The London Independent Girls' Schools Consortium

English Sample Questions

Group 1 and Group 2 English papers are each 1 hour and 15 minutes long and candidates may write in either ink or pencil.

The paper is divided into part A and Part B

Part A: Reading
Candidates are given 10 minutes to read a passage and a further 35 minutes to answer questions.

Part B: writing
Candidates are given 30 minutes to complete this part of the paper.

The writing question will call for an extended piece of writing based in some way on the reading passage. Pre-prepared pieces of writing which do not answer the question set will be heavily penalised.

A girl, Sym, her mother, Lillian, and her Uncle Victor, are about to travel to Paris.

The trains at Waterloo Station were all as shiny and sleek as intercontinental missiles. A mere excursion to the other side of the Channel seemed beneath their dignity—film stars finding themselves on a bucket-and-spade weekend when they had been expecting to go to a famous Film Festival.

'Have you *been,* Lillian? Sym?' said Uncle Victor loudly, from some distance away. Mum tried to ignore him, but Victor only repeated it more loudly still: 'Have you *been?* Think on. You should both go before we set off!'—offering to mind our shoulder bags while we found the station toilet.

'Honestly!' hissed Mum under her breath, investing the word with a wealth of pent-up embarrassment and resentment.

We were no sooner back than the train doors opened with a mechanical gasp that seemed to come from inside my chest. I didn't lift my foot high enough to clear the sill, stumbling into the train. Elegant as a swan, me.

But Mum was still on the platform, rummaging through her handbag, crouching down to set it on the ground and look with two hands. Uncle Victor was unzipping our single suitcase, sighing patiently, lifting out clothes. 'Your mother has left her passport behind,' he said and managed a martyred smile.

'No! No, I had it! I know I did!'

'Calmly, Lillian, calmly. Think on. Calm oils the cogwheels.'

But though she searched through every pocket, every compartment of her shoulder bag, between every page of her library book and under the cardboard stiffener in the cheap suitcase, there was no sign of either her passport or her calm. 'Are you sure I didn't give it to you to mind, Victor?'

Victor's hands padded slowly, methodically over the luggage. Mum's darted and flickered in growing panic. 'So stupid!'

'*You* aren't stupid, Lillian,' said Uncle Victor smiling and shaking his head, 'but sometimes the things you do are . . .' Mum didn't appreciate the distinction: she almost zipped Victor's hand into the suitcase.

The clock over the station clicked round. The guard appeared holding a green paddle the shape of a ping-pong bat. Mum had begun to cry with frustration and annoyance. My stomach swung like a cat flap. 'We'll just have to catch a later train!' I said.

But apparently the tickets were valid only on the eight o'clock. When the doors finally closed, Victor and I were on the inside with the suitcase, Mum was on the outside, her arms full of her own freshly ironed holiday clothing. It dangled from her grasp and she stooped awkwardly to stop the silky blouses slithering to the ground. She looked like a marble Madonna holding someone dead on her lap, head cocked sideways in grief.

'Back on Saturday,' I mouthed through the window and kissed the glass.

'It's a common mistake,' said uncle, cracking open the newspaper. 'Lack of organisation. Success comes down to getting organised. Keeping your eye on the ball. '

PART A: READING

After you have spent 10 minutes reading the passage, spend 35 minutes answering these questions.

Comprehension questions

1. How are Sym, her mother and Uncle Victor going to travel to Paris?

   _____ ☐ (1 mark)

2. Give another word for **excursion** [line 2]. ☐ (1mark)

   _____

3. In lines 1-4 find two things the trains are compared to.

   i)_____ ☐ (1 mark)

   ii) _____ ☐ (1mark)

   Choose the one which you think is the more successful comparison and explain **in your own words** why you think so.

   iii)_____

   _____

   _____ ☐

   _____ (2 marks)

4. Who is Lillian? ☐ (1 mark)

   _____

5. i) How does Sym's mother feel when hissing under her breath? [line 9]

   _____ ☐

   _____ (1mark)

ii) Why does she feel like this?

_____

_____

_____ (2 marks)

6. Re-read lines 11-13. Is the following statement true or false? Tick the correct answer.

Sym feels elegant. True [ ] False [ ]

(2 marks)

7. In lines 11-13 find one word which compares the train to a human.

_____ (1mark)

8. Explain what Uncle Victor means when he says 'calm oils the cogwheels'. [line 19]

_____

_____ (2marks)

9. In lines 20-28 what evidence can you find that Victor is organised and Lillian is disorganised? Find **two** things for each of them.

Victor i) _____

ii) _____

_____ (2 marks)

Lillian i) _____

ii) _____

_____ (2 marks)

10. Why do you think the author mentions the clock in line 29?

_____

_____ (2 marks)

11. In line 30-31 what does Sym mean when she says 'My stomach swung like a cat-flap'?

_____

_____ ☐

_____ 2 marks)

12. Explain what you think 'valid' means in line 32.

_____

_____ ☐

_____ (2 marks)

13. Re-read lines 32-36.

i) Write a sentence describing, **in your own words,** how Lillian holds the clothes.

_____

_____ ☐

(2 marks)

ii) Explain what this shows about how she is feeling

_____

_____

_____ ☐

_____ (2 marks)

14. Which **two words** from the list do you think best describe Uncle Victor?

Generous
Critical
Sympathetic
Humble
Anxious
Pompous
Disorganised

i)_____

ii)_____ ☐

(2 marks)

15. Re-read lines 38-39. Do you think Uncle Victor is sorry Lillian missed the trip?

Tick the correct answer. Yes [ ] No [ ] ☐

(1 mark)

Explain the reason for your answer.

_____

_____

_____ ☐

(2 marks)

PART B: WRITING

Spend 30 minutes on your writing.
Remember to leave time to check your work carefully.

Imagine you are Sym. Continue the story of your journey in the train with Uncle Victor.