KINGSTON
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1561

Specimen English questions

11+ entry

50 Minutes

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Read the following passage carefully and then answer all the questions on the question paper.

Gerald Durrell, an author and animal lover, spent part of his childhood in the 1930s on the Greek island of Corfu. In this passage he describes the Belgian consul in Corfu, who was one of his private tutors.

A New Tutor

The consul's home was situated in the maze of narrow, smelly alleyways that made up the old quarter of the town. It was a fascinating area, the cobbled streets crammed with stalls that were piled high with gaily-coloured bales of cloth, mountains of shining sweetmeats, ornaments of beaten silver, fruit and vegetables. The streets were so narrow that you had to stand back against the wall to allow the donkeys to stagger past with their loads of merchandise. It was a rich and colourful part of the town, full of noise and bustle, the screeches of people bargaining, the cluck of hens, the barking of dogs, and the wailing cry of the men carrying great trays of fresh hot loaves on their heads. Right in the very centre, in the top flat of a tall, rickety building that leant tiredly over a tiny square, lived the Belgian consul. He was a sweet little man, whose most striking attribute was a magnificent beard and carefully waxed moustache.

The first morning I arrived he welcomed me into a living-room whose walls were decorated with a mass of heavily- framed photographs of himself. In order to test the extent of my knowledge of French the consul sat me down at the table, produced a fat and battered French dictionary, and placed it in front of me, open at page one.

'You will please to read this,' he said, his gold teeth glittering amicably through his beard.

He twisted the points of his moustache, pursed his lips, clasped his hands behind his back, and paced slowly across to the window, while I started down the list of words beginning with 'A'. I had hardly stumbled through the first three when the consul stiffened and uttered a suppressed exclamation. I thought at first he was shocked by my accent, but it was apparently nothing to do with me. He rushed across the room, muttering to himself, tore open a cupboard, and pulled out a powerful-looking air rifle, while I watched him with a certain alarm for my own safety. He loaded the weapon, dropping pellets all over the carpet in his frantic haste. Then he crouched and crept back to the window, where, half concealed by the curtain, he peered out intently. Then he raised the gun, took careful aim at something, and fired. When he turned round, slowly and sadly shaking his head, and laid the gun aside, I was surprised to see tears in his eyes. He drew a great length of silk handkerchief out of his breast pocket and blew his nose violently.

'Ah, ah, ah,' he intoned, shaking his head sadly, 'the poor little fellow. But we must work … please to continue with your reading, mon ami. '

For the rest of the morning I toyed with the exciting idea that the consul had committed a murder before my very eyes, or, at least, that he was carrying out a blood feud with some

neighbouring householder. But when, after the fourth morning, the consul was still firing periodically out of his window, I decided that my explanation could not be the right one. It was a week before I found out the reason for the consul's incessant fusillade, and the reason was cats. In this part of town, the cats were allowed to breed unchecked. There were literally hundreds of them. They belonged to no one and were uncared for, so that most of them were in a frightful state, covered with sores and all of them so thin that it was a wonder they were alive at all. The consul was a great cat-lover, and he possessed three large and well-fed ones to prove it. But the sight of all these starving, sore-ridden animals stalking about on the roof-tops opposite his window was too much for his sensitive nature.

'I cannot feed them all,' he explained to me, 'so I like to make them happy by shooting them. They are better so, but it makes me feel so sad.'

He was, in fact, performing a very necessary and humane service, as anyone who had seen the cats would agree. So my lessons in French were being continuously interrupted while the consul leapt to the window to send yet another cat to a happier hunting ground. After the report of the gun there would be a moment's silence in respect for the dead, and then the consul would blow his nose violently, sigh tragically, and we would plunge once more into the tangled labyrinth of French verbs.

Section A

Please answer these questions. (Look at the passage again if you need to.) You should choose the best answer and write its letter on your examination paper. You should spend about 20 minutes on this section.

Question

1 Where did the consul live?

A In the old quarter of town.
B In a small village.
C Outside town.
D At the sea-side.
E At the edge of town.

2 Why was Gerry told to visit the consul?

A To improve his manners.
B To improve his French.
C To meet new people.
D To explore new areas of the town.
E To gain a sense of independence.

3 How might the atmosphere of the area in which the consul lives be best described?

A Quiet and peaceful.
B Dangerous and violent.
C Lively and energetic.
D Sophisticated and elegant.
E Dark and threatening.

4 Where might the consul buy most of the items he needs for his household?

A The supermarket.
B The next town.
C Door to door salesmen.
D The market stalls.
E On-line.

