Cambridge IGCSE
FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH

Paper 1: Reading **Set A**

Paper reference 0500/01

Insert

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.

The texts that follow are:

Text A: *Honeybees*

An original text written for this mock paper

Text B: *Bees on the roof*

An original text written for this mock paper

Text C: *Taking the swarm*

An original text written for this mock paper

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Read **Text A** and then answer **Question 1(a)–(f)** on the question paper.

Text A: Honeybees

Every honeybee visiting a garden flower carries a small scientific mistake in its name. In 1758, the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus called the western honeybee *Apis mellifera*, meaning "honey-bearing bee". He later realised that bees carry nectar, not honey, and tried to rename the species *Apis mellifica* ("honey-making bee"). By then, however, the original label had stuck.

Humans were eating honey long before anyone named the insects that made it. In the Cuevas de la Araña, near Valencia in Spain, a prehistoric rock painting shows a figure clinging to ropes or vines, reaching into a wild nest as bees swarm around. Bees offered a rare sweet food and precious wax, but this is honey hunting, not beekeeping: the hunter raids a colony rather than caring for one. So when did people stop robbing wild bees and start keeping them?

The earliest answers lie in broken pots. Beeswax leaves a distinctive chemical trace, and researchers testing more than 6000 fragments of ancient pottery found it in around 100. The oldest, from farming settlements in Anatolia, in modern Turkey, is around 9000 years old, suggesting that early farmers lived alongside bees. Much later, an Egyptian temple carving made around 4400 years ago showed a worker taking honey from horizontal hives while others poured it into jars.

Yet no actual hives had been found in the ancient Near East until archaeologists dug at Tel Rehov, in northern Israel. There they uncovered about 30 clay cylinders, around 3000 years old, in the heart of the city. A fire had destroyed the town but baked the hives hard, preserving charred honeycomb and bees inside. The apiary may once have held up to 200 hives. Surprisingly, the bees did not match local bees but resembled a calmer type now found only in parts of Turkey. Either the bees' range has shifted, or the town's beekeepers imported gentler, more productive insects.

Where did the honeybee itself originate? Many scientists believed Africa. In 2021, however, a team led by researchers at York University in Canada compared 251 honeybee genomes and found strong evidence for western Asia, from where the bees spread at least three times into Africa and Europe.

For centuries, keeping bees came at a terrible price: European beekeepers often killed whole colonies with burning sulphur to reach the honey. Then, in 1852, an American clergyman, Lorenzo Langstroth, patented a hive based on a simple discovery. Bees leave a gap of roughly their own width open, but seal any smaller space and fill any larger one with comb. With frames hung exactly this distance apart, beekeepers could lift out each comb like a page from a book, inspect it and slide it back. It was a quiet revolution.

Read **Text B** and then answer **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** on the question paper.

Text B: Bees on the roof

The first time I lifted the lid of my rooftop hive, six floors above a busy London street, thousands of bees poured out into the morning sun. I was terrified for about ten seconds. Then I was hooked. Three summers later, my two colonies are thriving, my neighbours queue for honey and I am convinced that every city roof should hum.

Not everyone shares my enthusiasm. In 2020, a report from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, warned that parts of London now have more hives than their parks and gardens can feed. Each colony, the researchers estimated, needs around 13 hectares of green space. Where hives are crowded together, honeybees take so much pollen and nectar that wild bees go short, and some wild species, which rely on just a few kinds of plant, may simply starve. Honeybees can also pass diseases on to wild insects. Worst of all, say the critics, the honeybee is not endangered at all: it is a farmed animal, about as much in need of rescue as a sheep.

Then come the everyday grumbles. Neighbours fear stings. A swarm hanging from a lamp post can empty a pavement in seconds. Equipment is expensive, colonies need checking every week in summer, and some eager newcomers lose their bees in the very first winter. Even the honey suffers, as hives packed close together produce smaller harvests. If you really want to help bees, the sceptics conclude, plant flowers or put up a nest box for wild species instead.

I will admit the Kew report stung, and rightly so. Yet most of the problems the critics list come from careless keeping, not from the bees themselves. The answer is not to tear hives off roofs but to keep them responsibly: fewer colonies in crowded areas, proper training and plenty of planting. My bees have taught me more about the seasons than any book, and they have turned strangers in my building into friends who now swap seeds and sow wildflowers along every balcony.

So yes, the doom-mongers have a point, but only half of one. A city that plants for its bees has room for both the honeybee and its wild cousins. My hives are staying put.

Read **Text C** and then answer **Questions 3(a)–(d)** and **4** on the question paper.

Text C: Taking the swarm

Last year, fifteen-year-old Priya spent her weekends and school holidays helping Mr Delacroix, an elderly beekeeper in her village, look after his twelve hives. The following text describes an afternoon in July, and the weeks that led up to it.

By the time Priya wheeled her bicycle on to the village green, a small crowd had already gathered beneath the cherry tree outside the post office. Nobody stood too close. Mrs Pugh from the bakery was flapping a tea towel at the air and warning anyone who would listen that the whole village would be stung. Two small boys hopped from foot to foot, half thrilled and half ready to bolt. Above them, from a low branch, hung the swarm.

"You'll be fine," Mr Delacroix had said on the phone, his voice crackling from the county show sixty kilometres away. "Swarming bees are full of honey and have no home to defend. Calm hands, Priya. Just be calm."

Calm was not a word anyone would have used to describe her first week. On her very first morning, the veil had fogged with her breath, the borrowed gloves had swallowed her hands and the first frame she lifted had slipped, dropping a heavy slab of comb back into the box with a dull thud. The bees had boiled up around her, roaring. She had fled to the end of the orchard, heart hammering, convinced she would never go back. Her brother had laughed for days. Her mother had quietly hoped she would give up.

Mr Delacroix had simply waited. Each morning he handed her the smoker and said nothing until she asked. Slowly she learned to move like him, unhurried and deliberate, never standing in the bees' flight path. She learned to read a frame: the pale wax sealing in stored honey, the brown cappings over growing young, the rare, peanut-shaped cell that meant the colony was raising a new queen. She was stung twice, once on the wrist and once, absurdly, on the nose. By midsummer she could spot a queen almost as quickly as he could.

Now she stood beneath the cherry tree and looked up. The swarm hung from the branch like a dark, living bunch of grapes, thousands upon thousands of bees clinging to one another, the whole mass shimmering and humming as if it were breathing. At its edges, scouts peeled away and drifted back, restless and impatient, searching for somewhere new to call home.

"Shouldn't you call someone?" asked a man filming on his phone.

"I am someone," said Priya, more bravely than she felt.

She spread a white sheet on the grass, propped a cardboard box open beneath the branch and pulled down her veil. Then she gripped the branch with both hands and gave it one sharp shake. The swarm dropped like a heavy curtain into the box. A gasp rippled through the crowd. For a long moment, nothing happened. Then, at the entrance, a line of bees raised their tails and began to fan their wings, sending out the scent that summoned the others. The queen was inside. Slowly, steadily, the air above the green emptied as the swarm marched in.

Someone started clapping. Mrs Pugh lowered her tea towel. An elderly man stepped forward and told Priya that his father had kept bees, and that he had not seen a swarm taken since he was a boy. The two small boys wanted to know if they could help next time.

That evening a reporter from the local paper rang. Priya described the swarm, but mostly she talked about Mr Delacroix, the twelve hives behind his cottage and the strange, steady peace of working among them. When she put down the phone, she realised she was already planning next summer.

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Sources

Texts A, B and C are original texts written for this mock paper. They are not extracted or adapted from any published source.

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