



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

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**FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (US)**

**0524/11**

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core)

**October/November 2013**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

**1 hour, 45 minutes**

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

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

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

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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.

*The narrator of this story is called Christopher Banks. This passage is about an incident from Christopher's childhood in China in the 1930s, which happened when he was nine years old.*

### A Mysterious Disappearance

The following day was again hot and humid. I have down the years, many times, gone over everything I can remember of *that* day, trying to put the various details in some coherent order. I cannot remember a great deal about the first part of the morning. I have a picture of how I said goodbye to my father as he went off to work. I was already outside, loitering around the driveway waiting for him to emerge. He eventually did so, in a white suit and hat, holding a briefcase and a stick. He paused and glanced out toward our gateway. Then, as I waited for him to come further toward me, my mother appeared on the doorstep behind him and said something. My father walked back a few steps, exchanged some words with her, smiled, kissed her lightly on the cheek, then came striding out to where I was waiting. That is all I remember of how he left that day. I do not remember now if we shook hands, if he patted my shoulder, if he turned back at the gate for a last wave. My overall recollection is that there was nothing in the manner of his parting that morning to set it apart from the way he had left for work on every other day.

All I remember of the rest of the morning is that I played with my toy soldiers on the rug in my bedroom. I remember my mother going out at some point and that I ate lunch with Mei Li in the kitchen. After lunch, needing to pass time until three o'clock, I walked the short distance along our road to the spot where two large oak trees stood, set back from the road, yet well in front of the nearest garden wall.

Perhaps it was because I was already stoking up my courage, but I succeeded that day in climbing one of the oaks to a new height. Perched triumphantly in its branches, I found I had a view across the hedges and grounds of all the neighboring houses. I remember I sat up there for some time with the wind on my face.

Eventually I climbed down the oak, wishing to go home for a glass of water and to check the time. As I came in through our gate, I saw two cars in the driveway. I was mildly curious about these, but by this stage was far too preoccupied to give them much attention. Then, as I was crossing the hallway, I glanced through an open door and saw the three men, standing with their hats in their hands, talking with my mother. There was nothing particularly unusual about this but something in the atmosphere made me pause a moment there in the hall. As I did so, the voices broke off and I saw their faces turn to me. I recognized one of the men to be Mr. Simpson, my father's colleague at the office; the other two were strangers. Then my mother came into view as she too leaned forward and looked at me. I suppose I might have sensed then that something out of the ordinary was unfolding. In any case, the next moment, I was hurrying off in the direction of the kitchen.

No sooner had I reached the kitchen than I heard footsteps, and my mother came in. I have often tried to recall her face—the exact expression she was wearing—at that moment, but with no success. Perhaps some instinct told me not to look at it. What I do remember is her presence, which seemed looming and large, as though suddenly I were very young again, and also the texture of the pale summer frock she was wearing. She said to me in a lowered, but perfectly composed voice: "Christopher, the gentlemen with Mr. Simpson are from the police. I must finish talking with them. Then I want to talk to you straight afterwards. Will you wait for me in the library?"

I was about to protest, but my mother silenced me with a stare that frightened me. “In the library then,” she said, turning away. “I’ll come as soon as I’ve finished with the gentlemen.”

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“Has something happened to father?” I asked.

My mother turned back to me. “Your father never arrived at the office this morning. But I’m sure there’s a perfectly simple explanation. Wait for me in the library. I won’t be long.”

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