

## TEST CONTENT INTERNATIONAL SECTION: 5E & 4E

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There is a written and an oral test

### 1. The candidate will have 1 hour and 30 minutes for the written test which comprises:

- A passage from a fictional text to be read with comprehension & interpretation questions (20 marks)
- A creative composition continuing the story of the same passage (20 marks: 10 for content and 10 for language accuracy)

### 2. The oral test lasts about 5 minutes

*Candidates must be fluent English speakers.*

- Candidates may be asked to read a text aloud and then they will be asked questions on this text
- They will then be engaged in general conversation about the place of English in their world and their motivation for studying in the international section

## HOW TO HELP CANDIDATES TO PREPARE FOR THE TEST

- Read with them regularly
- Encourage them to read aloud for you on a regular basis
- Speak English with them as often as possible
- Allow them the opportunity to interact with native speakers of English here in Singapore where English is an official language
- Have them watch films in English as often as possible
- Ensure that they work hard at their English lessons in school, completing homework thoroughly and accurately, and achieving high grades

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## EXAMPLE OF A TEST FOR ENTRY TO 5E

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### READING

The following extract is taken from the book *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket. It tells the story of the three Baudelaire children, Violet, Klaus and Sunny, who have become orphans (their parents have died). This extract comes from the first book, 'The Bad Beginning' and describes the children's first experience of meeting their unpleasant relative, Count Olaf.

Read the extract then answer the questions that follow.

### EXTRACT

I don't know if you've ever noticed this, but first impressions are often entirely wrong. You can look at a painting for the first time, for example, and not like it at all, but after looking at it a little longer you may find it very pleasing. The first time you try Gorgonzola cheese you may find it too strong, but when you are older you may want to eat nothing but Gorgonzola cheese. Klaus, when Sunny was born, did not like her at all, but by the time she was six weeks old the two of them were as thick as thieves. Your initial opinion on just about everything may change over time.

I wish I could tell you that the Baudelaires' first impressions of Count Olaf and his house were incorrect, as first impressions so often are. But these impressions – that Count Olaf was a horrible person, and his house a depressing pigsty – were absolutely correct. During the first few days after the orphans' arrival at Count Olaf's, Violet, Klaus and Sunny attempted to make themselves feel at home, but it was really no use. Even though Count Olaf's house was quite large, the three children were placed together in one filthy bedroom that had only one small bed in it. Violet and Klaus took turns sleeping in it, so that every other night one of them was in the bed and the other was sleeping on the hard wooden floor, and the bed's mattress was

so lumpy it was difficult to say who was more uncomfortable. To make a bed for Sunny, Violet removed the dusty curtains from the curtain rod that hung over the bedroom's one window and bunched them together to form a sort of cushion, just big enough for her sister. However, without curtains over the cracked glass, the sun streamed through the window every morning, so the children woke up early and sore each day. Instead of a closet, there was a large cardboard box that had once held a refrigerator and would now hold the three children's clothes, all piled in a heap. Instead of toys, books, or other things to amuse the youngsters, Count Olaf had provided a small pile of rocks. And the only decoration on the peeling walls was a large and ugly painting of an eye, matching the one on Count Olaf's ankle and all over the house.

But the children knew, as I'm sure you know, that the worst surroundings in the world can be tolerated if the people in them are interesting and kind. Count Olaf was neither interesting nor kind; he was demanding, short-tempered and bad-smelling. The only good thing to be said for Count Olaf is that he wasn't around very often. When the children woke up and chose their clothing out of the refrigerator box, they would walk into the kitchen and find a list of instructions left for them by Count Olaf, who would often not appear until nighttime. Most of the day he spent out of the house, or up in the high tower, where the children were forbidden to go. The instructions he left for them were usually difficult chores, such as repairing the back porch or repairing the windows, and instead of a signature Count Olaf would draw an eye at the bottom of the note.

## QUESTIONS

1. From the first paragraph, find another expression which means the same as 'first impressions' (1pt)
2. Quote the words which describe the Baudelaire children's first impressions of (a) Count Olaf and (b) the house. (2pts)

3. From the whole extract, name three things which made the bedroom unpleasant? (3pts)
4. How did the children try to make the best of what was in the room? (2pts)
5. Which of the Baudelaire children do you think was the oldest and therefore, most responsible: Violet, Klaus or Sunny? Give a reason for your answer! (2pts)
6. Find a word from the extract that means 'able to put up with'. (1pt)
7. Give the 3 aspects of Count Olaf that the children disliked. (3pts)
8. From your answer to question 7, choose one of these features and in your own words, explain what it means. (2pts)  
Aspect chosen: / Explanation (in my own words):
9. What was the only thing about Count Olaf that the children didn't mind? (1pt)
10. Name two of the tasks he expected the children to perform? (2pts)
11. How suitable do you think, these tasks are for children? (2pts)
12. Who is telling the story of the Baudelaire children – who is the narrator? Explain why you think so? (2pts)
13. In the first paragraph, it states that Klaus and Sunny became 'as thick as thieves'. What do you think this means? (2pts)

## WRITING

Imagine a day in the life of the Baudelaire children. Write how it would be. Start with a note from Count Olaf as to their tasks for the day. Then, tell how the children deal with these tasks. You decide whether you choose to allow Count Olaf to appear or not.

