

# **Entrance Examination 2017**

## **English Section B - Comprehension**

### **Comprehension Passage**

Printed in this booklet you will find the passage on which the comprehension paper is based. The questions are printed in the blue booklet and you should write your answers in the spaces provided on those pages.

You have a minimum of 5 minutes to read through the passage carefully, making any notes that you need alongside the text. You should not begin answering questions until the 5 minute period has finished.

**Do not open this booklet until told to do so.**

**Read through the passage very carefully. We recommend that you spend at least five minutes reading and re-reading the following material before you begin to answer the questions.**

*This story, set in Victorian England, focuses on a young girl, Faith. At this point in the story, she is with her father, the Reverend Erasmus Sunderly. They are in the grounds of their house by the coast, going towards a tower.*

The night was cold and starless, with just a few streaks of purple in the west. A single bat skimmed past and vanished, rapid as a heart flutter. Faith advanced across the grounds hesitantly. Her father gave her an impatient glance over his shoulder and beckoned to her to hurry.

"I must be back at the house by midnight," he whispered abruptly.

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In the darkness the tower seemed larger, and grimly prison-like. Her father opened the door and disappeared into the darkness. When he re-emerged, his arms were filled with a cloth-shrouded object, and he was clearly struggling with the weight. He lowered it carefully into the wheelbarrow that stood by the entrance. Faith's nose filled with a strange, cold scent. The Reverend took up the handles of the barrow.

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As the ground descended towards the beach, the path became more difficult. Whenever the wheel jolted, a little rustle of dropped leaves sounded from beneath the cloth, and each time her father drew in breath through his teeth.

On the beach the winds were colder and fiercer. The sea was black except for the seething shore, and brief scars of white foam. The cliffs seemed higher than they had by daylight, like giant bites taken out of the sky.

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There was a sudden surge of the wind, and some unseen crack or cliff hollow gave off a throbbing whine not unlike a voice. Faith's father tensed, turning his head towards the source of the sound. He lowered the barrow, one hand sliding into his pocket as he listened. Eventually he relaxed.

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With difficulty, her father manhandled the barrow across the beach to the little boat house. There he stooped by the rowing boat, examining it by the rays from the lantern, and knocking on the wood. After a while he nodded to himself. With visible effort, he lifted the plant pot and settled it near the stern.

"Get behind the boat, and push," he ordered, raising his voice to compete with the wind.

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Faith's heart plummeted, her worst suspicions confirmed. Her father really *did* mean to take out the boat in the middle of the night. She pushed the boat as hard as she could.

"Father," ventured Faith, "how will we see the rocks?"

"Keep watch while I row, and warn me if you see rocks."

Faith stared out across the black shifting mass of the ocean. Every time a foam crest flared, she imagined it breaking on the hidden rocks. Nonetheless she hitched her skirts as best she could and clambered into the boat, while her father held the little vessel steady. Her father needed her, and whatever dangers were ahead they would be facing them together.

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