



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
International General Certificate of Secondary Education



FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)

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Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)

October/November 2012

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

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

You may annotate this Reading Booklet Insert and use the blank spaces for planning. This Insert is **not** required by the Examiner.

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



Part 1

Read **Passage A** carefully, and then answer **Questions 1** and **2** on the Question Paper.

Passage A

A Trek in the Andes

The pain was worth it, I decided, as I heard my husband Alfred groan, roll out of bed, and stumble like a wooden soldier towards the bathroom. I knew that as long as I lay there, motionless, I would not suffer likewise. Our problem was that our muscles were unimaginably stiff after one of the most stimulating experiences of our lives, for we had spent the last couple of days “on top of the world”—trekking in the Andes.

* * *

We had left Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, three days before, and taken an 11-hour bus journey overnight to Mérida, a university town 1,500 meters above sea level in the lower region of that great mountain range. After a day to acclimatize in this lovely old city, we organized ourselves for the object of the exercise—to take the longest and highest cable car in the world to the top of the beautiful Venezuelan Andes.

With clear skies on a crisp January morning, we were transported gently upwards for 30 minutes in four stages to almost 5,000 meters. From the base of the *teleferico*, each stage had taken us approximately 1,000 meters higher; by stage three, we were beginning to feel the effects of the altitude, breathing more rapidly as our bodies demanded more oxygen than our usual breaths would provide. Although we could have stopped there, we had opted for the final cable car run, an extremely steep climb. We disembarked on top of Pico Espejo (Mirror Peak), only about 70 meters below the highest peak in Venezuela, Pico Bolivar, which then faced us.

What wonderful views greeted us at that altitude! We could almost touch the snow-clad Pico Bolivar across the ravine, looking like a majestic, ancient, and wise giant lording it over time and space. Below rushed the tiny, meandering river, just a moving silver thread woven into the dark fabric of the mountain. No superlative is capable of describing what we witnessed! It placed humankind firmly into insignificance as only minute specks on the landscape.

Where we were standing was sheltered, but the cold was very noticeable, even through our winter clothes. Moving into that freezing wind, with all its chill factor, brought home to us the reality and extremity of our location. When we had taken photos, we returned to the lower level. We then started out on our next objective—a trek across a mountain pass to the small village of Los Nevados (The Snowfalls). The time was 11am. We hoped to be able to spend the night at Los Nevados before returning to Mérida the following day.

The journey ahead was only 14.5 kilometers, normally well within a day’s walking distance. We set off in our stout walking boots, jeans, shirts, and fleeces, carrying a pack with wind proofs, sun hats, bottles of water, and basics for overnight. Although well trodden, the route was far from straightforward, with steep, snaking climbs that seemed to stretch to infinity and induced in us a feeling of being no bigger than ants, yet much more exposed to the stern sky, and more vulnerable to the whims of the elements. The way was strewn with slippery gravel, fine sand, and boulders of varying sizes, so that it was like attempting an obstacle course across an ice rink. Only occasionally did we find the luxury of a grassy cushion beneath our feet. It is not a journey to be undertaken by the faint-hearted or feeble-bodied!

Four hours had passed, and all we could see were barren mountains. The route was devoid of other travelers; the only sign of human habitation was a couple of tiny, isolated dwellings. By now I was looking hopefully for our destination, aware that fatigue was making itself felt, that I had not used sufficient protection from the UV light—sunglasses, lip salve, and sun cream are a must—and that we should have taken a first aid kit with us to treat the blisters on our heels. But there was no village within sight, even distantly. We had no choice but to press on.

Part 2

Read **Passage B** carefully and re-read **Passage A**. Then answer **Question 3**, which is based on both passages. Answer on the Question Paper.

Passage B**Treasures of the Himalayas**

Whichever superlative description you apply to the Himalayas, the 3,000 kilometers-long mountain range with peaks more than 8,000 meters high, it won't be enough to capture its grandeur. Spectacular ... awesome ... majestic ... breathtaking ... stunning ... magnificent None of these adjectives does justice to these mountains known as "the roof of the world." Little wonder that local people revere them as sacred, the home of the gods, the abode of the Supreme Soul, and that travelers come from all over the world.

Some of Asia's greatest rivers spring to life in the Himalayas—the Ganges, Yangtze, and Brahmaputra among them. The peaks, foothills, and plains are host to species such as the elusive snow leopard, the Bengal tiger, red panda, black bear, bearded vulture ... and perhaps even a yeti or two.

And now we at World Wildlife Fund (WWF) can add to that list. Our recent report reveals that no fewer than 244 plants, 16 amphibians, 16 reptiles, 14 fish, two birds, two mammals, and at least 60 invertebrates have been discovered by scientists in the Himalayas over the past 10 years. The Himalayan range is home to some 12,000 species of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and freshwater fish. The number of new species discovered—and investigated and verified by WWF—in the eastern Himalayas between 1998 and 2008 equates to 35 finds every year. "They remind us that despite our advances in knowledge, we can still be surprised," says our conservation adviser, Mark Wright. "If ever you needed a reminder of what we're striving to protect, discoveries like these have the power to do just that."

Among the latest discoveries are a bright green frog that uses its long, red, webbed feet to glide through the air; three species of scorpion, one of which is the first scorpion to be found in Nepal; and there's the miniature muntjac or leaf deer. At just over half a meter tall, this is the world's smallest deer species. Equally extraordinary is the Namcha Barwa Canyon. "Most people are blissfully unaware of this gorge," says Mark. "Yet it's 250 kilometers long and, in places, twice as deep as the Grand Canyon. When a couple of Chinese scientists ventured into it recently, they discovered a new ultramarine blue plant that not only flowers throughout the year but also changes color according to the air temperature. Other plant discoveries include a pure white orchid and a 15-meter-high palm tree."

Our study focused on the eastern Himalayas—an area that amazingly spans five countries and a wide range of temperatures. Nature doesn't respect boundaries, and working together on environmental issues is therefore vital. The Himalayas are likely to be hard hit by the effects of climate change. Many regions have their own microclimates and already we're seeing significant changes. Some species of wildlife and vegetation are moving up hillsides, and seasonal rainfall has become less predictable, which can sometimes result in extreme conditions, ranging from drought to flooding, and uncertainty for farmers. Many communities in the Himalayas still live in isolation, and they remain deeply dependent on the resources nature provides.

Other issues that need discussion and agreement between the governments of the countries affected are cross-border trade in wildlife, timber felling, and the harvesting of medicinal plants. Critically, we want to ensure that 50,000 square kilometers of forests, grasslands, and wetlands are protected and well connected. This will help save globally threatened species, such as the Asian elephant and the rhino, whose populations we constantly monitor. And we'll continue to help local communities live in harmony with their natural surroundings. With that secured, it's surely only a matter of time before the Himalayas will reveal yet more secrets.

Copyright Acknowledgements:

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