

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER 1

PART B2

Reading Passages

8:30 am – 10:00 am (1½ hours)
(for both Parts A and B)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Refer to the General Instructions on Page 1 of the Reading Passages booklet for Part A.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PART B2

- (1) The Question-Answer Book for Part B2 is inserted in this Reading Passages booklet.
- (2) Candidates who choose Part B2 should attempt all questions in this part. Each question carries ONE mark unless otherwise stated.
- (3) Hand in only ONE Question-Answer Book for Part B, either B1 or B2, and fasten it with the Question-Answer Book for Part A using the green tag provided.

PART B2

Read Text 5 and answer questions 42-66 in the Question-Answer Book for Part B2.

Text 5

The following is an excerpt from the autobiography of Clive James, a 79-year-old Australian author, critic and broadcaster.

1 [1] In primary school I ceased being the class half-wit and became class smart-alec instead. This presented a whole
new set of difficulties. Coming out first in the term tests attracted accusations of being teacher's pet. It was true,
2 alas: Mr Slavin, although a fair-minded man, couldn't help smiling upon anyone who knew how to answer the
3 questions. Too many boys in the class had trouble remembering their own names. Most of the heat was focused on
4 an unfortunate called Thommo, who was caned regularly. For ordinary offences Thommo was caned by Mr Slavin
5 and for more serious transgressions he was caned by the Deputy Headmaster. Mr Slavin was authorized to impart
up to four strokes of the cane. Thommo usually required six even to slow him down. We used to sit silent while the
6 Deputy Head gave Thommo the treatment outside in the corridor. The six strokes took some time to deliver,
because Thommo had to be recaptured after each stroke, and to be recaptured he had first to be found. His screams
7 and sobs usually gave away his location, but not always. One day the police came to the classroom and made
8 Thommo open his Globite school case. It was full of stolen treasures from Coles and Woolworths: balloons, bull-
9 dog paper clips, funny hats, a cut-glass vase. Thommo was led howling away and never seen again.

10 [2] Despite Thommo's fate, on the whole I would rather have been him than me. His manly activities merited
respect. As teacher's pet, I was regarded with envy, suspicion and hatred. I had not yet learned to joke my way out
11 of trouble and into favour. Instead I tried to prove that I, too, could be rebellious, untrammelled, dangerous and
tough. To register, any demonstration of these qualities would have to be made in front of the whole class. This
12 would not be easy, since my desk was at the back of the room. There were five columns of desks with seven desks
in each column. The five most academically able boys sat in the back five desks and so on down the line, with the
13 desks at the front containing the dullards, psychopaths, Thommo, etc. The problem was to become the centre of
attention in some way more acceptable than my usual method of throwing my hands in the air, crying 'Sir! Sir!
14 Sir!', and supplying the correct answer.

15 [3] The solution lay in the network of railway tracks carved into the top of each desk by successive generations of
occupants. Along these tracks fragments of pencil, pen holders or bits of chalk could be pushed with chuffing
16 noises. I also found out that the exposed wood was susceptible to friction. At home I was already an established
fire-bug, running around with a magnifying glass frying sugar-ants. I had learned something of what pieces of
17 wood could do to each other. This knowledge I now applied, rubbing the end of my box-wood ruler against the
edge of one of the tracks. A wisp of smoke came up. Eyes turned towards me. The billow was followed by fire. Mr
18 Slavin's eyes turned towards me.

19 [4] He gave me his full four strokes. The pain was considerable, but the glory was greater. This small triumph
20 spurred me fatally towards bigger things. I was very keen not to be among those victimised. It followed that I
should become one of those doing the victimising. Mears, the school's most impressive bully, had a favourite
21 means of persuasion. Grasping your hand in one of his, he would twist your wrist with the other. After having this
done to me by boys older and bigger, I sought revenge by doing it to boys younger and smaller. But I quickly found
22 that I was naturally averse to being cruel. The human personality is a drama, not a monologue; sad tricks of the
mind can be offset by sound feelings in the heart; and the facts say that I have always been revolted by the very
23 idea of deliberately causing pain.

24 [5] Considering the amount of pain I have been able to cause without meaning to, I suppose this is not much of a
defence, but to me it has always seemed an important point. I burned a lot of sugar-ants with my magnifying glass,
25 but if the sugar-ants could have spoken to me, I would have desisted soon enough. Having a character that consists
mainly of defects, I try to correct them one-by-one, but there are limits to the altitude that can be attained by
26 hauling on one's own boot-straps. One is what one is, and if one isn't very nice or good, then it brings some solace
to remember that other men have been worse. At various times in my life I have tried to pose as a thug, but the
27 imposture has always collapsed of its own accord. I could be coerced into hurting other people. I have done it by
chance often enough. But I could never enjoy it.

28 [6] At home, once or twice I announced my intention of running away, but my mother diffused the threat by
packing me a bag containing peanut butter sandwiches and pyjamas. The first time I got no further than the top of

our street and was back home within the hour. The second time I got all the way to Rocky Point Road, more than two hundred yards from home. I was not allowed to cross Rocky Point Road. But I sat there till sunset. Otherwise I did my escaping symbolically, tunneling into the poultry farm and surfacing among the chooks with a crumbling cap of birdshit on my head.

[7] The teacher's pet image would have followed me home if my mother had had her way. She had a deadly habit of inviting the neighbours in for tea so that she could casually refer to my school reports a couple of hundred times. The most favourite recipient of these proud tirades was Nola Huthnance, who lived four doors down. Nola Huthnance was no mean talker herself, being joint holder, with her next-door neighbour Gail Thorpe, of the local record for yapping across the back fence – an unbeatable lunch-to-sunset epic during which there was no point at which one or the other was not talking and very few moments when both were not talking simultaneously. But not even Nola Huthnance could hold her own when my mother got going on the subject of her wonderful son and his outstanding intelligence. Long after I had been sent to bed, I would lurk in the hall listening to my mother extolling my virtues in the lounge room. Apparently Gogol's mother was under the impression that her son had invented the printing press and the steam engine. My own mother thought along roughly the same lines. I lapped it all up, but could see even at the time that such talk would do me no good with the locals, unless I cultivated a contrary reputation on my own account.

END OF READING PASSAGE

Sources of materials used in this paper will be acknowledged in the *HKDSE Question Papers* booklet published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority at a later stage.