

0860/405

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2008

TUESDAY, 6 MAY
2.30 PM – 3.20 PM

ENGLISH
STANDARD GRADE
Credit Level
Reading
Text

Read carefully the passage overleaf. It will help if you read it twice. When you have done so, answer the questions. Use the spaces provided in the Question/Answer booklet.



This passage, taken from the opening chapter of a novel, introduces us to the character of Briony and her family.

- 1 The play—for which Briony had designed the posters, programmes and tickets, constructed the sales booth out of a folding screen tipped on its side, and lined the collection box in red crêpe paper—was written by her in a two-day tempest of composition, causing her to miss a breakfast and a lunch. When the preparations were complete, she had nothing to do but contemplate her finished draft and wait for the appearance of her cousins from the distant north. There would be time for only one day of rehearsal before her brother, Leon, arrived.
- 2 At some moments chilling, at others desperately sad, the play told a tale of the heart whose message, conveyed in a rhyming prologue, was that love which did not build a foundation on good sense was doomed. The reckless passion of the heroine, Arabella, for a wicked foreign count is punished by ill fortune when she contracts cholera during an impetuous dash towards a seaside town with her intended. Deserted by him and nearly everybody else, bed-bound in an attic, she discovers in herself a sense of humour. Fortune presents her a second chance in the form of an impoverished doctor—in fact, a prince in disguise who has elected to work among the needy. Healed by him, Arabella chooses wisely this time, and is rewarded by reconciliation with her family and a wedding with the medical prince on “a windy sunlit day in spring”.
- 3 Mrs Tallis read the seven pages of *The Trials of Arabella* in her bedroom, at her dressing table, with the author’s arm around her shoulder the whole while. Briony studied her mother’s face for every trace of shifting emotion, and Emily Tallis obliged with looks of alarm, snickers of glee and, at the end, grateful smiles and wise, affirming nods. She took her daughter in her arms, onto her lap, and said that the play was “stupendous”, and agreed instantly, murmuring into the girl’s ear, that this word could be quoted on the poster which was to be on an easel in the entrance hall by the ticket booth.
- 4 Briony was hardly to know it then, but this was the project’s highest point of fulfilment. Nothing came near it for satisfaction, all else was dreams and frustration. There were moments in the summer dusk after her light was out, burrowing in the delicious gloom of her canopy bed, when she made her heart thud with luminous, yearning fantasies, little playlets in themselves, every one of which featured Leon. In one, his big, good-natured face buckled in grief as Arabella sank in loneliness and despair. In another, there he was, cocktail in hand at some fashionable city bar, overheard boasting to a group of friends: Yes, my younger sister, Briony Tallis the writer, you must surely have heard of her. In a third he punched the air in exultation as the final curtain fell, although there was no curtain, there was no possibility of a curtain. Her play was not for her cousins, it was for her brother, to celebrate his return, provoke his admiration and guide him away from his careless succession of girlfriends, towards the right form of wife, the one who would persuade him to return to the countryside, the one who would sweetly request Briony’s services as a bridesmaid.
- 5 She was one of those children possessed by a desire to have the world just so. Whereas her big sister’s room was a stew of unclosed books, unfolded clothes, unmade bed, unemptied ashtrays, Briony’s was a shrine to her controlling demon: the model farm spread across a deep window ledge consisted of the usual animals, but all facing one way—towards their owner—as if about to break into song, and even the farmyard hens were neatly corralled. In fact, Briony’s was the only tidy upstairs

room in the house. Her straight-backed dolls in their many-roomed mansion appeared to be under strict instructions not to touch the walls; the various thumb-sized figures to be found standing about her dressing table—cowboys, deep-sea divers, humanoid mice—suggested by their even ranks and spacing a citizen army awaiting orders.

6 A taste for the miniature was one aspect of an orderly spirit. Another was a passion for secrets: in a prized varnished cabinet, a secret drawer was opened by pushing against the grain of a cleverly turned dovetail joint, and here she kept a diary locked by a clasp, and a notebook written in a code of her own invention. In a toy safe opened by six secret numbers she stored letters and postcards. An old tin petty cash box was hidden under a removable floorboard beneath her bed. In the box were treasures that dated back four years, to her ninth birthday when she began collecting: a mutant double acorn, fool's gold, a rain-making spell bought at a funfair, a squirrel's skull as light as a leaf.

7 At the age of eleven she wrote her first story—a foolish affair, imitative of half a dozen folk tales and lacking, she realised later, that vital knowingness about the ways of the world which compels a reader's respect. But this first clumsy attempt showed her that the imagination itself was a source of secrets: once she had begun a story, no one could be told. Pretending in words was too tentative, too vulnerable, too embarrassing to let anyone know. Even writing out the *she saids*, the *and thens*, made her wince, and she felt foolish, appearing to know about the emotions of an imaginary being. Self-exposure was inevitable the moment she described a character's weakness; the reader was bound to speculate that she was describing herself. What other authority could she have? Only when a story was finished could she feel immune, and ready to punch holes in the margins, bind the chapters with pieces of string, paint or draw the cover, and take the finished work to show to her mother, or her father, when he was home.

