



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
International General Certificate of Secondary Education

---

**FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH**

**0500/01**

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core)

**October/November 2009**

**1 hour 45 minutes**

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

---

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.

Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

Dictionaries are **not** permitted.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.

---

This document consists of **4** printed pages.



**Read the following passage carefully, and then answer all the questions.**

*Mma Ramotswe is a private detective in Botswana; she has driven into a lonely place to interview a dangerous man.*

Mma Ramotswe steered the tiny white van cautiously, avoiding the rocks that could damage the underside of the car, wondering why nobody came this way. She was on a dusty track hardly in use, enough to break the springs; a hill, a tumble of boulders, just as the sketch map drawn by Charlie had predicted; and above, stretching from horizon to horizon, the empty sky, singing in the heat of noon. This was dead country: no cattle, no goats, only the bush and the stunted thorn trees. That anybody should want to live here, away from a village, away from human contact, seemed inexplicable. Dead country. 5

Suddenly she saw the house, tucked away behind the trees almost in the shadow of the hill. It was a bare earth house in the traditional style; brown mud walls, a few glassless windows, with a knee-height wall around the yard. A previous owner, a long time ago, had painted designs on the wall, but neglect and the years had scaled them off and only their ghosts remained. 10

She parked the van and drew in her breath. She had exposed fraudsters; she had coped with jealous wives; she had even stood up to dangerous criminals; but this meeting would be different. This was evil incarnate, the heart of darkness, the root of shame. This man, for all his chanting and his spells, was a murderer. 15

She opened the door and eased herself out of the van. The sun was riding high; its light prickled at her skin. They were too far west here, too close to the Kalahari Desert, and her unease increased. This was not the comforting land she had grown up with; this was the merciless Africa, the waterless land.

She made her way towards the house, and as she did so she felt that she was being watched. There was no movement, but eyes were upon her, eyes from within the house. At the wall, in accordance with custom, she stopped and called out, announcing herself. 20

'I am very hot,' she said. 'I need water.'

There was no reply from within the house, but a rustle to her left, amongst the bushes. She turned round, almost guiltily, and stared. It was a large black beetle with its horny neck, pushing at a tiny trophy, some insect that had died of thirst perhaps. Little disasters, little victories; like ours, she thought; when viewed from above we are no more than beetles. 25

'Mma?'

She turned round sharply. A woman was standing in the doorway, wiping her hands on a cloth. Mma Ramotswe stepped through the gateless break in the wall. 30

'Dumela Mma,' she said. 'I am Mma Ramotswe.'

The woman nodded. 'I am Mma Notshi.'

Mma Ramotswe studied her. She was a woman in her late fifties, or thereabouts, wearing a long skirt.

'I have come to see your husband,' she said. 'I have to ask him for something.' 35

The woman came out from the shadows and stood before Mma Ramotswe, peering at her face in a disconcerting way.

'You have come for something? You want to buy something from him?'

Mma Ramotswe nodded. 'I have heard that he is a very good doctor.'

The older woman smiled. 'He can help you. Maybe he has something. But he is away until Saturday. You will have to come back some time after that.' 40

Mma Ramotswe sighed. 'This has been a long trip, and I am thirsty. Do you have water, my sister?'

'Yes, I have water. You can come and sit in the house while you drink it.'

It was a small room, furnished with an old, rickety table and two chairs. There was a grain bin of traditional design in the corner and a battered tin trunk. Mma Ramotswe sat on one of the chairs while the woman fetched a white enamel mug of water, which she gave to her visitor. The water was slightly rancid, but Mma Ramotswe drank it gratefully. 45

Then she put the mug down and looked at the woman.

'I have come for something, as you know. But I have also come to warn you of something.' 50

- 1 (a) Why did Mma Ramotswe take care when driving the van among the rocks (lines 1-2)? [1]
- (b) Explain, **using your own words**, why Mma Ramotswe thought that no-one would want to live in that part of the country (lines 6-7). [2]
- (c) What effect does the writer achieve by writing "Dead country" as a separate sentence (line 7)? [2]
- (d) Explain, **using your own words**, why Mma Ramotswe knew that this meeting was going to be different (lines 13-14). [2]
- (e) Re-read paragraph 4, "She opened the door...waterless land" (lines 16-19). Choose **three** words or phrases which the writer uses to describe the effects of the heat. Explain how each of these words and phrases helps you to imagine the surroundings. [6]
- (f) Explain, **using your own words**, what the black beetle was doing. What did this make Mma Ramotswe think about people's lives (lines 25-27)? [3]
- (g) On what day would Mma Notshi's husband return home? [1]
- (h) Explain, **using your own words**, what the writer means by:
- (i) "the heart of darkness" (line 14); [2]
- (ii) "in accordance with custom" (lines 21-22); [2]
- (iii) "peering at her face in a disconcerting way" (lines 36-37). [2]
- (i) By using details from the whole passage, write a summary of what you have learnt about both the outside and inside of Mma Notshi's house. Write a paragraph of about 50-70 words. [7]

[Total: 30]

2 Imagine you are Mma Notshi. Write the conversation you have with your husband about Mma Ramotswe's visit when you next see him. You should include:

- what Mma Ramotswe told you and what you thought about her
- what your husband thinks about Mma Ramotswe returning to see him
- what both of you decide to do

You may wish to give your husband a name.

Begin your conversation:

Mma Notshi: There's something I must tell you...

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it.

You should write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

**Up to ten marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to ten marks for the quality of your writing.**

**[Total: 20]**

---

*Copyright Acknowledgements:*

Passage © Alexander McCall Smith; The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency; pp. 220-223; Abacus Books; 2003; Reproduced by permission of Polygon, an imprint of Birlinn Ltd; [www.birlinn.co.uk](http://www.birlinn.co.uk).

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (UCLES) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

University of Cambridge International Examinations is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.