

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Adapted from an article in *BBC Wildlife Magazine*.

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0860/27/11

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2012

THURSDAY, 26 APRIL
10.35 AM – 11.25 AM

ENGLISH
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 this article, the writer describes her experiences catching snakes in Swaziland.

- 1 **IT'S PAST MIDNIGHT** when the telephone rings. I drag myself out of bed.
- 2 The woman on the other end of the phone is hysterical. Her name is Sanele, and she is crying and screaming. Between her sobs, I can hear a young child in the background shouting, "It's coming in: the snake is coming in!" From Sanele's frenzied description, I manage to establish that a large, slender snake has reached the doorway, trapping her toddler and baby daughter. It is about 3m long—probably a black mamba, I think to myself (mamba is a Zulu word meaning "big snake"). Still in pyjamas, I grab my trusty snake tongs—a gadget for handling snakes that resembles a park keeper's litter-grabber—and rush off into the rainy night.
- 3 As I drive to the farm, I feel more certain of the mystery snake's identity. Black mambas are highly inquisitive and frequently enter people's homes, seeking refuge in schoolbags and cupboards and under beds—anywhere they can squeeze into. Like many other reptiles, they look for a cool location when the summer heat becomes unbearable, and a nice warm spot during the winter. Unfortunately, houses fit the bill perfectly.
- 4 The rain is coming down in bucketloads now. I try to keep my vehicle on the muddy track through the sugarcane fields, steering with one hand and holding my mobile phone to my ear with the other. Sanele begs me to hurry, blurting that her one and only candle has almost burned out. Tears of relief stream down my own face when, after an hour, I find the farm at last.

DICING WITH DEATH

- 5 Sanele is standing perilously close to the curled up mamba, holding her broom like a weapon, ready to bash the intruder to a pulp if it dares move another inch. This is a fatal mistake—no mamba I have ever come across will just wait by while you take a hefty swing at it. Instead, it will strike with deadly accuracy. Rule number 1: if you are close enough to kill a snake, it is most certainly close enough to kill you.
- 6 Using my tongs, I carefully remove the creature and pop it in a snake bag. Sanele immediately rushes forwards to hug her children, and I complete the rescue by teaching the correct first-aid procedure and explaining the basics of snake safety. As usual, I emphasise the importance of staying still when in close proximity to a venomous snake.
- 7 There's a very good reason for this: snakes sense what's going on around them in a completely different way to us. Since snakes have poor eyesight, sudden, jerky movements that take them by surprise are almost guaranteed to upset them. So if you ever find yourself face to face with a black mamba, it is essential to keep calm. The snake will strike defensively only if it senses threatening movement.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

- 8 Mambas belong to the family which also contains the cobras and sea snakes—species equally feared for their powerful venom. One of four species of mamba, the black is named not for the colour of its body—it is brownish, olive or greyish overall—but for the inky black lining to its mouth. If cornered, it flicks its jaws open to reveal this bold colour as a warning to keep your distance. To make sure its threat is understood, the snake lifts its head well off the



ground, flattens its neck into a slight hood and gives a hollow-sounding hiss. It's an altogether frightening display.

- 9 The black mamba has a reputation for being extremely aggressive. It is said to be able to outrun a person on a horse and to 'stare' at its victims as if to spook them. Some local people even believe that black mambas hunt humans. All of these claims are totally wrong. In my experience, black mambas will more often than not do their best to get away as quickly as possible, slithering towards the nearest hollow tree, termite mound, burrow or dark corner. They become aggressive only when there is no escape route.

- 10 In the meantime, the snake-rescuer's life is a busy one. Every season I rescue about 600 snakes, of which 100 or so are black mambas. I run *Antivenom Swazi*, a charity whose mission is to raise enough funds to create a 'bank' of anti-venom for treating snakebite victims in Swaziland, a small country beside South Africa. My plan is to store the anti-venom in two different locations, so that everyone can get some within two hours.

- 11 Speed is essential. Mamba venom is fast-acting. The bite itself is usually not very painful with little or no swelling, but the first symptoms are felt within 15 minutes—much sooner if the victim is a small child. Breathing difficulties develop rapidly, leading to death within a few hours. Just two drops of venom are fatal, and a mamba may deliver as much as 10 times that amount in a single bite; each individual mamba has enough venom to kill up to 14 adult humans.

- 12 Snakebite in Africa is becoming much more common. Farmers in Swaziland are particularly at risk, because farms are ideal mamba habitat. The dense fields of sugarcane and maize are full of prey: rats, mice, gerbils, shrews, small birds and sometimes baby chicks are all taken. The mambas come out just after sunrise, climbing up the cane or maize to about chest height, then stay in the sun for an hour or two before moving away to hunt. In the late afternoon, they slink off to their lairs for the night.