8 Her efforts received encouragement. In fact, they were welcomed as the Tallises began to understand that the baby of the family possessed a strange mind and a facility with words. Briony was encouraged to read her stories aloud in the library and it surprised her parents and older sister to hear their quiet girl perform so boldly, making big gestures with her free arm, arching her eyebrows as she did the voices, and looking up from the page for seconds at a time as she read in order to gaze into one face after the other, unapologetically demanding her family's total attention as she cast her narrative spell.

9 The play she had written for Leon's homecoming was her first attempt at drama, and she had found the change quite effortless. It was a relief not to be writing out the *she saids*, or describing the weather or the onset of spring or her heroine's face—beauty, she had discovered, occupied a narrow band. Ugliness, on the other hand, had infinite variation. *The Trials of Arabella* was intended to inspire not laughter, but terror, relief and instruction, in that order, and the innocent intensity with which Briony set about the project—the posters, tickets, sales booth—made her particularly vulnerable to failure.

[END OF PASSAGE]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ENGLISH
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Questions

Fill in these boxes and read what is printed below.

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Town

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Forename(s)

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Surname

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**NB Before leaving the examination room you must give this booklet to the invigilator.
If you do not, you may lose all the marks for this paper.**



QUESTIONS

Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Look at Paragraph 1.

1. What task has Briony been involved in?

2 ■ 0

2. In Paragraph 1, the writer shows how committed Briony has been to this task.

Explain how **sentence structure** and **word choice** indicate Briony’s high level of commitment.

(a) **sentence structure:**

2 1 0

(b) **word choice:**

2 1 0

Look at Paragraph 2.

3. Briony’s play is a story with a message.

In your own words, explain what the message is.

2 1 0

□

4. Read the writer’s description of Briony’s play in Paragraph 2, beginning: “The reckless passion of the heroine . . .”

(a) What seems to be the writer’s attitude to Briony’s play?

2 1 0

(b) Quote **one** detail from the description and explain how it conveys this attitude.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraph 3.

5. “. . . and Emily Tallis obliged . . .” (Paragraph 3)

What does the word “**obliged**” suggest about Emily’s reaction to the play?

2 ■ 0

6. Give **two** ways in which the writer emphasises the closeness between Briony and her mother.

(i)

(ii)

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 4 and 5.

7. We are told that Briony’s imagination took over “after her light was out”. (Paragraph 4)

By **referring closely** to the passage, **explain** how the writer’s word choice indicates the **intensity** of Briony’s fantasies.

2 1 0

[Turn over

PAGE TOTAL

8. How does Briony want her brother, Leon, to **feel** about her writing?
Quote an expression from the passage to support your answer.

2 1 0

9. Look closely at the **final sentence** of Paragraph 4.
In your own words, give **two** reasons why Briony has written the play for her brother.

2 1 0

10. In Paragraph 5, the writer develops a **contrast** between Briony and her big sister.

(a) **In your own words**, state what the contrast is.

2 1 0

(b) By referring to **sentence structure** and **word choice**, explain how this contrast is developed.

You should refer to **both** characters in **both** parts of your answer.

(i) **sentence structure:** _____

2 1 0

(ii) **word choice:** _____

2 1 0

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PAGE TOTAL

11. Explain the function of the **dashes** in the expression “— towards their owner—”.
(Paragraph 5)

2 1 0

Look at Paragraph 6.

12. “Another was a passion for secrets.” (Paragraph 6)

By referring to the passage, show how the writer continues this idea in the rest of the paragraph.

2 1 0

13. Explain why a **colon** is used in the expression “when she began collecting:”
(Paragraph 6)

2 1 0

14. What do the items in Briony’s collection suggest about her as a person?

2 ■ 0

Look at Paragraph 7.

15. Briony wrote her first story when she was eleven.

In your own words, give **two** reasons why she later disliked this story.

(i)

(ii)

2 1 0

16. Explain **in your own words** why Briony was concerned about describing a character’s weakness.

2 1 0

[Turn over for Questions 17 to 20 on Page six

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17. **Quote one** word from Paragraph 7 showing that Briony was no longer vulnerable when the story was finished.

2 ■ 0

Look at Paragraphs 8 and 9.

18. Explain why Briony’s performance in the library surprised her family.
Answer in your own words.

2 1 0

19. Why did Briony prefer writing about **ugly** rather than **beautiful** characters?
Use your own words in your explanation.

2 1 0

Think about the passage as a whole.

20. In Briony, the writer has created a character who is both **imaginative** and **anxious**.
By referring closely to the passage, show how both these aspects of her personality have been conveyed to the reader.

(i) **imaginative:**

2 1 0

(ii) **anxious:**

2 1 0

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

PAGE
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p2

p3

p4

p5

p6

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