



MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI



**THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE OLYMPIAD
BUCHAREST SEPTEMBER 2023
WRITTEN PAPER - USE OF ENGLISH
LEVEL B1**

- All questions are compulsory
- Allotted points: 40
- Allotted time: 90 minutes

I. Read the text below and do the tasks that follow.

As the first guests arrived at the house, our mother became visibly more anxious. Although I knew her stomach must have been tied in knots making her feel sick, it was the slight tremor in her voice and the unsteadiness of her usually still hands that gave her away. I found myself looking back on similar occasions when she and my father had thrown extravagant parties. She hired caterers to keep everyone's plates full and glasses **topped up** and musicians to provide music for dancing. What made her stand out, though, was that she never forgot a face and **mingled** so that each of her guests felt important. But since my father's death, things had been different. She was a shadow of the woman she had been, unrecognisable. She had gradually withdrawn socially and she had lost contact with almost everyone.

But I reminded myself that that was the past and that things were about to change. This year was going to be the first time that we would all be together for the festive season. The timing was perfect: we could organise a New Year's Eve party under the pretence of us all being together without my mother realising our ulterior motive: to remind her that she still had a life to live. I knew she would not be very receptive and, at first, she had refused point blank (...) but as she slowly became involved in the planning, I began to see **glimpses** of the mother we had known so well: the sound of her laughter, the look on her face as she decided who to invite and what entertainment to provide.

And now here we were, my mother, sisters and I, ready to welcome the first guests. As more of our friends and family arrived, I could see her blossom. She hadn't lost her touch. We looked on with pride and relief while our mother mingled with her guests as she used to. When the evening ended my mother said: 'That was a quite an evening. I think your father would be proud of us, don't you?'

A. Answer the following questions, according to the text.

(4 points)

1. How could someone tell that the writer's mother was anxious?
2. What made the writer's mother the perfect hostess?
3. What was the real reason why the writer and his sisters organised the party?
4. Why did the writer and his sisters feel relieved at the party?



B. Choose the right synonym for the words below, according to their meaning in the text. (3 points)

- 1. topped up: a. refilled b. restored c. recharged d. replenished
- 2. mingled: a. blended b. mixed c. socialized d. joined
- 3. glimpses: a. flashes b. sights c. views d. impressions

C. Rephrase the following sentences so as to preserve the meaning. (3 points)

- 1. It was the slight tremor in her voice and the unsteadiness of her usually still hands that gave her away.
She _____ the slight tremor in her voice and the unsteadiness of her usually still hands.
- 2. But since my father's death, things had been different.
If _____ would have been different.
- 3. As she slowly became involved in the planning, I began to see glimpses of the mother we had known so well.
The more she _____ I began to see glimpses of the mother we had known so well.

II. Use the word given in brackets to form a word that fits in each gap. (10 points)

If you travel deep into the Carpathian Mountains to the heart of Romania, you will find the legendary Transylvania. In this (1) _____ (**MYSTERY**) place, you will see an ancient castle on top of a hill; this is Bran Castle. With its four impressive towers, the castle was (2) _____ (**ORIGIN**) used as a (3) _____ (**FORT**) to protect the (4) _____ (**INHABIT**) from enemy armies. It is now a museum where visitors can see art and furniture collected by the Queen of Romania, Marie, who lived there for many years. At the bottom of the hill, in an open-air museum park, there are examples of (5) _____ (**TRADITION**) peasant homes. One of the people associated with the castle was Prince Vlad III, who was famous for his (6) _____ (**BELIEF**) cruelty. Many people think that the character of Count Dracula is based on him, and that is why the castle is (7) _____ (**COMMON**) known as Dracula's Castle. This has given the castle a spooky reputation. Bran Castle offers visitors an exciting glimpse into Romanian history. In (8) _____ (**ADD**), its link with the legend of Dracula makes it an attractive tourist (9) _____ (**DESTINE**). A trip to this impressive castle is (10) _____ (**DEFINITE**) worth the time.

III. Five sentences have been removed from the text below. Read the text and use the sentences A – H to fill in the gaps in the text. (10 points)

I was ten years old. My grandmother sat on the string bed, under the mango tree. It was late summer and there were sunflowers in the garden and a warm wind in the trees. My grandmother was knitting a woollen scarf for the winter months. She was very old, dressed in a plain white sari; her eyes were not very strong now, but her fingers moved quickly with the needles, and the needles kept clicking all afternoon. Grandmother had white hair, but there were very few wrinkles on her skin.

