
Sample Assessment Test for CEM (Durham University) Tests – Verbal Reasoning

Allow 30 minutes to do this test and work as quickly and as carefully as you can.

Read this passage carefully and answer the questions that follow.

The First Day

Daniel felt as if he was being swallowed alive as he walked down the rowdy corridor and squinted through the thick lenses of his spectacles at the school hall beyond. The corridor was like the throat of a terrifying beast and he was sliding down it into the big belly that was the school hall.

- 5 He knew what would happen when he got there. All the new pupils, like himself, would be sitting in rows waiting for the headmaster to make his welcome address. The headmaster at St Joseph's was a towering, severe man who could strike fear into any pupil. He was not a man who would put up with any nonsense whatsoever. Daniel knew this. He knew it because when Mr Graham was not busy being the headmaster, he was busy being Daniel's dad. Now, of course, his dad would be able to do both simultaneously and Daniel was sure that he would never hear the end of it from his classmates. He felt
- 10 thoroughly miserable; he was never going to make any friends.

"Hello," a voice said behind him. "You must be new too. My name's Rachael."

The girl was stunning. She thrust her hand out confidently towards Daniel, while he gaped at her.

"Dennis!" he blurted, finally shaking her hand, "I mean... Daniel. My name's Daniel."

"Don't you know your own name?" Rachael laughed. She didn't seem to be nervous at all.

- 15 "You're the head teacher's son, aren't you? Everyone says he's intimidating but my brother Tom, who's in the year above us, says that his bark is worse than his bite. It'll be weird for you, calling your dad 'Sir', won't it?"

"Yeah, I suppose," Daniel mumbled. He couldn't believe his luck: Rachael wanted to be his friend. Daniel thought secondary school might not be so bad after all.

Answer these questions about the text that you've just read.
Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Which word best describes how Daniel feels at the start of the passage?

A Anxious
B Excited
C Unlucky
D Angry

2. Which of these statements is true?

A There is a beast in the school hall.
B Daniel cannot see the school hall.
C There are no other children in the corridor.
D Daniel wears glasses.

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Carry on to the next question → →

3. Which word best describes what Daniel's father looks like?
- A Bald
 - B Tall
 - C Thin
 - D Broad
4. Daniel tells Rachael that his name is Dennis at first. Why do you think he does this?
- A She approached him from behind so he was surprised.
 - B He doesn't want to be Rachael's friend.
 - C He was nervous because she was so pretty.
 - D He did not like being called Daniel.
5. How does Daniel think the other pupils will treat him?
- A They will be unkind and unfriendly.
 - B They will be nervous but welcoming.
 - C They will be kind and friendly.
 - D They won't know what to say to him.
6. How do you think Rachael's brother Tom knows what the headmaster is like?
- A Tom is a friend of Daniel's.
 - B He has heard what the headmaster is like.
 - C The headmaster knows Tom's parents.
 - D He already goes to the school.
7. How do you think Daniel feels at the end of the passage?
- A Miserable
 - B Relieved
 - C Shocked
 - D Uncomfortable
8. Which of the following facts is given in the passage?
- A Rachael's surname
 - B Daniel's age
 - C Daniel's surname
 - D The name of Daniel's new form tutor

9. What is meant by the word “address” (line 5)?
- A Directions to classes
 - B The place where someone lives
 - C A formal speech
 - D An official warning
10. What is meant by the word “severe” (line 6)?
- A Strict
 - B Miserable
 - C Thin
 - D Unreasonable
11. What is meant by the word “simultaneously” (line 9)?
- A One after the other
 - B In an effective way
 - C By sharing the tasks
 - D At the same time
12. Why do you think Rachael doesn’t feel nervous about starting a new school?
- A Because she has already met Daniel.
 - B Because she knows what to expect.
 - C Because she knows the headmaster.
 - D Because she found her old school boring.
13. Daniel thinks that he will “never hear the end of it” (line 9).
What do you think this phrase means?
- A His dad will punish him at home if he misbehaves in school.
 - B The other children will tease Daniel for being the headmaster’s son.
 - C His dad will boast about being Daniel’s headmaster.
 - D The other children will ignore Daniel because he’s the headmaster’s son.
14. Rachael says “his bark is worse than his bite” (line 16).
What do you think this phrase means?
- A The headmaster only punishes those who deserve it.
 - B The headmaster has a bad temper.
 - C The headmaster never punishes anyone.
 - D The headmaster is not as scary as he seems.

Fill in the missing letters to complete the words in the following passage.

15. Over four and a half thousand years ago, the **A n c** **t**
16. Egyptians began **l i l d n g** pyramids.
17. The pharaohs **i n** **d e d** the pyramids to be
18. impressive monuments: eternal resting **p l** **s**
- to safeguard their souls.
19. Wealthy Egyptians would fill their tombs with the **h** **g s**
20. they would need in the afterlife, but they **b e l** **e d**
21. that before their souls were **g r a** **d** eternal life,
22. their **a** **n s** on Earth would be judged rigorously.
23. This **u d g e** **n t** would happen in the underworld,
24. where the deceased person's heart would be **w e** **h e d**
- against the feather of the goddess Ma'at.
25. If the heart was **h e a** **r** than the feather,
26. it would be deemed **u n w** **t h** and the person
27. would not **e n** **r** the afterlife.
28. Djoser's Step Pyramid was one of the **f** **t** of these tombs.
29. It is known as a step pyramid **b e** **s e** it was built
30. as a series of six successively **l l e r** squares
31. on top of one **a n o** **r**.
32. The burial chamber is **h i** **n** underground
- and sealed with a stone weighing 3.5 tonnes,
33. but this did not **d e** **r** the grave robbers.
- When the tomb was excavated,
34. almost **n** **t** **g** was left inside.

Mark the word outside the brackets that has a similar meaning to the words in both sets of brackets.

Example: (find discover) (stain blemish) freckle smudge spot see

35. (point direct) (purpose intention) goal aim motive guide
 36. (trench drain) (abandon dump) drop gutter ditch leave
 37. (talent ability) (present offering) gift bonus skill flair
 38. (path route) (hunt pursue) way chase passage track
 39. (law code) (lead reign) rule govern order instruct
 40. (assess grade) (scratch dent) judge mark rate cut
 41. (people tribe) (run sprint) dash nation race type
 42. (late overdue) (after following) delayed next detained behind
 43. (stone boulder) (swing sway) roll rock tilt cobble
 44. (bolt fasten) (ringlet curl) hair seal plait lock

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Complete the word on the right so that it means the opposite, or nearly the opposite, of the word on the left.

Example: smooth r o u g h

45. sweet i t r
 46. poor e a l h
 47. dry o s t
 48. bright s d y
 49. temporary e r m n t
 50. slow e e y
 51. joy w
 52. rare o m n
 53. uninterested e g r
 54. professional a m a t

/ 10

Carry on to the next question → →

Find the word that means the same, or nearly the same, as the word on the left.

Example: **small** tiny strong large soft

55. **brave** noble fearless capable tough
56. **guess** consider estimate belief idea
57. **worth** payment value expensive reward
58. **study** teach student learn education
59. **assist** treat remedy cure aid
60. **glad** comforted pleased comical witty
61. **shovel** excavate sift tunnel scoop
62. **ring** around shape band tunnel
63. **bendy** broken flexible snap springy
64. **tight** taut solid immovable tense
65. **scare** afraid shock frightful fluster
66. **shrink** slight miniature wane simplify
67. **soak** drench damp drip clean
68. **blunt** curt silent secretive defensive

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Total / 68

End of Test