



Answer ALL questions.

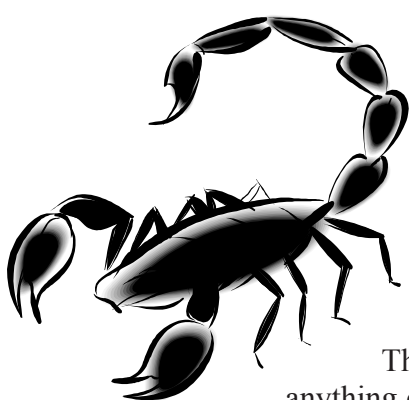
SECTION A: Reading

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.

*In this passage, the writer describes how, as a young boy, his fascination with scorpions caused panic in his family.*

**The scorpion who came to lunch**



The crumbling wall that surrounded the sunken garden alongside the house in Greece was a rich hunting ground for me. It was an ancient brick wall that had been plastered over, but now the whole surface was an intricate map of cracks. There was a whole landscape on this wall if you peered closely enough to see it; the roofs of a hundred tiny toadstools, like villages on the damper portions; mountains of bottle-green moss; forests of small ferns drooping languidly like little green fountains.

The top of the wall was a desert land, too dry for anything except a few rust-red mosses to live in it. At the base of the wall was a pile of broken and chipped roof-tiles.

The inhabitants of the wall were a mixed lot, but the shyest of the wall community were the most dangerous. Under a piece of the loose plaster there would be a little black scorpion an inch long, looking as though he were made out of polished chocolate. They were weird-looking things, with their neat, crooked legs and the tail like a string of brown beads ending in a poisonous sting like a rose-thorn. I grew very fond of these scorpions. Provided you did nothing silly or clumsy (like putting your hand on one) the scorpions treated you with respect, their one desire being to get away and hide as quickly as possible.

One day I found a fat female scorpion in the wall, wearing what at first glance appeared to be a pale fawn fur coat. Closer inspection proved that this strange garment was made up of a mass of tiny babies clinging to the mother's back. I was enraptured by this family, and I made up my mind to smuggle them into the house. With infinite care I manoeuvred the mother and family into a matchbox, and then hurried home. Just as I entered the door, lunch was served; so, I placed the matchbox carefully on the mantelpiece in the drawing-room, and made my way to the dining room and joined the family for the meal. My elder brother Larry, having finished his meal, fetched his cigarettes and the matchbox from the drawing room, and lying back in the chair he put one in his mouth. Oblivious of my impending doom I watched him interestedly as he opened the matchbox.

Now I maintain to this day that the female scorpion meant no harm. She was agitated and a trifle annoyed at being shut up in a matchbox for so long. She hoisted herself out of the box with great rapidity, her babies clinging on desperately, and scuttled on to the back of Larry's hand. There, not quite certain what to do next, she paused, her



sting curved up at the ready. Larry, feeling the movement of her claws, glanced down to see what it was.

40 He uttered a roar of fright that made the maid drop a plate and brought Roger, the dog, from beneath the table, barking wildly. With a flick of his hand Larry sent the unfortunate scorpion flying down the table, and she landed midway between Margo and Leslie, scattering babies like confetti. Thoroughly enraged at this treatment, the creature sped towards Leslie, her sting quivering with emotion. Leslie leapt to his feet and flicked out desperately with his napkin, sending the scorpion rolling across the  
45 cloth towards Margo, who promptly let out a scream that any railway engine would have been proud to produce. Mother, completely bewildered, put on her glasses and peered down the table to see what was causing the pandemonium, and at that moment Margo, in a vain attempt to stop the scorpion's advance, hurled a glass of water at it. The shower missed the animal completely, but successfully drenched Mother. The  
50 scorpion had now gone to ground under Leslie's plate, while her babies swarmed wildly all over the table. Roger, mystified by the panic, but determined to do his share, ran round and round the room, barking hysterically.

"It's that boy again..." bellowed Larry.

"Look out! Look out! They're coming!" screamed Margo.

55 "All we need is a book," roared Leslie; "don't panic, hit 'em with a book."

"What on earth's the *matter* with you all?" Mother kept imploring, mopping her glasses.

"It's that boy... he'll kill the lot of us... Look at the table... knee-deep in scorpions..."

60 "That boy... Every matchbox in the house is a deathtrap..."

"Look out, it's coming towards me... Quick, quick, do something..."

By the time a certain amount of order had been restored, all the baby scorpions had hidden themselves. While the family, still simmering with rage and fright, retired to the drawing room, I spent half an hour rounding up the babies, picking them up in a  
65 teaspoon and returning them to their mother's back. Then I carried them outside and, with the utmost reluctance, released them on the garden wall. Roger and I spent the afternoon on the hillside, for I felt it would be prudent to allow the family to have a rest before seeing them again.



