Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/11**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2025**

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)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: *Penguins*

Despite their global popularity, over half the 18 listed species of penguins are in trouble. Who's to blame? Well, humans mostly.

Penguins have adapted to difficult conditions and diverse ecosystems over millions of years. But today, many populations – from those living in the cold of Antarctica to those in the warmth of the Galápagos Islands – are feeling the effects of human activities.

Seasonal melting, changing Southern Ocean currents and weather patterns cause the dissipation of ice. This loss in turn reduces the places for penguins to rest and avoid certain predators during long foraging trips, as well as contributing to reductions in krill, a favourite food of several penguin species. Emperor penguins commonly breed and raise their young on 'fast ice', a floating platform of frozen ocean connected to the land.

Some commercial fishing industries have claimed that their operations near penguin colonies do not make it difficult for penguins to find nourishment. But this is demonstrably wrong. Penguins have been known to drown due to collisions with fishing boats, or become entangled in their nets while diving for food.

Tourism has increased public awareness of the plight of penguins, but at the same time has exacerbated such problems as littering, which create choking and suffocation hazards. Prior to human encroachment on their territories, penguins lived in isolation and so did not develop immune systems fit to combat many of the world's most common pathogens. Non-native predators such as dogs and foxes introduced by humans in new South Wales, Australia, have also been responsible for the wiping out of several colonies of penguins.

And how do humans feel about penguins? We love them is the answer. Mostly, the docile, even friendly, disposition that humans anticipate in these beautiful creatures is the side that they show to tourists. But don't confuse territorial behaviour with an invitation to be sociable, as one visiting researcher did, resulting in a resounding slap from a powerful flipper and damaged equipment. And while we might think they are performing a cute and clumsy wobbly walk in the direction of water for the benefit of our cameras, it's worth remembering that penguins are highly efficient predators and that they have very keen eyesight for anything that may be happening under water surfaces.

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

Text B: *Studying penguins*

Penguin spotting is a lonely job. In the name of science, you sit on a beach for hours, watching one African penguin after another waddle past on their way somewhere more fun. You note down how many you saw and when, and then keep on waiting. Time passes slowly. Finally, the penguins all walk back home, and you note that down too. With the noting-down all finished, you too can head home, knowing not only is your job time-consuming, but it's also prone to mistakes.

Happily, biologists may not have to continue getting sand in their trousers. Specialists are building more accurate systems that use CCTV and artificial intelligence to distinguish one African penguin from another, meaning that scientists can get on with more important things.

The camera is positioned in the place where penguins are expected. When one shuffles past, software checks to make sure it's a penguin, looking closely for the colour patterns that penguin breeds all share – black head, white neck, then a ring of black around a white abdomen. As humans, we can't always detect or recall an additional arrangement of spots on their stomachs that is unique to each penguin, but the fact that the camera can opens up another possibility for CCTV. It lets the software recognise which penguin is which.

These unique markings that identify each penguin help scientists learn more about their lives. A scientist explains, 'You know if a specific penguin has been here before and whether it has a friendship group and if it hunts with this same group of friends each day. You find out whether the same penguins come back to the same places every year at the same time, assisting in our projects for breeding and conservation. We used to put a tag or a band on them for identification purposes, but that was probably uncomfortable for the penguins and not very safe.'

Benefits aren't just penguin related. Studying the physiological features some possess, for example studying how deep and for how long penguins can dive without breathing, could teach us how to develop more effective anaesthetics.

What's more, the smart CCTV system will free lonely biologists from penguin-watching duty. After all, no one should have to be bored at the beach.

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

Text C: ***Visiting the Antarctic***

Saffron is 18 and about to leave school for higher education at college. She and her mother are holidaying on a boat in the Antarctic. This text contains her mother's journal entries for this period.

Tuesday

Spent today in bed as our ship rocked over the rough seas. We're both feeling seasick. Saffron is worried about the higher education course she has chosen. She thinks Environmental Science may be a mistake. Apparently, her friend Josie choosing to study Medicine is a bigger deal than I had expected.

Maybe I shouldn't have been so pushy about her choosing Environmental Science but I know she'll just love it like I did years ago.

She's also complaining about my decision to come to these remote islands in this cold (Josie and her family are holidaying in the sun, apparently, with lots of other young people around). The fact that we've had no internet access for days hasn't helped either.

Not the best day.

Thursday

Today we went out in Zodiacs. These are the small inflatable boats that take us from our cruise ship to explore the bays.

I woke this morning to complete and total stillness. Knowing this meant we were in Antarctica, I quickly woke Saffron up and, grabbing our jackets, we hurried up to the deck. Well, I hurried; Saffron seemed less enthusiastic.

John was the expedition leader in charge of our Zodiac, which held eight excited older tourists, Saffron and me.

We all gasped at the heavenly sights. There were panoramic views of glaciers, mountains and icebergs, basking in the sunshine and cutting white lines between the clear blue sky and the silent waters of the bay around us. John took us along the seemingly endless face of glacier. We were captivated by its crevassed and sculpted glory, that is until a lone seal surfaced to distract us, rolling playfully alongside the boat, before disappearing into the secret depths below.

After this, John carefully guided the Zodiac through the sea of white. He explained the different ice formations and how ancient glaciers break into towering icebergs, before floating silently on their lonely journey out to sea.

Watching the broken ice blocks, Saffron asked him how much evidence he had seen of climate change in his time working for the cruise ship.

In response, John's face dropped and he pointed inland to where we could see verdant plant life greedily snatching at gentle contours of quietly receding ice.

'I never saw that when I first led expeditions,' he sighed. 'Our penguins are the main victims. What will happen to them when all their ice is gone?'

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Penguins! I am so excited about seeing penguins. Tomorrow hopefully. Saffron seems more cheerful. We didn't talk about college choices today.

Friday

Today was a good day. We went back out in the Zodiac. And we did see penguins!

John asked Saffron about her plans for college. She told him about her Environmental Science course, how she and Josie have been together in school since they were five and had big dreams of working together to make changes in the world. 'Josie's going to be a doctor,' Saffron told him. In reply, John explained how his work here took him away from family and friends for long periods and how much he looked forward to holidays with them. 'That's an interesting course you've chosen, though,' he added. 'It's crucial that accurate information about places like Antarctica is shared and influences our actions as human beings.'

Saffron seemed thoughtful. She even started asking me questions about my time studying Environmental Science and, incredibly, she listened to my answers.

But the penguins! We visited an enormous colony of them. They were comically squabbling over a perfect pebble – yes, a pebble! – that several wanted to poach from a neighbour's nest. Next minute, they forgot their petty domestic warring to unite angrily in noisy chastising of an opportunistic predatory gull which had its beady eye on an unprotected egg. I laughed and laughed and was delighted to see a huge grin on Saffron's face too.

Sad to be leaving tomorrow.

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