, they were physically fit, as exploring the cave fully would have been difficult otherwise. In 2013, the cave was opened to the public, but with a two-year waiting list to visit.

The ecosystem created within the cave has its own weather system. A visitor will find a stalagmite standing at 80 metres tall, which is impressive as cave stalagmites tend to grow no more than 10 centimetres per thousand years. Collapsed ceilings have created openings above, allowing foliage to grow inside the cave. There are jungles and rivers enveloped by misty clouds, and microorganisms thriving in the darkness. Fossils date back millions of years.

To reach Mountain River Cave, a visitor needs to pass through the only village located inside the national park. This village is only accessible by foot, as it is surrounded by dense jungle. It is sometimes possible to buy some provisions here. It then takes two days of intense jungle trekking from the village to reach the Mountain River Cave entrance.

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

Text B: Visiting a cave

In this text, an experienced cave explorer gives advice to young people wanting to explore caves.

I have visited caves all over the world. With their distinct smells, creatures that you rarely see outside and multiple different sounds, these magical grottos tempt you to enter them. It's easy to act on impulse when out trekking and you see an unexpected cave mouth smiling invitingly at you.

But please don't enter! Caves can be treacherous: no two caves are alike and, exciting though the unknown may seem, safety must come first. It sounds boring, but, wherever possible, on my first visit to a cave, I join a guided tour. After that I am better positioned to decide whether a second visit by myself is viable.

Maybe there are no available guides, but you have been reassured that a nearby cave is totally safe and everyone goes, apparently. Some foolhardy thrill-seekers even visit at night, without a torch!

That doesn't mean you should do the same. How well qualified are these people seeking to reassure you? Are they members of the area cave group or simply some local people you met in a café?

Okay, you have made sure that your cave visit will be safe. Your responsible guide tells you to enter the cave slowly. This allows your eyes to adjust to the dark, meaning that you don't miss any interesting rock features early on. Also, you are more likely to notice any potential hazards, such as uneven or wet and slippery floor formations. You are, of course, wearing appropriate footwear.

Switch on your torch (you didn't forget it, I hope) before daylight from the cave mouth disappears. Now comes a fun part: when you can see, what is enhanced by your artificial light? Are there any unusual colours in the rock formations? Did anything move or try to hide when your light came on?

Some caves are barren and empty. Others are homes for bats, cave spiders, hibernating animals and many other life forms. Probably none of these creatures is dangerous, but do be careful not to scare them. Just remember where you are and don't get too distracted by the delights you have suddenly become aware of. If you're with a group, it could be unsafe to stray. Maybe ask the group leader to slow down if the group is moving too quickly for you, but if this isn't possible, you must do as you are told.

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

Text C: The lost cave

Rohaan wants to start up his own building company called RS Building Works. He has decided to build an office in the garden to work in and to meet his clients.

Rohaan was tugging at the thick green ivy plant smothering the three-metre rock face at the bottom of the garden.

Shaima looked at the ivy cascading down, curtain-like, over the natural wall. 'It softens that overhanging rock,' she commented.

'It's all in the way, I'm afraid, and I'm not sure what's behind it,' said Rohaan. 'If RS Building Works is going to be successful, I need space to work in. We have to make some sacrifices if we are going to earn money.'

'I understand,' said Shaima. She returned to the house. She was working on an important assignment for her college archaeology course. 'One day, I will go on a real archaeological dig,' she mused, 'rather than just writing about other people's discoveries.' She smiled at an idea that they had neither the opportunity nor money for now.

In the garden, things had taken a more violent turn. Surrendering to one last mighty heave, the roots of the ivy suddenly collapsed away above the rock face with the completeness of a breaking chrysalis shell. Rohaan toppled heavily backwards, as eager green ivy tendrils sprang towards him. Taken by surprise, he writhed around under many stringy choking fingers for several seconds, before ripping his mischievous assailants away.

Unaware of events outside, Shaima paused at her laptop, thinking about the bees and the butterflies that the intrusive ivy attracted. She realised that she had mixed feelings about the building project.

Rohaan lifted himself to his elbows. He hadn't broken, twisted or pulled anything important, and he freed himself from the remaining foliage.

He looked at what was left of the rock face. A gaping hole stared defiantly back at him, as if inviting a stand-off. Rohaan dropped his eyes to break the gaze and received an immense surprise. Half a metre from the base was the floor of a cave entrance. It was surely inviting him to look inside.

After brushing off dead leaf detritus, cobwebs and insects, Rohaan slowly approached the mouth of the cave. He peered inside, his heart pounding. The air was still, dry and cool, the smell, an age-old musty scent. Within a few metres, everything appeared lost in suffocating blackness.

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Armed now with a torch, Rohaan advanced into the cave. At first, it was dry and vaguely warm. As he travelled deeper, Rohaan found himself contorting his shoulders and lowering his head to navigate an increasingly confined space. He walked down a gentle slope with caution, trying to avoid treacherously loose stones underfoot. The walls swallowed the light. He flashed the torch up to the ceiling then right and left ahead of his feet.

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In front of him, the path suddenly ended. Rohaan could hardly believe what he had found. A huge cavern had appeared, dropping perhaps 10 metres below. The height looked to be the same. In the dim distance was the cavern wall.

'Hello,' sang out Rohaan and was greeted with a gratifying echo. He laughed out loud then stood in awe at his find. The bright spotlight shone down on animal bones, though which animals they belonged to was a mystery. It didn't take a genius to realise that the remains of these creatures had once been animals that had run into the cave to escape a predator, only to fall headlong to their death. He spotted deer antlers, which solved one puzzle. Maybe Shaima could identify the other, old, maybe even extinct species? Would this be their new project? Could they hope to make money?

Slowly Rohaan moved the beam around the cavern. He realised he had stopped breathing, and took in a large lungful of air. It was air that must have lingered in this place for thousands of years, and it left a dry ash-like taste on his tongue.

Suddenly he heard movement behind him. He turned quickly. 'Oh, my goodness!' he heard Shaima call out.

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