**You should refer closely to the passage to support your answers.  
You may include brief quotations.**

**1.** Name **two** plants that grow on the wall.

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**Q1**

**(Total 1 mark)**

**2.** Look again at lines 14 to 24. Give **two** comparisons that the writer uses to describe the scorpions, in this section of the passage.

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2 .....  
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**Q2**

**(Total 2 marks)**

**3.** What do we learn about the boy's character, from his thoughts about the scorpions, and how he treats them?

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**Q3**

**(Total 5 marks)**









**SECTION B: Reading and Writing**

**You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.**

**Remind yourself of the passage *Shopping for Romanian babies* from the London Examinations Anthology, and then answer questions 5 and 6.**

***Shopping for Romanian babies***

5 There are few more depressing assignments for a journalist than the Eastern European “orphanage beat”. In Russia, you can find thousands of children who have been forcibly removed from parents deemed to be inadequate, through alcoholism, drug abuse or political inclination. The accepted belief is that the State is the best possible parent. In Romania you can find as many children who have been dumped in state institutions by parents who simply cannot afford to feed them.

10 I walked into a “Cassia dei Copii”, a “house of children”, in northern Romania. The smell of urine, the cold and dim lighting are familiar. A sea of expectant young faces looks up at me. Within seconds, two small fists are thrust into my hands. Others dig under their mattresses for childish drawings – no-one has a locker in which to keep personal belongings – which are then frantically held up to me for approval.

15 The children are desperate to give these offerings to someone. Anyone. They call out, “What is your name? What is your name?” I am too choked to answer. Give me a war zone any day, but spare me the emotional trauma of 100 children searching for a mother. It takes some time to locate any adult carer, hardly surprising since there are only three on duty for the 100 or so children.

20 I ask whether it is true that, in some orphanages, only 1% are what we would describe as genuine orphans; the rest have been left for economic reasons. “I don’t know,” the director says, looking around at all the children apparently without identities. “The papers have been lost. But most of them haven’t been visited for six months,” she adds helpfully, which means that under Romanian law they are now the official property of the state.

25 And this is not a trip down memory lane to those pictures of half-starved neglected children, the babies rocking in their cots, when journalists were first allowed access to Romania after the revolution 10 years ago. Then we found 150,000 children abandoned to the state. Since then the situation has improved slightly – there are now 140,000.

**‘Vested interest’**

In the thankfully clean-smelling, warm offices of the European Union in the capital Bucharest, the head of Mission holds his head in his hands.

30 Last year, the discovery of thousands of malnourished children, in an investigation sponsored by Brussels, prompted an emergency-feeding programme. But attempts to persuade the authorities to do something fundamental, he says, meet with a blank wall of vested interest.

35 “Thousands of jobs are involved in running these state institutions,” he explains. “We are dealing with an industry of children.”





Posing as a wealthy, would-be parent of a Romanian orphan, I discover that if you are prepared to pay, then you can shop for a baby, as I did in a town some three hours drive north of Bucharest.

40 Local gossip says the orphanage director is making a fortune from the trade. She has powerful friends and the police are not allowed to investigate.

45 She shows me 60 babies she has in her baby shop that week. They all look clean but are still prone to the rocking motion of babies suffering from neglect. She gives me three to choose from – Andrei, Nico, or Liviu. The impoverished parents of these babies will readily give their permission. “I can forge their signatures if necessary,” she says.

The sum of \$20,000 is mentioned, and she says she can get the baby delivered, all papers intact (her daughter is a lawyer) to my home in north London.

### **Baby trade**

50 In the surrounding villages, I find the network which feeds the trade. Wherever I stop, villagers come up to me asking, “Are you here to buy a baby?” I am told of one couple who lost two of their children to the orphanage down the road.

“We took them there for the winter,” explains the father, “because we couldn’t afford to feed them. And when we came to collect them, we were told they had gone.”

The tears roll down his cheeks. The four-year-old boy who remains at home is holding on tightly to his father as he speaks, with some anxiety.

55 I then went to meet a woman who produces for the baby shop.

“I have given six children to the orphanage and kept two,” she says. “I don’t mean to keep this latest one.”

She places a nine-month-old baby on my lap.

“You can have him if you like,” she says.

60 “For \$11,000,” the father adds quickly.

I hand back the seventh baby I have been offered in as many days in Romania, make my excuses and leave.

By Sue Lloyd Roberts in Romania

