Base your detail on what you have already read in the extract.

## **EXAMPLE OF A TEST FOR ENTRY TO 4E**

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### **READING**

In this extract, the narrator is travelling in a boat that is carrying wounded soldiers to safety after a battle in the North Sea.

#### The Dangerous Reef

As we got nearer to the shore, the reefs began to appear and Mr. Riach, the captain's main man, sometimes called down to us from the mast, to change the course. The brightness of the moon showed us these dangers as clearly as in the day, which was, perhaps more alarming. It showed me, too, the face of the captain as he stood by the steersman, listening and looking as steady as steel. I saw they were brave men and admired them more.

By veering to one side or the other to avoid a reef, but still hugging the wind and the land, we had begun to come alongside the Isle of Mull.\* The tide was very strong, and threw the boat about. Two extra pairs of hands were put to the wheel, and it was strange to see three strong men throw their weight upon it, and the wheel like a living thing struggle against them. Mr. Riach announced from the top of the mast that he saw clear water ahead.

'Keep the boat away from the reef,' shouted Mr. Riach. And just at the same time the tide caught the boat and threw the wind out of its sails. It spun round into the wind and the next moment struck the reef with a thump that threw us all flat upon the deck, and came close to shaking Mr. Riach from his place upon the mast.

I was on my feet in a minute. The reef which we had struck was close to the south-west end of Mull. Sometimes the waves broke clean over us; sometimes they only ground the poor boat upon the reef, so that we heard it beat itself to pieces. What with the great noise of the sails and the singing of the wind, and the flying spray

in the moonlight, and the sense of danger, I was so terrified I could scarcely understand the things I saw.

I saw Mr Riach and the seamen trying to save the boat and ran over to assist them. As soon as I started to help, I felt calm. It was no easy task and the breaking of the heavier waves continually hampered our struggles. Meanwhile those of the wounded who could move came clambering out onto the deck and began to help, while the rest that lay helpless in their bunks horrified me with their screaming, and begged to be saved.

The captain took no part. He seemed stunned. He stood holding onto the mast, talking to himself and groaning out aloud whenever the ship hammered on the rocks. His boat was like family to him and when anything threatened it he seemed to suffer too.

We had one of the wounded men keep a watch upon the seas and give us warning. We had the boat just about under control, when this man called out shrilly:

'Everyone, hold on!'

We knew by his tone that it was something out of the ordinary; and sure enough, there followed a wave so huge that it lifted the boat right up and, with the sudden tilt, I was thrown clean over the side into the sea.

\*The Isle of Mull is an island situated off the west coast of Scotland.

(Adapted from Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson)

## Questions

1. In the first paragraph, explain why the moonlight might both be a good and a bad thing for the ship? (2pts)
2. The captain is described in the first paragraph as being as 'steady as steel' - what does this tell us about how he feels at this stage? (1pt)
3. Comment on the style of writing that is used here (1pt)
4. In the second paragraph, what shows us particularly, how strong the wind is? (1pt)
5. The weather is twice described as being 'alive' in the second paragraph. Give an example of one of these and explain why it is alive. (2pts)
6. In paragraph three, what happens to the ship? USE YOUR OWN WORDS (3pts)
7. In paragraph four, list all the things that the men could SEE, HEAR and FEEL at this point. USE YOUR OWN WORDS (6pts)
8. In paragraph five, what made the narrator feel calm and what made him feel horrified? (2pts)
9. What does 'hampered' mean in this paragraph? (1pt)
10. Look at paragraph six. Why do you think the captain could not do anything to help his boat? (USE YOUR OWN WORDS) (2pts)
11. What does 'hammered' mean in this paragraph? (1pt)
12. In paragraph seven, what does 'shrilly' mean? (1pt)
13. Look back at paragraph four again: 'what with the great noise of the sails, and the singing of the wind, and the flying spray

in the moonlight, and the sense of danger, I was so terrified  
I could scarcely understand the things I saw.'

Show how the author's repetition of the word 'and' is effective  
writing for bringing out the feelings of the narrator at this point?  
(2pts)

### **Writing**

Continue the extract. What happens to the narrator after he was  
thrown into the sea? (Remember that we have his account of the  
storm, so he must have survived to write it all down).

10pts for language

5pts for content