

English Comprehension: Medium Practice

Paper 3

Read this passage carefully, then answer the questions that follow.

The River Bank

by Kenneth Grahame

From The Wind in the Willows (1908), a story in which the animals of an English river valley live rather as people do. As the book opens, the Mole is at work in his home under the ground, where he has spent the whole of the winter. This extract has been shortened in places.

1 The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash
5 all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms. Spring was moving in the air above and in the earth below and around him, penetrating even his dark and lowly little house with its spirit of divine discontent and longing. It was small wonder, then, that he suddenly flung down his brush on the floor, said "Bother!" and "O
10 blow!" and also "Hang spring-cleaning!" and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. Something up above was calling him imperiously, and he made for the steep little tunnel which answered in his case to the gravelled carriage-drive owned by animals whose residences are nearer to the sun and air. So he
15 scraped and scratched and scrabbled and scrooged and then he scrooged again and scrabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with his little paws and muttering to himself, "Up we go! Up we go!" till at last, pop! his snout came out into the sunlight, and he found himself rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow.

20 "This is fine!" he said to himself. "This is better than whitewashing!" The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow, and after the seclusion of the cellarage he had lived in so long the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout. Jumping off all his four legs at once,
25 in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning, he pursued his way across the meadow till he reached the hedge on the further side.

"Hold up!" said an elderly rabbit at the gap. "Sixpence for the privilege of passing by the private road!" He was bowled over in an
30 instant by the impatient and contemptuous Mole, who trotted along

the side of the hedge chaffing the other rabbits as they peeped hurriedly from their holes to see what the row was about.

It all seemed too good to be true. Hither and thither through the meadows he rambled busily, along the hedgerows, across the copses, 35 finding everywhere birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting—everything happy, and progressive, and occupied. And instead of having an uneasy conscience pricking him and whispering “whitewash!” he somehow could only feel how jolly it was to be the only idle dog among all these busy citizens.

40 He thought his happiness was complete when, as he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life had he seen a river before—this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh 45 playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated.

As he sat on the grass and looked across the river, a dark hole in 50 the bank opposite, just above the water’s edge, caught his eye, and dreamily he fell to considering what a nice snug dwelling-place it would make for an animal with few wants and fond of a bijou riverside residence, above flood level and remote from noise and dust. As he gazed, something bright and small seemed to twinkle down 55 in the heart of it, vanished, then twinkled once more like a tiny star. But it could hardly be a star in such an unlikely situation; and it was too glittering and small for a glow-worm. Then, as he looked, it winked at him, and so declared itself to be an eye; and a small face began gradually to grow up round it, like a frame round a 60 picture.

A brown little face, with whiskers.

A grave round face, with the same twinkle in its eye that had first attracted his notice.

Small neat ears and thick silky hair.

65 It was the Water Rat!

Then the two animals stood and regarded each other cautiously. “Hullo, Mole!” said the Water Rat. “Hullo, Rat!” said the Mole. “Would you like to come over?” enquired the Rat presently.

Please answer these questions. (Look at the passage again if you need to.) You should choose the best answer and mark its letter on your answer sheet.

Q1. What had the Mole been doing all morning, and how had it left him?

- A. He had been digging a new tunnel and was pleased with his work.
- B. He had been cleaning and whitewashing his home and was dusty and aching.
- C. He had been asleep in his dark little house and had woken up stiff.
- D. He had been painting the outside of his house and was splashed with mud.
- E. He had been searching for his coat and had grown impatient.

Q2. 'penetrating' (line 7)

What does this word mean here?

- A. breaking something open by force
- B. making its way right into
- C. shining brightly upon
- D. passing quickly by
- E. filling with a sharp smell

Q3. 'spirit of divine discontent and longing' (lines 7-8)

What does this tell us about how the Mole was feeling?

- A. He was angry with himself for having left the cleaning so late.
- B. He was lonely and wished that another animal would visit him.
- C. He was restless and wanted something more than his dark little house.
- D. He was worried that spring would arrive before he had finished.
- E. He was frightened by the noises coming from above the ground.

Q4. 'scraped and scratched and scrabbled and scrooged' (line 15)

Why has the author written these words and then repeated them backwards?

- A. To show that the Mole had to dig his way out twice.
- B. To show that the Mole was going round in circles under the ground.
- C. To make the climb feel long and hard, and to let us hear him working at it.
- D. To suggest that the Mole was being as quiet as he possibly could.
- E. To show that the Mole had forgotten which way the tunnel went.

Q5. 'busily' (line 17)

What type of word is this?

- A. a noun
- B. a verb
- C. an adjective
- D. an adverb
- E. a pronoun

Q6. 'seclusion' (line 22)

What is another way of saying this?

