The North London Independent Girls' Schools' Consortium

YEAR 7 ENTRANCE

January 2009

ENGLISH
Supplementary Paper
Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

The reading passage is printed on a separate piece of paper

First Name	
Last Name	

Total Marks: Part A		**Total Marks: Part B**		**Total Marks: Parts A&B**	

PART B: WRITING

INSTRUCTIONS:

Spend 30 minutes on your writing.

Remember to leave time to check your work carefully.

TASK:

“It was his own son – Sunny.”

Describe what happens next.

50 marks

50 marks

A Drink of Water
The following story is set in Trinidad, an island in the Caribbean

The time when the rains didn't come for three months and the sun was a yellow furnace in the sky was known as the Great Drought in Trinidad. It happened when everyone was expecting the sky to burst open with rain to fill the dry streams and water the parched earth.

In the tiny village of Las Lomas, out in his vegetable garden, Manko licked dry lips and passed a wet sleeve over his dripping face. Somewhere in the field a cow mooed mournfully, sniffing around for a bit of green in the cracked earth. The field was a desolation of drought. The trees were naked and barks peeled off trunks as if they were diseased. When the wind blew, it was heavy and unrelieving, as if the heat had taken all the spirit out of it. Bush fires had swept Las Lomas and left the garden plots charred and smoking. Cattle were dropping dead in the heat. There was scarcely any water in the village; the river was dry with scummy mud. But with patience one could collect a bucket of water. Boiled, with a little sugar to make it drinkable, it had to do.

"Boil the water first before drinking!" was the warning cry.

Manko sat in the shade of a mango tree and tried to look on the bright side of things. Such a dry season meant that the land would be good for corn seeds when the rains came. He and his wife Rannie had been working hard and saving money with the hope of sending Sunny, their son, to college in the city.

And Manko, proud of his son, used to boast in the evening, when the villagers got together to talk, that one day Sunny would be a lawyer or a doctor. But optimism was difficult now. His cattle were dying out, and the market was glutted with yams* (* tropical food). He had a great pile in the yard which he could not sell.

Next day, Las Lomas held a big feast, and prayers were said to the rain god, Parjanya. And then two days later, a man called Rampersad struck water in a well he had been digging for weeks. It was the miracle they had been praying for. That day everyone drank their fill and Rampersad allowed each villager a bucket of water, and Manko told Sunny: "See how blessing doesn't only come from the sky, it comes from the earth too."

Rampersad's wife was a selfish and crafty woman, and while the villagers were filling their buckets she stood by the doorway of their hut and watched them. That night she told her husband he was a fool to let them have the water for nothing.

"They have money," she urged him. "They could well pay for it. The best thing to do is to put barbed wire all round the well, and set a watchdog to keep guard in the night so nobody steal the water. Then say you too poor to give away for nothing. Charge a dollar for a bucket and two shillings for half-bucket. We make plenty money and come rich."

When Rampersad announced this, the villagers were silent and aghast that a man could think of such a scheme when the whole village was burning away in the drought.

Rampersad bought a shotgun and said he would shoot anyone he found trespassing on his property. He put up the barbed wire and left a ferocious watchdog near the well at nights.

As April went, there was still no sign in the sky. In Las Lomas, the villagers exhausted their savings in buying Rampersad's water to keep alive.

Manko got up one morning and looked in the tin under his bed in which he kept his money. There was enough for just two buckets of water. He said to Rannie: "How long could you make two buckets of water last, if we use it only for drinking?"

"That is all the money remaining?" Rannie looked at him with fear.

He nodded and looked outside. "Is a long time now," he said softly. "It can't last. The rain will fall, just don't be impatient."

Rannie was not impatient, but thirst made her careless. It happened soon after the two buckets were empty. She forgot to boil a pan of river water, and only after she had drunk a cupful did she realise her fatal mistake. She was afraid to tell Manko; she kept silent about the incident. Next day, she could not get out of bed. She rolled and tossed as fever ravaged her body.

Manko's eyes were wide with fright when he saw the signs of fever. Sunny, who had not been to school for weeks, wanted to do whatever he could to get his mother well. He spoke to his father after Rannie had fallen into a fitful sleep, with perspiration soaking through the thin white sheet.

"How is it this man Rampersad have so much water and we ain't have any? Why don't we just go and take it?"

"The water belong to Rampersad," Manko said. "Is his own, and if he choose to sell it, is his business. We can't just go and take it, that would be thieving. You must never thieve from another man, Sunny. That is a big, big sin."

All day, Sunny brooded over the matter, trying hard to understand why his mother should die from lack of water when a well was filled in another man's yard. After a while, Sunny went out.

Manko was glad to be alone. He didn't want Sunny to see him leaving the hut later in the night, with the bucket and rope. It would be difficult to explain that he was stealing Rampersad's water only because it was a matter of life and death.

He frowned as he went out and saw the moon like a giant sun in the sky, lighting up the village. He moved off towards the well, keeping behind the huts and deep into the trees. It took him ten minutes to get near the barbed wire fence, and he stood in the shadow of a giant silk-cotton tree. He leaned against the trunk and drew in his breath sharply as his eyes discerned a figure on the other side of the well, outside the barbed wire. The figure stopped, as though listening, then began clambering over the fence.

For a moment, Manko's heart failed him. He had been a fool to come. Then a new frenzy seized him. He remembered the cruel red flush on Rannie's cheeks when he had left her. Let her die happy, if a drop of water could make her so. Let her live, if a drop of water could save her. His own thirst flared in his throat; how much more she must be suffering!

He saw the bucket slide noiselessly down and the rope paid out. Just what he planned to do. Now draw it up, cautiously, yes, and put it to rest gently on the ground. Now kneel and take a drink, and put the fire out in your body. Why didn't the man take a drink? What was he waiting for? Moon rays shot through a break in the cloud and lit up the scene. It was his own son - Sunny.