



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

0500/11

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core)

October/November 2012

READING BOOKLET INSERT

1 hour 45 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the reading passage for use with all questions on the Question Paper.

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Read the following passage carefully and then answer all the questions on the Question Paper.

A Journey to the Rainforests of Peru by Rebecca Ford

In my dreams the Amazon was a steamy world of luxuriant foliage, beady-eyed monkeys, jewel-bright birds and improbably large insects: a place where anything could happen – and frequently did. I had such high expectations that I wondered whether the reality would disappoint. I needn't have worried. Within minutes of arriving in the Peruvian rainforest, I saw a crimson hummingbird dart from a flower; I had to duck as a flock of parakeets swooped over my head, and watched as an agouti – a sort of giant guinea-pig – cracked a Brazil nut between its teeth.

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I was staying at the Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica; a tropical lodge on the banks of the Madre de Dios River, a tributary of the mighty Amazon. It's a great place for watching wildlife. Even on the way there we saw a caiman (a type of crocodile) basking near the shore and an emerald cloud of parakeets clinging to a muddy salt-lick beside the water. There are 35 comfortable wooden cabins (*cabañas*) with palm roofs and tiled showers, set in a clearing beside a central restaurant. It's the jungle without discomfort.

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Peru is a superb destination for nature lovers like me, as the people at Inkaterra realised back in the 1970s when they pioneered eco-aware holidays there. The dense rainforest in the north and east of the country is home to an immense variety of plants and animals, ranging from the elusive jaguar to the evil sounding strangler fig tree. The bird life is extraordinary – 18.5 per cent of all the world's bird species are found in Peru.

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Soon after I arrived, I joined a nature walk led by Elias, one of the guides. I was amazed at just how many creatures we saw on a gentle stroll. Not that this is some tamed environment – guests must walk with a guide on the forest trails, not least because it is astonishingly easy to get lost. "One guest went off by himself," I was told. "We finally found him two days later – utterly terrified."

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Before we'd even left the grounds, Elias had spotted a troop of squirrel monkeys swinging through the trees with easy grace. "Humans can eat what monkeys eat," he said, as we watched them nibble fruit. "If you don't know what foods in the forest are safe, watch the monkeys." I stored away that tip – in case I accidentally strayed and ended up doing survival self-catering.

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Elias showed us how adding water to the crushed leaves of the sanipanga plant creates a red dye, used by local people as a temporary tattoo. He pointed out the garlic tree, the bark of which is a natural mosquito repellent.

Later, on a twilight walk, we saw the rainforest in a different guise. As darkness fell, our torches revealed the gleaming eyes of caimans lurking menacingly in the river; there was a furry tarantula with pink feet, sitting on the trunk of a tree, and a chicken spider the size of my hand, emerging from its den to take the evening air. Every so often the golden flash of a firefly pierced the enveloping blackness, which echoed with eerie whistles, shrieks and strange percussive beats.

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Peru's varied terrain means that you can see a stunning range of wildlife in a short time. I reluctantly left the Amazon to fly to Cusco, former capital of the Incas. The paintings in the cathedral were a fascinating mix of European and Peruvian features. In one of them, the artist had painted roast guinea-pig and local drinks instead of the more conventional offerings.

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Some days later, I took a bus that wound through the Sacred Valley of the Incas to Ollantaytambo, where I boarded the train for the 90 minute journey to Aguas Calientes – the rail terminus for Machu Picchu.

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Set in the Andean cloud forest, Machu Picchu was probably abandoned before the Spanish conquest and so was the only major Inca site to escape destruction. It wasn't until 1911 that explorer Hiram Bingham discovered it, buried deep in jungle. I visited the next day and strolled around its steep terraces, temples and ceremonial baths. It is mysterious and almost inaccessible but hauntingly beautiful.

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But this misty cloud forest has other beauties too – creatures like the endangered Spectacled Bear, woolly monkeys and rare orchids. The grounds of my hotel were like a lush nature reserve – filled with butterflies and birds in brilliant shades of sapphire, scarlet and saffron. Most exciting for me were the hummingbirds, which looked like animated gems. One flew so close that I even heard the beat of its tiny wings. Peru may boast archaeological wonders and rich reserves of gold, but its real treasure is its wildlife which is richer than I'd dared to imagine.

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