



# The Regent Secondary School

## Year 7 Entrance Examination Specimen Paper I

**(Reading passage)**

*Read the passage on the next page carefully before attempting to answer the questions in the Question and Answer booklet.*

SAMPLE

*Andrew Derocher has studied polar bears for over 20 years. Here he tells us about their habitat and his interest in them.*

The area of our world known as the Arctic is defined by sea ice, snow, reindeer, whales and polar bears. For many people, it is polar bears alone that define this northernmost area of our planet. Antarctica has penguins. The Arctic has polar bears. Many people find something supernatural about a huge, dangerous, pure white predator that stays awake all winter, walking on a frozen ocean under the Northern lights.

Although polar bears can swim they are more often found on the ice than in the water. Some Arctic mammals use the sea's frozen surface merely as a handy place to snooze or give birth, but polar bears use this sea ice as a platform for travelling, feeding and breeding.

The Arctic landscape is not unspoiled but, until recently, has been mostly unaffected by humans (Arctic whaling had been a booming business until most of the whales were killed). The Arctic has long been viewed as a frozen wasteland with little to offer but freezing cold winters and summers filled with biting insects, but a serious new danger is coming: climate change. This is raising interest in the Arctic and poses a threat to the polar bears' environment. Perhaps people's fascination with polar bears will be strong enough to save them.

Given my long connection with polar bears, I am clearly influenced by these fascinating animals. That some people find the polar bear charming is shown by the bear's presence in historical and popular culture. Paintings, carvings, T shirts, jewellery, 'bearaphenalia', magazines, advertisements and television shows are all filled with polar bear images.

A friend once asked how I would make a living as a 'polar bearologist' and what sort of future did such a career hold (fearing perhaps that I would live in poverty). I do not think I had an answer all those years ago but I have, indeed, made a career studying big, white bears. For three decades, I have been carrying out research on polar bears and my fascination with them has not waned.

There are few polar bear biologists in the world. The unbelievable patience of these scientists is notable and their combined efforts to keep polar bears is outstanding. Perhaps the bears inspired them as they did me. Luck set me on the path to studying bears – I hope to follow that path for many years to come.

I have been privileged to study polar bears and in a sense I owe them. They have been good to me (so far) and have provided a window on the Arctic like no other. I hope that by writing about their natural history I can provide people with better insight into how they live in one of the harshest environments in the world.

**Polar Bears – A Complete Guide to their Biology and Behaviour by Andrew Derocher.**

