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Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/13**

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core) **May/June 2014**

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

Isabel Esterman, the writer, describes a visit to the ancient sites of the Nile Valley in Egypt.

Up the Nile in Style

As the sun dips low across the Nile and the Sahara desert beyond, the sandstone columns around me blush pink and orange. Lengthening shadows sharpen the lines of the murals carved into their stone.

More than 3,000 years ago, when the Karnak temple complex stood newly built above the city of Thebes, it must have been truly breathtaking. The 134 columns of the Great Hall, their tops shaped like lotus blooms and papyrus buds, supported a vaulting roof that allowed shafts of light to stream onto the gleaming marble floor and reflect on the faces of the statues lining the chamber. The pharaoh and his priests would enter the sanctuary to pray to the god Amun-Ra, while ordinary citizens worshipped in the courtyard outside.

Standing in the Great Hall today, its roof long since collapsed, I can't help thinking I prefer the temple as it is now: crumbling, evocative, silent. A thin stream of visitors trickles through the site, but every time I leave the main walkway, I find myself alone, free to wander in solitude among the ruins and search for hidden places where faint traces of the original colours have managed to cling to millennia-old plaster.

Karnak is the first major site on a week's cruise through Upper Egypt, and its emotional power catches me by surprise. Egypt is like this, I've learned. Over-saturated by Hollywood images of pyramids and temples, I had expected these ancient monuments to be underwhelming.

I couldn't have been more wrong. As with my visit to see the Sphinx, which proved awe-inspiring despite the fast-food restaurant across the road, here in Karnak I found the temples magnificent and mysterious. Nothing I had seen or read about them prepared me for the wonder of actually setting foot on these stones.

The following morning, after crossing to the Nile's west bank on an excursion to the Valley of the Kings, I was astonished yet again. As we drove along an empty desert road I felt keenly the starkness and the desolation that led the ancient pharaohs to believe that their mummified bodies would find eternal rest in these rocky heights.

In the Valley of the Kings, pharaohs could arrange to be buried so deeply that modern archaeologists, with all the latest technology, have still not located the tombs of at least five major rulers who are believed to rest in the hillsides.

A pharaoh would begin work on his tomb from the moment he became ruler, enlarging and decorating it until his death. Thus, the tomb of the valley's most celebrated occupant, the boy king Tutankhamen, is in fact one of the smallest. Tutankhamen was just 18 when he died, and his mummy, still on view within, seems almost impossibly slight. The wall paintings are beautiful and detailed, depicting in vibrant colours scenes from the Ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. But they are just that: paintings. Typically, the walls would have been carved in meticulous detail before being painted.

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King Tutankhamen's coffin alone was made from more than 110 kilograms of pure gold, and more than 7,000 statues, ritual objects, household items and jewels were discovered. If this was the grave of a minor king, on the throne for a mere decade, it is staggering to imagine what a tomb like that of Ramses IV, cut 70 metres into the heart of the rock, must have contained. Or that of Ramses III, who ruled for 55 years.

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Stripped bare some 3,000 years ago, they are still splendid. Every inch of the walls is decorated with scenes from Egyptian mythology: gods standing in judgement, beheaded enemies, three-headed snakes and other dangers the pharaoh would encounter on his journey to the underworld.

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