- 13 Anti-venom—the only cure—is not easily available in Swaziland, and in any case is so expensive that

locals can't afford it. Eighty per cent of the country's population rely on traditional healers, who prescribe a herbal medicine known as *mooty* to treat snakebite. But while such remedies can be effective for some illnesses, they are useless against the powerful venom of a mamba.

IN THE NICK OF TIME

- 14 The phone rings again. It is the second time that I have received a call for help from this particular farm, which is situated in dense bush. It is a long drive on a bad dirt road. When I finally arrive, I am met by a frantic father and his family, who physically drag me out of my vehicle. I am rushed into the house, where I find a young boy lying in bed. On top of the sheet is a huge mamba.
- 15 We freeze. If we make a mistake or the child moves, there's a very good chance he will be bitten. I try to calm him and edge towards the snake and lift it off the child in one smooth motion. Luckily, the previous snake-safety course I gave at this farm has saved the youngster from a fatal bite.
- 16 It's a happy ending this time. Black mambas are part of our lives, whether we like it or not, and we must learn to live with them.

Adapted from an article in
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[END OF PASSAGE]

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0860/27/01

NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
2012

THURSDAY, 26 APRIL
10.35 AM - 11.25 AM

ENGLISH
STANDARD GRADE
Foundation Level
Reading
Questions

Fill in these boxes and read what is printed below.

Full name of centre

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Town

--

Forename(s)

--

Surname

--

Date of birth

Day Month Year

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Scottish candidate number

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Number of seat

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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

Marks

Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Look at Paragraphs 1 and 2.

1. Give a reason from Paragraph 1 why the telephone call might be inconvenient for the writer.

2 ■ 0

2. “The woman on the other end of the phone is hysterical.” (Paragraph 2)
Write down **two** other words from Paragraph 2 which continue this idea.

2 1 0

3. Give **two** pieces of evidence that the writer left in a hurry to help the woman.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 3 and 4.

4. Name **three** places where snakes hide in houses.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

2 1 0

5. Explain fully why houses “fit the bill perfectly” as shelters for snakes. (Paragraph 3)

2 1 0

6. Give **two** reasons why the writer finds it difficult to drive in Paragraph 4.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7.

7. **Write down** an expression from Paragraph 5 which shows that Sanele is in great danger when the writer arrives.

2 ■ 0

8. Give **two** pieces of advice from the writer about what to do if you see a snake.

2 1 0

9. What can snakes **not** do very well?

2 ■ 0

10. What is the **only** reason why a snake might attack a human?

2 ■ 0

Look at Paragraphs 8 and 9.

11. What is surprising about the name “black mamba”? (Paragraph 8)

2 ■ 0

12. If a mamba is cornered, what is the first thing it does **and** why does it do this?

2 1 0

[Turn over

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TOTAL

13. Name **three** other things a mamba does when it is cornered.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

2 1 0

14. Read the following statements. Tick (✓) the correct box to show whether each statement is TRUE, FALSE or CANNOT TELL from the Passage.

	True	False	Cannot Tell
Black mambas try to escape quickly if disturbed.			
Black mambas stare at prey to hypnotise them.			
Black mambas are aggressive if defending young.			
Black mambas are faster than people on horses.			

2 ■ 0

2 ■ 0

2 ■ 0

2 ■ 0

Look at Paragraphs 10 and 11.

15. Explain fully what *Antivenom Swazi* will do with the money it raises.

2 1 0

16. Why, at first, might someone bitten by a mamba **not** think it was serious?
 Give **two** reasons.

2 1 0

17. Write down **two** separate expressions showing that mamba venom is fast-acting or deadly.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraphs 12 and 13.

18. Give **one** reason why farms “. . . are ideal mamba habitat.” (Paragraph 12)

2 ■ 0

19. Explain fully why 80% of people in Swaziland “rely on traditional healers” instead of using anti-venom.

2 1 0

Look at Paragraph 14 to the end of the passage.

20. In Paragraph 14, the writer receives another call for help.

Write down two words which show that the family is panicking when she arrives.

2 1 0

21. “We freeze.” (Paragraph 15)

Give **one** way the writer has made this sentence stand out.

2 ■ 0

[Turn over

Think about the passage as a whole.

22. What is the message of this passage? Tick (✓) **one** box.

Snakes are dangerous and should be killed.	
Snakes can be dangerous and should be treated carefully.	
Snakes are not dangerous and can be tamed.	

Give **one** piece of evidence from the passage to support your choice.

2 1 0

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]

FOR OFFICIAL USE

p2

p3

p4

p5

p6

TOTAL
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