- A. being shut away on his own
- B. being extremely tidy
- C. being deep in thought
- D. being safe from harm
- E. being short of food

Q7. 'the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout' (lines 23-24)

This is an example of...

- A. a metaphor
- B. a simile
- C. alliteration
- D. onomatopoeia
- E. a rhetorical question

Q8. What did the elderly rabbit at the gap want?

- A. He wanted the Mole to help him mend the hedge.
- B. He wanted the Mole to pay sixpence for using the private road.
- C. He wanted to warn the Mole about the river beyond the meadow.
- D. He wanted the Mole to go back and finish his spring-cleaning.
- E. He wanted the Mole to stop frightening the other rabbits.

Q9. What does the way the Mole treats the rabbits tell us about him at this moment?

- A. He was so full of his new freedom that he had no patience with anyone in his way.
- B. He was afraid of the rabbits and hurried past them without speaking.
- C. He had quarrelled with the rabbits before and wanted his revenge.
- D. He was lost, and was hoping that the rabbits would show him the way.
- E. He was ashamed of the whitewash on his fur and did not want to be seen.

Q10. 'contemptuous' (line 30)

What does this word mean?

- A. full of scorn
- B. full of regret
- C. badly frightened
- D. easily amused
- E. in a great hurry

Q11. 'birds building, flowers budding, leaves thrusting' (lines 35-36)

Why has the author put these three together?

- A. To show that the countryside was crowded and difficult to walk through.
- B. To show that the Mole was looking for somewhere new to live.
- C. To show that spring had almost passed and the Mole had nearly missed it.
- D. To show that everything around him was busy and growing.
- E. To show that the Mole knew a great deal about the natural world.

Q12. 'only idle dog among all these busy citizens' (line 39)

What does this mean?

- A. He was the only creature not working, and he was enjoying it.
- B. He felt guilty that he had left his own work unfinished.
- C. He was the only animal in the meadow who did not live there.
- D. He thought that the other animals were working far too hard.
- E. He was too lazy to be of any use to the other animals.

Q13. 'chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh' (lines 43-44)

What impression of the river do these words give?

- A. That it is dangerous and likely to sweep the Mole away.
- B. That it is a living creature at play.
- C. That it is slow, deep and silent.
- D. That it is angry at being disturbed.
- E. That it is drying up in the spring sunshine.

Q14. 'All was a-shake and a-shiver—glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble' (lines 46-47)

Why does the author use so many words in one sentence?

- A. To show that the Mole was becoming confused and dizzy.
- B. To show how long the Mole stood watching the water.
- C. To suggest everything moving and sounding at once, all over the river.
- D. To suggest that a storm was beginning to blow up the valley.
- E. To list the different creatures living in the river.

Q15. 'bewitched, entranced, fascinated' (lines 47-48)

What do these three words together tell us?

- A. That the Mole was too tired to walk any further.
- B. That the Mole was afraid of the water.
- C. That the Mole believed there was magic in the river.
- D. That the Mole could not take his eyes off the river.
- E. That the Mole had seen a river once before, long ago.

Q16. Why did the dark hole in the opposite bank seem such a good home to the Mole?

- A. It was hidden from the other animals by thick weeds.
- B. It was close to his own house on the other side of the meadow.
- C. It was small, snug and quiet, and it stood above the level of the floods.
- D. It was large enough for an animal with a great many possessions.
- E. It was the only dry place that he had found all morning.

Q17. 'it could hardly be a star in such an unlikely situation' (line 56)

Why did the Mole decide that the twinkle was neither a star nor a glow-worm?

- A. Stars are not found in holes in river banks, and the light was too bright and small for a glow-worm.
- B. It was the middle of the day, so no star or glow-worm could be seen.
- C. The light kept moving from one part of the bank to another.
- D. He had been told that no glow-worms lived beside the river.
- E. The light was too far away for him to make it out clearly.

Q18. 'A brown little face, with whiskers.' (line 61)

Why has the author written this and the two descriptions after it as separate short lines?

- A. To show that the Mole was falling asleep on the bank.
- B. To show the face appearing a piece at a time, as the Mole slowly makes it out.
- C. To show that there were several different animals watching him.
- D. To show that the Mole was too far away to see anything clearly.
- E. To show that a long time passed between each thing he noticed.

Q19. 'Small neat ears and thick silky hair' (line 64)

How many adjectives are there in this line?

- A. one
- B. two
- C. three
- D. four
- E. five

Q20. Which of these would make the best alternative title for the passage?

- A. A Morning of Hard Work
- B. The Rabbit and the Private Road
- C. Life in a Dark Little House
- D. The Boat on the Water
- E. The Mole Discovers the River