5 Which one of these statements about the consul is true?

A He takes pride in his appearance.
B He is shy.
C He is strict.
D He doesn't encourage visitors.
E He is an experienced and gifted teacher.

6 What is the purpose of the first test the consul gives Gerry?

A To see if he can memorise vocabulary.
B To test his ability to read the dictionary aloud.
C To see if he can translate French to English.
D To test his familiarity with French words.
E To see if he can copy French spellings.

7 Why did the consul interrupt Gerry's reading so suddenly?

A He realised that Gerry's French wasn't very good.
B He was offended by Gerry's poor pronunciation.
C He only wanted Gerry to read through words beginning with the letter A.
D He wanted to groom his moustache.
E He had seen something out of the window.

8 Which of these two things did the Consul not do when he was preparing to shoot?

1. Clean his rifle.
2. Mutter to himself.
3. Take aim.
4. Explain what he was about to do.
5. Hide.

A 1 and 3 only.
B 2 and 4 only.
C 3 and 5 only.
D 1 and 4 only.
E 2 and 5 only.

9 How many cats does the consul own?

A One. B Two. C Three. D Four. E Five.

10 Why does the consul look sad when he puts his gun down?

A He is disappointed at his own marksmanship.
B He is disappointed that he has had to interrupt Gerry's lesson.
C He is upset that he has had to kill a cat.
D He is upset that he wasn't able to kill more cats.
E He is annoyed that he dropped pellets all over the carpet.

11 How long is it before Gerry discovers why the consul fires his gun out of the window?

A Four days.
B Seven days.
C That morning.
D A fortnight.
E Never.

12 Why does the consul shoot the cats?

A Because they are a nuisance.
B Because they prowl on the roof-top opposite and put him off his teaching.
C Because they are unpleasant to look at.
D Because they attack his cats.
E Because they are suffering.

13 What can we deduce about the townspeople's attitude to the stray cats?

A They were a necessary nuisance.
B They were a helpful means of controlling unwanted rodents.
C The more cats the better!
D They weren't worth bothering with.
E They were cared for and encouraged to breed.

14 After the consul has held a moment's silence for the cats why does he blow his nose?

A To hide the fact that he feels like crying.
B To show that he is ready to re-start the lesson.
C Because he is about to sneeze.
D To distract Gerry from what has just happened.
E Because he is allergic to cats.

15 Based on the evidence in the passage, what is Gerry's attitude to the consul?

A He thinks the consul is a dangerous lunatic.
B He admires the consul's skill as a marksman.
C He applauds the consul's humane approach.
D He thinks the consul is selfish and only wants to look after his own cats.
E He thinks the consul is making a fuss about nothing.

Now answer these questions about the meaning of words as they are used in the passage.

16 "Amicably" (line 15) implies:

A In a friendly way
B Menacingly
C In a sinister way
D Brightly
E Clearly

17 Which of these is closest in meaning to "supressed exclamation" (line 19)?

A A curse.
B A scream of dismay.
C A swearword.
D A loud outburst.
E A quiet expression of surprise.

18 What is meant by the expression, 'blood feud' (line 32)?

A A long-running dispute.
B A dare encouraged by his relatives.
C An assassination attempt.
D A secret mission.
E Target practice.

19 Which of these is closest in meaning to "incessant fusillade" (line 34)?

A Occasional fidgeting.
B Constant firing.
C Sporadic shouting.
D Intermittent nagging.
E Continuous disappointment.

20 What is meant by the expression "the tangled labyrinth of French verbs" (line 48)?

A The difficulty of the verbs gave Gerry nightmares.
B The verbs were jumbled up.
C The verbs were frightening.
D The verbs weren't written in straight lines on the page.
E The verbs were confusing and seemed endless in number.

Section B

Now consider the following question which requires you to think about this passage as a whole. Please support your answer with quotations from the text. You should spend about 10 minutes on this section. This question is worth 10 marks.

Based on the information in this passage, explain what sort of man you consider the Belgian consul to be.

You might consider:

- What we learn from the description of his appearance.
- His surroundings.
- His explanation of his actions.

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SECTION C

Imagine you are Gerald's mother, concerned about his education. Write a letter to a friend in which you describe Gerald's latest private tutor and his attempts to teach Gerald French. Your opinion of his methods and the regular interruptions should be included.

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it. You should write between ¾ to 1 side, allowing for the size of your handwriting.
Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer, and up to 5 marks for the accuracy of spellings, punctuation and grammar. You should spend about 20 minutes on this section.