



Sydenham
High School

G D S T
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

Sample 11+ English Entrance Examination Paper

Time allowed: 1 hour 10 minutes



READING SECTION

'The Railway Children' by E Nesbit

Three siblings, Roberta (nicknamed Bobbie), Phyllis and Peter, live by a railway and have been watching a group of students do a cross-country race. The runners have gone through a railway tunnel, but the children have noticed that one runner, who is wearing a red jumper, has not come out the other side. They have decided to go into the tunnel to look for him. This book was written in 1906, so the train being described is a steam train and the railway lines would not have been electric.

- 1 Everything is quite different when you walk into a tunnel on your own feet and tread on shifting, sliding stones and gravel on a path that curves downwards from the shining metals to the wall. Then you see slimy, oozy trickles of water running down the inside of the tunnel, and you notice that the bricks are not red or brown, as they are at the tunnel's mouth, but dull, sticky, sickly green. Your voice, when you speak, is quite changed from what it was out in the sunshine, and it is a long time before the tunnel is quite dark.
- 2 It was not yet quite dark in the tunnel when Phyllis caught at Bobbie's skirt, ripping out half a yard of gathers, but no-one noticed this at the time.
"I want to go back," she said. "I don't like it. It'll be pitch dark in a minute. I won't go on in the dark, I don't care what you say, I won't..."
"Don't be a silly cuckoo," said Peter, "I've got a candle and matches and.....what's that?"
- 3 'That', was a low, humming sound on the railway line, a trembling of the wires beside it, a buzzing, humming sound that grew louder and louder as they listened.
"It's a train!" said Bobbie.
"Let me go back," cried Phyllis, struggling to get away from the hand by which Bobbie held her.
"Don't be a coward," said Bobbie. "It's quite safe. Stand back."
"Come on!" shouted Peter, who was a few yards ahead. "Quick! Manhole!"
- 4 The roar of the advancing train was now louder than the noise you hear when your head is under water in the bath and both taps are running, and you are kicking with your heels against the bath's tin sides. But Peter had shouted for all he was worth, and Bobbie heard him. She dragged Phyllis along to the manhole. Phyllis, of course, stumbled over the wires and grazed both her legs. But they dragged her in, and all three stood in the dark, damp arch recess* while the train roared louder and louder. It seemed as if it would deafen them. In the distance, they could see its eyes of fire growing bigger and brighter at every instant.
- 5 "It is a dragon - I always knew it was - it takes its own shape in here, in the dark," shouted Phyllis. But nobody heard her. You see the train was shouting too and its voice was bigger than hers.
- 6 Now, with a rush and a roar and a rattle and a long dazzling flash of lighted carriage

windows, a smell of smoke, and a blast of hot air, the train hurtled by, clanging and jangling and echoing in the vaulted roof of the tunnel. Phyllis and Bobbie clung to each other. Even Peter caught hold of Bobbie's arm, "in case she should be frightened" as he explained afterwards.

7 Now, slowly and gradually, the tail-lights grew smaller and smaller, and so did the noise, till with one last whiz the train got itself out of the tunnel, and silence settled again on its damp walls and dripping roof.

Glossary

**Arch recess – a small space created by building part of the wall further back in the tunnel in which people could stand to let trains go past.*

END OF READING PASSAGE

Paper 1 Reading Response

Read the extract carefully. Then answer all questions.

1. Read paragraph 1.

Find and list three details which make the tunnel seem frightening.

(3 marks)

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2. “dull, sticky, sickly green” are examples of what type of word (for example: adjective/ verb/ noun/ preposition/ adverb)?

(1 mark)

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3. Read paragraphs 2- 3. How can we tell Phyllis is scared? Find 2 pieces of evidence (quotes).

(2 marks)

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4. Read paragraph 2.

How does Peter try to encourage Phyllis to go into the tunnel? You may find a quotation or use your own words.

(1 mark)

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5. Read paragraphs 3-4. What does Bobbie do that informs the reader she is the eldest child? Try to explain your example.

(2 marks)

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6. The following quotations describe the train. What literary technique (eg. simile/ alliteration/ metaphor/ personification/ onomatopoeia) has been used in each quotation?

a. "In the distance, they could see its eyes of fire growing bigger and brighter every instant."

(1 mark)

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b. "...with a rush and a roar and rattle"

(1 mark)

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c. "...the train hurtled by, clanging and jangling and echoing in the vaulted roof of the tunnel."
(1 mark)

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d. "It is a dragon - I always knew it was – it takes its own shape in here, in the dark"
(1 mark)

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7. Read paragraph 6. How can we tell all of the children were scared of the train?
(1 mark)

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8. Look at the whole text. Explain how the writer makes it frightening and tense for the reader?

- Remember to support your opinions with evidence (quotes).
- Aim to comment on 3 different things.

(6 marks)

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WRITING SECTION

Choose one of the following tasks:

1. In this passage, the children find themselves in a scary situation. Write a description of a frightening experience. This may be real or imagined.

You may wish to include:

- A description introducing the setting
- What happens to make the character(s) scared
- How the character(s) respond

Write 2-3 paragraphs.

You should plan and proofread your work. Remember to proof-read your work.

Or

2. The trains were an exciting Victorian invention that helped people travel quicker. Write a speech for your class, encouraging them to use public transport more.

You may wish to include:

- What forms of transport you can use
- What are the advantages of using public transport
- What are the negatives of using a motor car

Write 2-3 paragraphs.

You should plan your work in the area below. Remember to proof-read your work.



