

Selective High School Placement Test

Reading

Explained answers for the sample test

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[Task 1]

1 The correct answer is **'experienced some discomfort.'** In the third paragraph of Extract A, we're told 'the heat inside the vehicle was oppressive' and the fourth paragraph refers to 'the close air of the coach'. The fourth paragraph of Extract B gives many details about how cramped and uncomfortable the children were on their long journey, squashed together in the back of the car.

2 The correct answer is **'The College group'**. According to the second paragraph of Extract A, the girls were 'chirping and chattering like budgerigars'. There is no reference in Extract B to any talking among the Law family members – instead we're told that the children would 'nod off' during the journey.

3 The correct answer is **'Extract B'**. In the first paragraph of Extract B, the writer tells us that his family 'isn't the outdoors type' and goes on to say that they dislike camping and prefer theme parks. We're told that the girls in Extract A are excited to be away from College, but we don't know their attitude towards being in natural surroundings.

4 The correct answer is **'It is the furthest point on their regular walks.'** We're told that the girls knew the first part of the journey, up to the clump of wayside willows, 'only too well' as they would be taken there on their daily walks from College, but would not be allowed by their governess to go past this point. On this occasion, they feel 'a sense of adventure' once they have passed the willow trees.

5 The correct answer is **'Miss McCraw'**. Irma asks Mademoiselle if the girls can take their hats off, but it is Miss McCraw who makes the decision, replying, 'Certainly not'.

6 The correct answer is **'College standards were now being relaxed.'** When Irma earlier asked if the girls could remove their hats, she was told this was unacceptable, as they would look like 'street urchins' – an unacceptable standard of appearance. However, when they stop for their picnic, nothing is said to the girls when they remove their hats.

7 The correct answer is **'awestruck'**. The writer says that the family would feel 'an overwhelming sense of wonder' when they saw the rollercoaster, and the writer compares it to 'a strange apparition or a mirage'.

8 The correct answer is **'the writer is aware that others might find his family's love of theme parks puzzling.'** The writer mentions that 'Despite being raised on the coast', his family did not like the beach or camping for many reasons. This is in contrast to their clear preference for theme parks. The writer goes into some detail in the first two paragraphs to explain and justify this preference, suggesting that the reader may not share his views.

[Task 2]

The correct answers are:

9 **inaugurating**

10 **cover**

11 **coveted**

12 **denotes**

13 **credit**

- 14 draped
15 matter
16 copious

[Task 3]

- 17 The correct answer is **'leads us into the poem itself.'** The title 'The Fish' leads grammatically on to the first two lines of the poem, 'wade through black jade', which describe the movement of the fish under the water.
- 18 The correct answer is **'a mussel'**. One 'of the crow-blue mussel-shells' adjusts the ash-heaps, and opens and shuts itself 'like an injured fan'.
- 19 The correct answer is **'the sunlight'**. The rays ('shafts') of the sun are submerged below the water and illuminate the underwater crevices, lighting up the barnacles.
- 20 The correct answer is **'lilies'**. The crabs are 'like' green lilies. This is the only option that uses a simile (indicated by 'like').
- 21 The correct answer is **'the actions of people.'** The cliff has marks from 'dynamite grooves, burns, and hatchet strokes' which, it is suggested, are signs of harm that's been caused by man.
- 22 The correct answer is **'the movement of the waves'**. Every verse of five lines has the same pattern – it starts with just one syllable, then the number of syllables in each line increases before decreasing again. In the same way, a wave is small at first and increases in size before it breaks and then is drawn back into the sea.

[Task 4]

- 23 The correct answer is **'Farming them intensively would probably cause large numbers of deaths from stress.'** Professor Jacquet's group are against farming octopuses. This is because octopuses are 'highly developed... creatures'. As a result, farming them might be stressful for them, causing large numbers of deaths. The next sentence after the gap continues the argument against octopus farming, repeating the idea that sophisticated creatures such as octopuses shouldn't be farmed for food.
- 24 The correct answer is **'In one such experiment, scientists observed octopuses building shelters from pieces of coconut shell.'** This answer begins, 'In one such experiment...'. This refers to the 'tests' mentioned in the previous sentence. The 'pieces of coconut shell' are examples of the tools referred to in the previous sentence.
- 25 The correct answer is **'Fish farmers have turned to the rearing of octopuses to try to replace these dwindling catches.'** This answer mentions 'these dwindling catches'. This refers back to the statement immediately before this gap that the numbers of octopus caught are 'in decline'.
- 26 The correct answer is **'These efforts have foundered, however, because octopus larvae eat only live food.'** This sentence begins with 'These efforts...', which refers back to the sentence at the end of the previous paragraph about ways of increasing the numbers of

octopus. The sentence which fits the gap is about the feeding habits of octopuses. This is linked to the following sentence, which is also about feeding.

27 The correct answer is **‘There have also been advances in controlling the environments in which octopuses are raised.’** The word ‘also’ tells us that one advance has already been mentioned. It links this sentence to the previous sentence, which is about an advance in the feeding of young octopuses.

28 The correct answer is **‘But the case for octopus farming is weak, according to Jacquet and her co-authors.’** This sentence is against octopus farming. The sentence begins ‘But...’ because the previous sentence is giving a positive argument for octopus farming – that it shows signs of being a successful business.

[Task 5]

29 Which extract describes a feeling of awareness of being in a dream?

The correct answer is **D**. In the second sentence, the writer says, ‘...and the dream went lucid; I realized that what was going on was a dream’. The writer was therefore aware of being in a dream.

30 Which extract refers to using dreams as a source of professional inspiration?

The correct answer is **C**. In the second paragraph of the extract, we learn that, ‘like so many other writers (and artists too)’, the writer is involved in creative work, and that he uses images and stories from his dreams to inspire him in this work.

31 Which extract mentions being able to do something in a dream that would be impossible in real life?

The correct answer is **A**. In the writer’s dream, a locked and chained gate prevented her from going down the drive. Then suddenly the writer was ‘possessed... with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier’.

32 Which extract argues that dreams can teach us something useful?

The correct answer is **B**. The writer says that the most interesting dreams for other people are those ‘in which you deal with a problem in some new way... you learned something about how to deal with a threat’. So he is saying that in certain circumstances – when we have to deal with a problem – dreams can be useful and teach us how to behave.

33 Which extract says that people mostly dream about everyday things?

The correct answer is **B**. The writer says that although we think of dreams as being weird, ‘about 80 percent of dreams depict ordinary situations’.

34 Which extract states that dreams usually lose their power once the person wakes up?

The correct answer is **C**. The writer says, ‘As a rule, dreams die in the glare of the waking world, their shimmering aura evaporating...’. So as the dreamer awakens, the emotional power of the dream is usually lost.

35 Which extract mentions a place that looked different in a dream from its appearance in the writer’s memory?

The correct answer is **A**. In the writer's dream, the drive was 'narrow and unkempt, not the drive that we had known'. The drive she had known was well looked after, whereas this one had been taken over by nature.

36 Which extract describes how a strange occurrence prevented the writer from doing something?

The correct answer is **D**. When the writer tried to remember the information on the cover of the book he was holding, he found this information kept changing and he was unable to remember it.

37 Which extract explains the reason we are willing to accept absurd things in our dreams as significant?

The correct answer is **B**. At the end of this extract the writer says that 'the emotional pull of dreams makes even the strangest incongruities seem 'meaningful and worthy of discussion and interpretation'.

38 Which extract discusses some advice about relaying dreams to others?

The correct answer is **C**. The writer's mother told him: 'Don't ever share your dreams with anyone'. She was therefore advising him that he should never recount his dreams to other people.