
ENGLISH

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Paper 2 SPECIMEN INSERT

For Examination from 2014

1 hour plus 10 minutes' reading time

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Section A: Reading

Read this extract from 'The Runaway Summer' by Nina Bawden.

They got off the bus on a busy main road. Cars rushed past them, and huge lorries, spraying sand and ballast. There was a high stone wall on the right, grim and forbidding, with broken glass on the top. Simon led them along a little way to a rusty, iron gate.

The gate was padlocked and chained, but uselessly: its hinges were broken. Simon gave one expert heave and the gate fell back, leaving a space big enough for them to squeeze through. Then he closed it behind them.

Once inside, the noisy road might not have existed. A few yards from the gate they were in a different world: a hushed, green jungle. Trees, crowded together and grown tall and spindly, met overhead and shut out the sky. The ground was a tangle of spiky brambles that tore at their clothes.

'This way,' Simon said and set off confidently, though there seemed no obvious path. Krishna and Mary stumbled after him, Krishna carrying the cat basket, and Mary the two bags of food. Invisible cobwebs brushed their faces. Simon was going too fast for them but they had no breath to complain.

After what seemed ages, he stopped in a small clearing shafted with smoky sunlight and whirring with crickets.

'There aren't any more brambles,' Simon said. 'That's the worst bit. Give me one of those bags Mary, you'll need a free hand.'

When he led the way out of the clearing, she saw what he meant. There was a path now, though very narrow and overgrown. It went down, along the side of a steep hill; the earth was damp and squidgy underfoot, and nettles, tall as they were, whipped at their faces. It was so quiet they could hear themselves breathing.

'Watch out, there's a bit of tree fallen,' Simon said. 'Look, that's where it came from.'

They looked up and saw the tree high above them, a white scar down the side where the great branch had torn away, which was slimy with moss and dangerous. Simon crossed first, and then turned to take the cat basket, for safety's sake. There was no sound from inside.

'I suppose he's all right,' Mary said. 'Ought we to look?'

'He's just sleeping soundly,' Simon said. 'We'll let him out when we get to the island.'

'What island?' Mary said, and, as if in answer, the trees on the right thinned out and they could see water beyond, covered in a bright green weed, like a curly mat.

'It's an artificial lake,' Simon explained. 'There used to be a big house on the other side but it burned down ages ago, and the people went away and never came back...'

The path came down to the lake and it was easier walking now. They turned a bend and saw the island, so thick with trees and huge, sprawling rhododendrons that it looked as if it would be impossible to land there. There was no weed on this part of the lake; a humped, wooden bridge spanned a stretch of brown, glinting water.

'The bridge is tricky,' said Simon, 'I'll take the rucksack first.'

They followed him to the first half of the bridge, where the planks were rotten but held them. The second half was almost gone. Only a single beam remained, about five inches wide.

The water underneath was running fast. Mary looked down and felt giddy. 'It's shallow,' she said. 'Can't we wade instead?' 40

Simon shook his head. 'It's quick-mud. You'd be sucked down.'

He went across like a tightrope walker and came back for the cat basket. Noakes, the cat, had begun to stir and thump against the sides. 'Leave the bags,' Simon said. 'You'll need your hands to balance.' 45

Even with nothing to carry, it was an alarming exercise.

'Don't look down,' Simon warned as Mary took her first step on the beam, but she found it impossible not to. She saw the racing water and felt her stomach lurch. She said, terrified, 'I'll fall – *Simon ...*' and at once he was there, coming halfway across to steady her. He led her safely across and called to Krishna, 'Come on, it's alright really.' 50

Now answer the questions in the answer booklet.

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