ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL

General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE 1122/2

PAPER 2 INSERT

NOVEMBER 2017 SESSION

2 hours

Comprehension passage insert
The insert **should not** be posted to ZIMSEC with the answer booklet.
Allow candidates 5 minutes to count pages before the start of the examination.

TIME 2 hours

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Check if the insert has all the pages and ask the invigilator for a replacement if there are duplicate or missing pages.

Read the following passage very carefully before you attempt any questions.

Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided using **black** or **blue** pens.
Shape all your letters very clearly.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES
The number of marks is given in brackets [ ] at the end of each question or part question.
You are advised to spend 1 hour 30 minutes on Section A and 30 minutes on Section B.
Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.

This insert consists of 5 printed pages and 3 blank pages.

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SECTION A (40 MARKS)

Read the following passage very carefully before you attempt any questions.

Answer **all** the questions in the spaces provided on the question paper.

Mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar may be penalised in any part of the paper.

THE EAGLE AND THE KITTEN

1 Cyclone Eline brought torrential rains which caused flooding in the whole of Mutoko Communal Lands. The cyclone came down from the Mozambique Channel and it rained for two days and a night.

2 In the darkness of the second night softening away to dawn, there was silence. There was only the gurgle and drip of the wet world, and the creatures that lived on the earth began to appear, freed from the devastation of the storm.

3 The eagle, ruffled in misery and brooding in ferocity, came forth in hunger and hate. It struck off into the void of space, searching the earth for some spoils of the storm – the sheep lying dead like a heap of wet cotton in the sodden paddocks, or the rabbit driven from its flooded warren and squeezed dead against a log.

4 With practised eyes, it scrutinised the floating islands of rubble and piles of twigs lying all over on the banks for a sign of a lizard or a snake, dead or alive, but there was nothing. The eagle rested on a high and very steep rough rock and surveyed the terrain with a fierce and hungry eye. Lice worried its body. Savagely, it plucked with its beak under the fold of its wings, first on one side, then on the other. It rasped its bill on the jagged stone. Then it took off. It climbed in a gliding circle, widening its field of vision.

5 The earth was yellow and green, the sun was hot and the air heavy and humid. Swinging south, the eagle dropped over a vast graveyard of dead timber. The cyclone had ravaged the trees, splitting and felling them as well as strewing the ground with pieces of branches.

6 A rabbit sprang twenty metres away like a bobbing wheel, and the sight drew the eagle's attention, but the rabbit vanished into a hollow log. It stayed there, and there was no other life to be seen.

7 Desperate and weak, the eagle perched on a tall tree and glared around. The sun was a fire on its famished body. Logs smoked with steam and the brightness of water on the ground reflected like mirrors. The telescopic eye of the eagle inched over the ground and then stopped. Then, suddenly, the eagle swooped to the ground and tore at the body of a dead field mouse. Voraciously, it ripped at the mouse, swallowing fast and finishing the meal in a few seconds.

The food only served to make the eagle's appetite more fierce.

8 It flew into a tree, scanning the countryside. It then swerved into space and climbed higher and higher in a circle, searching the vast expanse below. To the west, something moved on the ground: a speck, and the eagle watched it. The eagle did not strike at once. Obedient to instinct, it continued to circle, peering down at the farmhouse and outbuildings. A hundred metres or more down on the margin of the field, a kitten was playing, leaping, running and tumbling, pawing at a feather and rolling on its back, biting at the feather between its paws. Frenzied with hunger, yet ever cautious, the eagle came down in a spiral, set itself, and swooped. The kitten froze with its head cocked on one side, unaware of the danger but startled by this new and untried sport. However, in the next moment, the eagle fastened its talons in the fur and the fat belly of the kitten.

9 The kitten spat and twisted, struggling against the power that was lifting it. Its great wings beating, paddling with the rhythm of oars, the eagle went up a slope of space with its 'cargo'. The kitten, airborne for the first time in its life, the earth running under it in a blur, wailed in terror. It squirmed frantically as the world fell away in the distance, but the eagle's talons held it vice-like.

10 The air poured like water into the kitten's eyes and broke against its rippling furry sides. The kitten howled in infinite terror, and gave a sudden desperate twist, so much that the eagle was jolted in its course and dropped to another level, a few metres below the first.

