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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/11**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2020**

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.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–1(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: The city of the lost giants

This text is about a mysterious ancient city in Ecuador that appears once to have been occupied by giants.

Ecuadorian legends tell of an ancient city of giants. As a matter of fact, tribes from all over the Amazonian basin recollect the existence of an ancient race of giants that inhabited thriving cities long before 'regular-sized' humans arrived in the area.

Locals talk about the prehistoric stone city with a mixture of fear and respect. The reason behind their attitude becomes clear when you first view the ancient structures on site.

The largest structure is an 80-metres-tall by 80-metres-wide pyramid with an inclination too high to be natural. It was built using hundreds of huge boulders, each one weighing approximately 2 tonnes. Furthermore, bones much larger than those of an average-sized human were discovered in nearby caves. The most interesting discovery, however, came in the form of tools. Oversized and ancient, they litter the forest floor. Their purpose is unknown but it is suspected that they were used in metalworking. One thing is certain, though: their size would have made it very difficult for a normal-sized human to wield them.

This evidence has been wilfully ignored by the authorities. In 2013, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Culture sent one of their teams to briefly inspect the pyramid. They saw the regular size of the blocks, yet still concluded that it was nothing more than a natural formation. Researchers at the ancient city disagree and point to the precision with which the blocks were cut and then assembled as proof of their artificial origin.

Furthermore, several other interesting large 'mounds' wait to be excavated. Although embedded in mud and covered by dense vegetation, their shape suggests pyramids may be buried beneath them. This excites researchers, often very eager to believe stories that, in other parts of the world, such complexes are built around a central pyramid where a leader is buried.

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

Text B: The Crooked Forest

In this text, the writer describes his visit to the Crooked Forest in Western Poland. The Crooked Forest consists of approximately 400 pine trees that grow in an unusual way outwards from their base. The writer is very interested in how they are formed.

My visit to the Crooked Forest took me by train to the station of Dolna Odra. I say station and not town, because I really felt like I was in the middle of nowhere, with no people about and just a small gravel road heading off towards the forest. I wandered down this rough track, contemplating the popular idea that the deformation of these trees had resulted during the invasion of Poland in the Second World War.

Arriving at the location, I had mixed reactions. While the trees were definitely as warped as I had expected, the grove they occupied was small and sparse and, furthermore, surrounded by perfectly straight pine trees on all sides. Perplexed, I dismissed my compelling image of heavy enemy tanks ploughing through the midst of a huge forest, flattening young saplings in all directions, and decided to take photographs instead.

The small group of pot-bellied stick figures posed jauntily for my camera lens. At their bases, they extended outwards anything from three to nine feet and then their trunks grew perfectly erect. It did seem highly unlikely that the trauma of being run over by ridiculously heavy tanks would result in the odd yet uniform curvature, if the young trees survived at all.

Some kind of genetic mutation maybe? I remembered reading about a plant specialist who discovered a group of aspen trees in Canada that had become gnarled and twirly as a consequence of genetic malfunction. But the whole tree had been affected in these cases.

Back at the hotel, locals had been quite voluble in their theories. Talk of alien or supernatural activity led to anecdotes about ‘sightings’, designed presumably to fool gullible visitors. Meanwhile, the hotel manager eagerly hypothesised that fluctuations in gravitational forces or a unique gravitational pull in the area could be responsible. As I contemplated the cartoon images of squat misshapen trees on my hotel room walls, it seemed to me that the manager’s words ignored basic laws of physics – that gravity pulls downwards not sideways.

Sitting now on one of the very solid horizontal lower trunks and contemplating the white-coated landscape surrounding me on this early spring morning, I wondered too about the effects of heavy snowfall. Still I observed the vast number of perfectly vertical pines forming a neat and protective circle around me. Were the curves in these trees man-made then? I’d heard how people sculpted trees into furniture, knots or baskets, like the ‘circus trees’ at Gilroy Gardens in California. American Indians also bent marker trees into symbols they used to navigate and communicate in the forest.

But these trees are often found solo, and not necessarily in Europe ...

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

Text C: Lost mining city

For centuries stories had been passed down about an ancient city in a very remote part of Brazil, the inhabitants of which mined vast quantities of gold, silver and precious stones from the surrounding mountains. An adventurer called Raposo took a team on a long expedition across rough terrain to find the ancient city. This is an account of the final stage of their journey.

The party was travelling again, tired of this seemingly endless wandering, and disheartened by their failure so far to locate the lost mines or evidence of ancient civilisation. Raposo worked hard to keep their spirits high, but many of his companions had long decided that no such places existed. They had come through swamps and bush country, stumbling and complaining, and now a range of jagged mountains showed up ahead, beyond a grassy plain broken by thin belts of green forest.

These were no ordinary mountains. As the party came nearer, the sides lit up in flame, for it had been raining and the setting sun was reflected from wet rocks rich in colour and light. To the onlooking explorers they seemed to be studded with gems. Streams leaped from rock to rock and, over the crest of the ridge, a rainbow beckoned.

'An omen!' cried Raposo. 'See! Our destination is just on the other side. We will be rich!' However, night had fallen, forcing them to camp before they could reach the foot of the immense mountain range.

Next morning, when the sun came up from behind them, the crags appeared black and menacing. To the eyes of many their height was vast, and when the party reached them it was to find sheer, unscalable precipices. All day they struggled over boulders and crevices, seeking a way up those glossy sides.

Eventually, judging that weariness was overwhelming his party, Raposo called a halt. 'We'd better return to our old trail and try to go northwards and around these mountains.'

'Camp!' was the wail. 'Let's camp. We've had enough for one day. Tomorrow we can return to the trail.'

'Very well,' answered the leader, and then to two adventurers, 'You, Jose and Manoel, off you go to find wood for the fire!' Jose glanced at Manoel in disbelief at their misfortune before nodding briefly, and reluctantly followed Manoel into the darkness.

Camp was pitched and the party was resting, when confused shouting and crashing in the bush brought them to their feet. Manoel burst into view. 'We've found it!' Manoel cried. 'We've found the way up!' Jose appeared behind him, his face like stone.

Searching for firewood in the scrub, they had seen a dead tree at the edge of a small wooded creek. This was the best fuel to be had, and they were making their way towards it, when a deer sprang up on the other side of the creek and disappeared beyond a corner of the cliff. Surprised at its agility and how quickly it had vanished, Manoel followed, and came to a deep cleft in the face of the precipice. He saw that it was possible to climb through it to the summit. Firewood was forgotten in his excitement.

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Raposo cajoled the weary adventurers, and soon, packs shouldered, they set off with Raposo and Manoel leading. Jose dropped behind, muttering to others who wore similar mutinous expressions.

The group entered the crevice in single file to find that it widened inside. Raposo exclaimed in wonder at traces of old man-made paving. In places, the sheer walls of the cleft seemed to bear the almost obliterated marks of tools. Clusters of rock crystals and frothy masses of quartz gave the wide-eyed leader the feeling of having entered a fairyland, and, in the dim light filtering down through the tangled mass of creepers overhead, his anticipation of a wondrous citadel on the other side was palpable.

The climb was so difficult that three hours passed before the group emerged breathless on a ledge above the surrounding plain. There, Raposo picked up an abandoned axe head and gazed outwards, as if he was lost in a dream. Ahead of them lay the broken remains of a human settlement.

Raposo spun round on his feet and stared in disbelief at the other men.

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