BENENDEN

Lower School Entrance 2017

ENGLISH

13+

1 Hour

Name: _____

School: _____

Date: _____

Instructions to Candidates:

- Answer Question 1 and Question 2.
- Write your answers in the space provided in this booklet.
- You should spend 30 minutes on each section (including time to read through and check your work carefully).

This passage is the opening of Kirsty Logan's novel, 'The Gracekeepers'

The first Callanish knew of the Circus Excalibur was the striped silk of their sails against the grey sky. They approached her tiny island in convoy: the main boat with its bobbing trail of canvas-covered coracles following like ducklings, chained in an obedient line. Ships arrived a dozen a day in the archipelagos, and Callanish knew that the circus folk would have to fight for their place on her island. Tomorrow the dock would be needed for a messenger boat, or a crime crew, or a medic. In a world that is almost entirely sea, placing your feet on land was a privilege that must be earned.

As dusk fell, Callanish loitered at the blackshore, her slippered feet restless on the wooden slats. She watched as the circus crew spilled ashore: a red-faced barrel of a man, trailed by a bird-delicate boy; a trio of tattooed ladies, hair bright as petals; two gleaming horses left to gum at the seaweed. To a chorus of shouts—hoist! hoist! hoist!—the crew pulled ropes in unison, their limbs slick with saltwater.

Callanish tugged at her white gloves as she watched the circus unfold. She saw how the boat's sails would become the striped ceiling of the big top; how the wide, flat deck would be the stage. With each billow of sail or tightening of ropes, she inched further off the dock and on to the shore. It was only when the sun dipped below the horizon that she felt the damp chill in her toes and saw how her slippers had darkened with seawater. Oh, she would be in trouble now.

She ran home doing giant steps, leaping high into the air like a circus acrobat, hoping the wind would dry her slippers before her mother saw.

That night Callanish huddled under the striped canopy, mouth open as she gazed up, gloved hands gripped between her knees. Not all the landlockers on her island found the circus a glad sight: there were enough people on the island to crowd out the big top twice over, but it was only half full. Still, Callanish was excited enough for every single landlocker in the whole archipelago.

Her mother had scrubbed and scrubbed at the white silk slippers, muttering that Callanish would have to skip the performance. Callanish had shut herself in the wooden chest, hiding among the sealskins, until her mother relented. She promised that she would not fiddle with her gloves and slippers, and she would be silent and good and unnoticed, and it would all be worth it for the circus.

"We shouldn't welcome damplings like this," murmured Callanish's mother, folding her bare hands on her lap. "And at nighttime too, when good people should be tucked up safe in their houses! What are those circus folk hiding in the dark, hmm?" She patted Callanish's hands, making sure the gloves were on. "Some islands don't even let damplings come above the blackshore. If they want to perform, they can do it in the daytime with waves lapping at their ankles like they're meant. Those people belong in the water. They're dirtying the land."

Coracles: small, round boats
Archipelagos: a group of islands

Read the passage carefully, then answer the following questions:

Question 1 (50 marks)

How does the writer present the circus visiting Callanish's island in this passage?

- You could refer to specific quotations, writing techniques and language choices in your answer.

Question 2 (50 marks)

Imagine you are Callanish watching the circus that night. Continue the passage, describing the performance. Feel free to be as imaginative as you like!

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Total: 100 marks