I had come home after playing cricket on the *maidan*. I had taken my meal, and now I was rummaging in a box of



old books and family heirlooms that had just that day been brought out of the attic by my mother. I was going through the book, looking at the pictures, when I found a small photograph between the pages. It was a faded picture, a little yellow and foggy; it was a picture of a girl standing against a wall, and behind the wall there was nothing but sky; but from the other side a pair of hands reached up, as though someone was going to climb the wall.

I ran out into the garden. 'Granny!' I shouted. 'Look at this picture! I found it in the box of old things. Whose picture is it?'

I jumped on the bed beside my grandmother, and she walloped me on the bottom and said, 'Now I've lost count of my stitches, and the next time you do that I'll make you finish the scarf yourself.' [...]

She took the photograph from my hand, and we both stared at it for quite a long time. The girl had long, loose hair, and she wore a long dress that nearly covered her ankles, and sleeves that reached her wrists, and there were a lot of bangles on her hands; but, despite all this drapery, the girl appeared to be full of freedom and movement; she stood with her legs apart and her hands on her hips, and she had a wide, almost devilish smile on her face.

'Whose picture is it?' I asked.

'A little girl's, of course,' said Grandmother. 'Can't you tell?'

'Yes, but did you know the girl?'

'Yes, I knew her,' said Granny, 'but she was a very wicked girl and I shouldn't tell you about her. It was taken in your grandfather's house, about sixty years ago and that's the garden wall, and over the wall there was a road going to town.'

'Whose hands are they,' I asked, 'coming up from the other side?'

'It's the first time I noticed,' she said. 'That must have been the sweeper boy's. Or maybe they were your grandfather's.'

'They don't look like grandfather's hands,' I said. 'His hands are all bony.'

'Yes, but this was sixty years ago.'

'Didn't he climb up the wall, after the photo?'

'No, nobody climbed up. At least, I don't remember.'

'And you remember well, Granny.'

'Yes, I remember ... I remember what is not in the photograph. It was a spring day, and there was a cool breeze blowing, nothing like this. Those flowers at the girl's feet, they were marigolds, and the Bougainvillea creeper, it was a mass of purple. You cannot see these colours in the photo, and even if you could, as nowadays, you wouldn't be able to smell the flowers or feel the breeze.'

'And what about the girl?' I said. 'Tell me about the girl.'

'Well, she was a wicked girl,' said Granny.

'I think they are terrible clothes,' I said.



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'So did she. Most of the time, she hardly wore a thing. She used to go swimming in a muddy pool with a lot of ruffianly boys, and ride on the backs of buffaloes. No boy ever teased her, though, because she could kick and scratch and pull his hair out!' (adapted from *The Photograph*, by Ruskin Bond)

- A – But I'll tell you about the photograph.
- B – There was a creeper too, but it was just a creeper.
- C – You don't know the trouble they had getting her into those fine clothes she's wearing.
- D – At any moment something's going to happen.
- E – Nothing in the box interested me very much, except for a book with colourful pictures of birds and butterflies.
- F – Grandmother squinted and looked closely at the picture, and shook her head.
- G – There were flowers growing near the girl, but I couldn't tell what they were.
- H – I wonder whose hands they were.

IV. Fill in the gaps in the text below with ONE appropriate word in each gap. (10 points)

Life on a remote Scottish island is wonderfully peaceful. But for one local, Hamish McAlpine, life is far from relaxing. This is because Hamish has fourteen jobs. When he meets me off the ferry, harbour master Hamish is the one and (1) _____ person in sight. Luckily, he is also the island's taxi driver, so he takes me to the hotel, (2) _____ he owns. He can even (3) _____ found serving behind the counter at the local shop.

It all started not (4) _____ after Hamish married his wife Donna in 1964. The couple were asked (5) _____ they would like to run the post office. Then Hamish found himself agreeing to become fire chief, policeman and coastguard. Now, having given 35 years of devoted service, Hamish (6) _____ about to retire. But who will (7) _____ over his jobs? Can one person do it all or will the jobs have to be split up? Apart (8) _____ their week-long honeymoon on the mainland, the couple have had hardly any holidays. 'Donna and I have worked together every day for the last 35 years. But who knows, once we have lots of time on our hands, we (9) _____ find we can't stand the sight of each (10) _____,' says Hamish, his eyes twinkling mischievously.