

0860/401

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2009FRIDAY, 8 MAY
10.35 AM – 11.25 AMENGLISH
STANDARD GRADE
Foundation 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.



In the following passage, Tom, a boy who has just arrived in Australia, is taken on a trip by his new friends, Sam and Greg.

1 They camped much later that afternoon on top of a low cliff above the river. The river was lined with trees. They reminded Tom of children's drawings with their square-shaped trunks and stubby little branches.

2 The river glided over polished white boulders. There were lily pads a metre wide with huge purple flowers at their centre. The nearest pads were about thirty metres away. Bright green ferns grew amongst the cracks in the rocky sides.

3 Tom looked round to see what the others were doing then scrambled down to the river's edge. There was a wide sandy beach on the opposite bank. Tom studied it. It wouldn't take any time to swim there and back and he wanted a swim very badly. He was sweat-stained and tired. There was sand in his hair, under his fingernails and inside his shorts.

4 He slipped off his shoes and stood ankle deep in the water. He closed his eyes and let the sensation engulf him. The water felt like silk. He took a deep breath and slowly let it out. The stress of the day began to disappear. He could stay here for ever, he decided. A bird shrilled from a nearby bush. He waded further out.

5 "Hey!" Sam's shout interrupted his sense of well-being. "Tom! Get back! What the heck you doing!" He came scrambling down the rocks in a flurry of arms and legs. He grabbed Tom's arm and dragged him away.

6 "You want to see your mother again?" he hissed, putting his face into Tom's. "You want to get me into big trouble?" He scowled at Tom. "You think you know better than me?"

7 "Hey look! I'm sorry . . ." began Tom.

8 "Me too," Sam snapped. Then he shook his head. "It's my fault. I forgot to tell you about crocodiles. Saltwater crocodiles. The scariest in the world. I'm a stupid man."

9 It was Tom's turn to reassure. "Don't worry," he said. "I had a really good look before I came down. There was nothing there. I promise you."

10 Sam cleared his throat and spat on to the sand. "See those lily pads?" he pointed, grabbing Tom's arm. "The crocs hide under there and watch. They don't miss a trick. They can stay there all day, waiting. Then an animal like you comes along and thinks everything is safe." He clapped his hands together. "Big mistake!"

11 He shook his finger at Tom. "Want to know how bad it is?" he said. "Most families round here have someone taken by a croc every year."

12 Tom's mouth dropped.

13 Sam shrugged. "That's how it goes," he said. "Think you can run fast?" he asked and without waiting for Tom's reply added, "No man alive can outrun a crocodile. They can do twenty miles an hour over fifty metres." He grinned suddenly at Tom. "You get chased by a six-metre-long saltwater with its jaws open, it's time to say goodbye, my friend. Ain't nothing that can help you then."

14 "Hey! You guys!" came Greg's voice from above. "Come and give us a hand! I'm not making camp on my own!"

15 They hurried back to the vehicle. Greg had already unpacked a small mound of stores. They all set to and very quickly had put up the tent, two camp beds and got the food organised.

- 16 “Doesn’t Sam have a bed?” Tom asked, looking round inside the tent.
- 17 Sam shook his head. “Always sleep on the ground.”
- 18 “Keeps the snakes from coming inside!” Greg laughed.
- 19 Later, Tom went off with Sam to collect wood for the camp fire. There was plenty lying around and all of it tinder dry. Tom worked steadily picking up branches and dragging them into a pile. He stopped under a tree and took a breather. He looked up and was puzzled to see a number of triangular-shaped leaves hanging down from a branch.
- 20 Tom stared at them. He had never seen leaves this shape or size before. Then he noticed that they weren’t just a single leaf but several, all joined together. Intrigued, he picked up a long thin stick and tapped the nearest one.
- 21 Seconds later the whole branch was boiling over with enraged ants. But ants of a kind he had never seen before. Bright green ants in their thousands swarmed over every inch of the bark. Some fell on to his arm and he yelled in surprise. It felt as if a dozen red-hot injection needles had suddenly been thrust through his skin. He ran, slapping at them. Sam thought it a great joke and picked a whole lot more from Tom’s hair.
- 22 “They’re bad, those things,” Greg remarked, when they got back to camp. “Probably kill you if enough got hold of you. Bit stupid of you annoying ’em. This isn’t a park in London, you know.”
- 23 Tom said nothing. Greg as usual was right. Then, while Sam went off to check the vehicle, he helped Greg build the fire. Tom watched Greg dig a shallow hole. “Aren’t we going to have a bonfire?” Tom asked.
- 24 Greg stared at him. “Take a look around,” he advised. “If this place catches fire we’re all dead men. Ever seen a bush fire before?”
- 25 Tom thought of the muddy paths that criss-crossed the woods back home. He shook his head. How could he?
- 26 “You get a wall of fire metres high in a couple of minutes,” Greg told him. “Goes across the ground faster than you can drive. This way, we keep the sparks down. In the morning, you just fill it back in with earth. Simple and safe.”
- 27 Greg opened a packet of firelighters and pulled one out. Tom saw they were the same ones that his grandmother used back home. He was amused. “Why aren’t you rubbing sticks together or something?” he joked.
- 28 Greg looked up at him, puzzled. “Don’t be daft,” he said. “What do you think matches are for?”

Adapted from the novel “Crocodile River” by Geoffrey Malone

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