11 Riding higher and higher on the wind, the eagle went west. The kitten then cried with a new note. Its stomach was wambling. The air gushing into its mouth and nostrils, set up a humming in its ears and an aching dizziness in its head. As the eagle turned on its soundless orbit, the sun blazed like a flame in the kitten's eyes, blinding it. The kitten knew that it had no place there in the heart of space. Moreover, its terrified instincts told it that its only contact with the solid earth and safety rested with the thing that held it.

12 Suddenly, the eagle was ready to drop its prey from that height. It was well-practised. Down had gone the rabbit, a whistle in space, to crash to death on the ruthless earth, and the eagle was about to repeat that action, this time with the kitten. Now there, at six hundred metres, the bird hovered. The kitten was alarmingly aware of the sudden change. It was now blinking at the pulsations of beaten air as the wings flapped. The poor kitten could only hear that sound. Unexpectedly, the eagle stopped and the wings were still outstretched but rigid, tilting slightly with the poised body. Only the fanned tail was lifting and lowering with the flow of the currents.

[Turn over

13 The kitten felt the talons relax slightly, and that was its warning. The talons

opened, but in the first flashing shock of the movement, the kitten completed its twist, slashed the eagle's legs and buried its claws in the flesh like fish hooks. In the next fraction of a second, the kitten had consolidated its position, securing its hold, jabbing in every claw except those on one foot which thrust out in space, pushing against unsupporting air. Then, the claws on that foot were dug into the breast of the eagle.

14 With a cry of pain and alarm, the bird swooped crazily, losing fifty metres like a dropping stone. Then, it righted itself, flying in a drunken sway that diminished as it circled.

15 Blood from its breast beaded and trickled down the kitten's paw and spilled into one eye. The kitten blinked, but the blood came and congealed, warm and sticky. The kitten could not turn its head. It was frightened to risk a change of position. The blood slowly built a blinding pellicle over the eagle's eye.

16 The eagle felt a spasm of weakness and out of that weakness came the intensification of its hunger and a lust to kill, at all costs, the victim it had claimed and carried to this place of execution.

17 The eagle started to climb again, desperately trying to dislodge the kitten. However, the weight was too much and it could not ascend. A great tiredness came into its body, an ache all along the frames of its wings. The kitten clung tenaciously onto the eagle's breast, staring down at the winding earth below and mewing in terror.

18 For ten minutes, the eagle spinned, feeling defeated and bewildered. All it wanted to do then was to get rid of the burden fastened to its legs and body. It craved for respite, a rest on the tallest trees, but it only flew high over those trees, knowing very well that it was unable to perch. Its beak gaped under the harsh ruptures of its breath. It descended one hundred metres. The kitten, with the wisdom of instinct, never altered its position, but appeared to ride down like some fantastic parachutist.

19 In one mighty burst, the eagle, with a striking beak and a terrible flapping of its wings, tried finally to cast off its passenger – and nearly succeeded. The kitten miaowed in a frenzy of fear at the violence of the sound and the agitation. Its back legs dangled in space, and like that, it went around on the curves of the flight for two minutes. Then it secured a foothold again, even firmer than the first.

20 In rage, the eagle tried once more to lift itself, and almost instantly began to sweep down in great, slow gliding circles that became narrower and narrower.

21 The kitten was the pilot then and the eagle no longer the assassin of the

void, the lord of the skies and the master of the wind. The ache coiled and throbbed in its breast. The eagle fought against the erratic disposition of its wings and the terror of its waning strength. Its heart was bursting with the strain; its eyes dilated wild and yellow and it came down, skimming the ground under it. The kitten cried at the silver glare of the roofs not far off, the expanding earth and the green grass.

22 The eagle hit the ground, rolled over and the kitten rolled with it. The eagle lay flat with exhaustion, its eyes fiercely aware of the danger of its forced and alien position.

23 The kitten staggered giddily not seriously hurt, towards the silver roofs, wailing loudly.

Adapted from: Tankel Syvial (e.d): <u>*Short Story International No. 3,*</u> (1977), International Cultural Exchange, New York.

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