

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

0500/02

Paper 2 Reading Passages

October/November 2006

2 hours

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black pen.
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.
Dictionaries are **not** permitted.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.
The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

Part 1

Read **Passage A** carefully, and then answer **Questions 1** and **2**.

Passage A

In this passage, the writer describes a visit to a town, a village, and out into the desert in Patagonia. The desert is not one of sand and gravel but is covered with grey-leaved, thorny plants.

A visit to Patagonia

Bahia Blanca is the last place before the Patagonian desert. Bill dropped me at the hotel near the bus station. The bar-room was green and brightly lit and full of men playing cards. The owner's wife showed me a hot airless room, painted purple. The room had no window and the door gave out onto a glassed-in courtyard. I did not sleep that night.

So next day, as we drove through the desert, I sleepily watched the rags of silver cloud spinning across the sky, and the sea of grey-green thornscrub lying off in sweeps and rising in terraces and the white dust streaming off the salt pans, and, on the horizon, land and sky dissolving into an absence of colour.

Patagonia begins on the Rio Negro. At mid-day the bus crossed an iron bridge over the river and stopped outside a bar. Here I disembarked, followed by an Indian woman who was with her son. She had filled up two seats with her bulk. She chewed garlic and wore real gold jangly earrings and a hard white hat pinned over her braids. A look of abstract horror passed over the boy's face as she manoeuvred herself and her parcels on to the street.

The permanent houses of the village were of brick with black stovepipes and a tangle of electric wires above. When the brick houses gave out, the shacks of the Indians began. These were patched out of packing cases, sheet plastic and sacking.

A single man was walking up the street, his brown felt hat pulled low over his face. He was carrying a sack and walking into the white dust clouds, out into the country. Some children sheltered in a doorway and tormented a lamb. From one hut came the noise of a radio and sizzling fat. A lumpy arm appeared and threw the dog a bone. The dog took it and slunk off.

Outside the village there were irrigated plantations of maize and squash, and orchards of cherries and apricots. Along the line of the river, the willows were all blown about and showing their silvery undersides. The Indians had been cutting slender branches from the trees and there were fresh white cuts and the smell of sap. The river was swollen with snowmelt from the Andes, fast running and rustling the reeds. Purple swallows were chasing bugs. When they flew above the cliff, the wind caught them and keeled them over in a fluttering reversal and they dropped again low over the river.

The cliff rose sheer above a ferry-landing. I climbed a path and from the top looked up-stream towards Chile. I could see the river, glinting and sliding through the bone-white cliffs with strips of emerald cultivation either side. Away from the cliffs was the desert. There was no sound but the wind, whirring through thorns and whistling through dead grass, and no other sign of life but a hawk, and a black beetle easing over white stones.

1 Imagine you are the writer of Passage A.

Write a diary entry in which you explore your thoughts and feelings about the trip so far. be sending your diary entry to your friends and family.

In your entry include

- the impact of the landscape
- your reactions to people and places.

You should write between 1½ and 2 sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to fifteen marks will be given for the content of your answer and up to five marks for the quality of your writing.

[20 marks]

2 Re-read the descriptions of:

(a) the hotel in Bahia Blanca and the housing in the village, in paragraphs 1 and 4.

(b) the woman and her son in paragraph 3.

By referring closely to the language used by the writer, explain how he makes these descriptions effective.

[10 marks]

Part 2

Question 3 is based on both **Passage A** and **Passage B**. Read **Passage B** and re-read **Passage A**.

Passage B

This passage is about the wind, the deserts and the changing lifestyles of the sheep farmers in Patagonia. The word 'steppe' refers to a large area of land without trees.

Land of the living wind

Their manes rippling, horses roam free in Patagonia, the Big Sky country of southern Argentina and Chile, where granite peaks crown glacial lakes, and the dreams of new pioneers still have room to grow.

The wind chased me everywhere I went in Patagonia. It clogged my sinuses and sent the jeep slithering across the gravel roads as though on ice. Birds flew backward. Trees grew horizontally. The wind was a living thing. It could be violent, punching holes in glass windows or sending spirals of dust rising above the flat, dry steppe like miniature tornadoes.

On a plateau above Santa Cruz Valley I got out of the jeep to take a photograph and a blast of wind wrenched the door out of my hand, bending it backward with such violence that it sheared off the two welded brackets holding the door to the chassis.

At other times the wind had a feather touch. At a ranch near the Valdes peninsula, on the Atlantic coast, I watched as the wind caressed a piece of paper, moving it about on the ground in a circle like a magnet moving a ball bearing.

Until recently this vast, sparsely populated region in the far south of South America was a byword for remoteness – *finis terra*, the uttermost ends of the earth. Everyone I met had a different idea of the place. 'Patagonia,' said one sheep rancher in northern Tierra del Fuego, brandishing a sizzling lamb chop in the air, 'is everywhere you can taste this!'

Of all the changes blowing through Patagonia, none has had greater impact than the shifts of ownership and the use of land brought about by the collapse of the huge sheep farms (or *estancias*) of the Argentine tableland. Since the 1970s falling wool prices and desertification caused by overgrazing have brought the industry to its knees. Hundreds of *estancias* have gone out of business, while others have been sold to wealthy foreigners.

Set in the lee of a line of hills rising towards the Andes, Telken is, like all *estancias* in Patagonia, an oasis of green in a biscuit-coloured wilderness. It had taken me two days of bouncing and sliding along potholed gravel roads to reach the small towns near the *estancia*. For hours as I chased the horizon across the empty expanses, I saw no cars or buildings – just an ocean of grass and bushes, a dome of blue sky and an occasional grubby sheep. Gas stations were often hundreds of miles apart, and I marvelled at the skill of the pump attendants, who managed to get the very last drop into the tank.

As I drove along, a smudge of clouds stretched across the horizon. Rain was falling. But the heat rising from the steppe was so intense that the drops evaporated before they reached the ground. Lack of rain, the poverty of the soil and the winds that roar across Patagonia at up to 150 miles an hour, stripping mountains to bare rock, carrying topsoil away, and scything vegetation flat, have kept the region poor. Most towns are rough-and-ready frontier-style settlements consisting of a few dirt streets lined with shops providing only basic necessities.

The townspeople of San Julian do their best to make the place look good. Every morning the mayor drives down the central avenue watering the rosebushes, protected from the wind by a lattice of iron. But there is no disguising the fact that the town has been battered by the decline in sheep farming. 'The *estancias* in this region used to employ 3000 people,' said Pablo Walker, the director of tourism. 'As we passed an abandoned three-storey building with elegant wrought iron balconies and classical columns, once San Julian's biggest department store. 'Now there are cowboys sweeping the streets or cleaning toilets.'

- 3 Summarise the features of the desert areas beyond the village areas and the cultivated plantations described in:
- (a) Passage A
 - (b) Passage B

You should write about 1 side in total, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Up to fifteen marks will be given for the content of your answer and up to five marks for the quality of your writing.

[20 marks]

Copyright Acknowledgements:

Passage A
Passage B

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