



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

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**FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH**

**0500/23**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)

**October/November 2012**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

**2 hours**

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**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.

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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**

*Slack-lining is a daring sport which involves walking on a narrow slack rope, unlike a tightrope, strung between two points. In this passage Dean Potter attempts to slack-line high above the Yosemite Valley to Lost Arrow Spire.*

On a spring morning once again, 365 metres above Yosemite Valley, Dean Potter took a deep breath and stepped with his bare feet onto a nylon rope strung 20 metres across a precipice. It wobbled exaggeratedly beneath him. Exhaling slowly, he started to edge forward. The rope vibrated as if someone was tugging on the end of a gigantic rubber band. Potter tried to focus on the beacon that was his orange t-shirt tied in a knot at the other end of the rope. This was undoubtedly an easier practice walk than the much higher one he intended to accomplish later. Nevertheless, he had to admit it was still tough.

However, something was wrong; Potter was afraid. He fought to tame his fear and his pounding heart, only to slip into a fierce internal debate in which he was torn between holding on to his concentration and an intense desire to look straight down into the vastness below. Hesitating, his eyes flickered as he looked at the rope attached to the ledge beneath his feet. He struggled to keep his balance – and failed. Potter was tethered to the rope by a leash attached to a harness that was wrapped around his waist and legs. He felt the sharp jolt as he tumbled two metres and bounced up like a yo-yo.

He experienced the full force of his fears; he was terrified by the vast expanse of space between the slack-line and the ground below. The danger loomed ominously. He knew that even if he should do this lower crossing un-tethered and slip, he would plummet to his death.

Despite this fall, Potter's determination to master this skill was relentless. He would, without fail, master slack-lining without a safety rope, and make the higher crossing, a feat that only a few brave souls had ever accomplished. He knew this extreme walk to Lost Arrow Spire would be the most terrifying and exhilarating experience of his life. As he was not a man to be beaten by his own fear, he spent months practising over and over in preparation on low slack-lines between trees in the valley, trying to get used to their demonic unpredictability and curved bounces. Yet he still felt like a novice.

\* \* \*

Several months later, as autumn casts its first chill across Yosemite Valley, Potter steels himself for his greatest challenge – he knows he is finally ready. Among the mottled leaves of maple trees and black oaks that cloak the valley floor, a crowd of slack-liners gather quietly and point in wonder up to the thick needle of grey rock piercing the blue sky above. This is Lost Arrow Spire – an awe-inspiring tower of granite. The yawning gap between the valley rim and this steely spire is incredibly intimidating. The onlookers know that the slack-line walk to Lost Arrow Spire, 900 metres above and 18 metres across, is the stuff of legends. They watch with fearful fascination as Potter appears above.

His face, adorned with a pointed beard, looks strained, his cheekbones reddened by endless days in the sun. Anxiety is drawn on this face as he tests the rope, tuning it like a loose cello string. In a blink, Potter leaps barefoot onto the rope, hesitates, and breathes long and deep. His features are etched with concentration as he steps forward and struggles to tame the line, which squirms and wriggles like a snake under his feet. Every muscle in his body is taut as he advances, pinning his eyes on the distant pinnacle of rock ahead.

The valley spreads beneath him as though he is on a tiny island in the sky. Trees blur into a vast green carpet decorated by occasional black ribbons of roads. In the distance, buses look like ants and the maintenance lodge seems no larger than his fingernail. Water from the Yosemite Falls crashes loudly against the rocks, or maybe the pounding is his thudding heart. As Potter begins crossing, he hears the shout from below, 'You can do it!' And Potter does. It strikes him that slack-lining is symbolic of life: the rope is straight and unmoving until you get on, and then it swings, forcing you to ride the curves as you travel to your destination.

Two days later, he again walks the slack-line across Lost Arrow Spire. Twice.

**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**

*Extreme sports are not only a recent phenomenon; also in the past people risked their lives for a moment of fame.*

It's not clear why the first daredevils did what they did. With little publicity and no such thing as television, these pioneers risked their lives to entertain small audiences, but some might argue that they sought the same thrills today's sporting people chase.

Barnstormers, daredevil pilots who performed aerial stunt shows, flew into the scene after World War I. At the time, these shows were the most popular form of entertainment. Mostly fighter pilots, these early risk-takers took their biplanes on death-defying rolls and tumbles in the unregulated skies – all in the name of showmanship. Wing walkers climbed from the plane's cockpit to do handstands and hang from trapezes. Commanding officers found that these stunts boosted pilot and audience morale, and so they encouraged these men to keep up their antics. One such pilot, Ormer Locklear, became a professional wing walker, to the delight of aerial show fans everywhere. He would hang from a ladder by his teeth and walk from plane to plane in mid air – sometimes earning as much as \$3,000 for an appearance.

Human cannonballs are certainly among the early daredevils who were seeking ever greater thrills. The first person to be used as a projectile was 'Lulu' in 1871. Lulu was sent skyward by a catapult at the London Music Hall. The first actual cannon was used by circus pioneer P T Barnum in 1880. A woman stunned audiences when she climbed into the cannon and was shot into a safety net. Barnum used coiled springs to propel her along with a fake bang and puff of smoke, produced by well-timed firecrackers.

Perhaps no other place on Earth attracts more daredevil acts than the huge waterfalls at Niagara – so much so that the Falls' tourist centre has an exhibit dedicated to the proud history of the stunts performed there. Crowds gathered as early as 1859 to watch 'The Great Blondin' make his first journey across the 335 metre tightrope stretched across the Niagara River which separates the United States and Canada. It took about 20 minutes and a 20 kilogram balancing pole which stretched 10 metres. Blondin completed eight more walks spurred on by the people who flocked to see him. His chief rival at these events was 'The Great Farini'. He and Blondin engaged in a back-and-forth display of one-upmanship, each trying to top the other's stunts. When Blondin did a headstand, Farini did a handstand; when Blondin carried a stove out onto the wire and cooked an omelette, Farini dragged out a washtub and scrubbed handkerchiefs.

In 1901, a 63-year-old retired school teacher, Annie Taylor, became the first person to go over the Niagara Falls in a barrel. The fame and fortune of other famous daredevils prompted the stunt, and the more unusual the 'act', the better for pulling the crowds. With her pet cat, pillows for padding, and an iron anvil in the base to keep her upright, Taylor floated over the edge, dropped over 50 metres into the foaming mist, and lived to tell the tale.

Later, in 1938, Robert Craig – better known as Evel Knievel to his fans – took to driving his specialised motor bike up high ramps in order to clear hazards below. His first professional jump was six metres over boxes of rattlesnakes and two mountain lions. However, the jump that would literally catapult him to national fame was over the fountain at Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas, a distance of 46 metres!

Today, real 'Spiderman' Alain Robert has earned fame as an urban free-climber, scaling skyscrapers, such as the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur with his bare hands and no safety measures in place. Audiences gather to watch this modern daredevil and react with the same whiteknuckle trepidation as the many other audiences have felt down the years.

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*Copyright Acknowledgements:*

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Question 3 © ADAPTED: Charles W Bryant; *How Daredevils Work*; <http://adventure.howstuffworks.com/daredevil.htm/printable>.

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