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Paper 2 Comprehension

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INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This insert contains the passage for comprehension.

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



A Nightmare Journey

- 1 'Come on, Rose, relax!' laughed Jameela to her room-mate. 'I'm only going out for two hours. You can't study all the time!' But Rose was not to be dissuaded; with only one week until the university examinations, the proposed cinema trip, like all Jameela's recent diversions, was out of the question. In any case, although Rose's parents never referred to the sacrifices they were making to allow her to attend university, how could they ever be far from her mind? Jameela's typically unrealistic attitude towards time was demonstrated by her return four hours later, just as Rose was packing up her books and preparing for bed. 5

- 2 As the girls went to their classes the next morning, Jameela took Rose's arm affectionately. 'It's great that our parents are paying for us to have a trip home after the exams,' she said. 'I've been thinking about plane and train timetables and I suggest you leave the arrangements to me. It's too difficult for you.' Rose fought against her annoyance at Jameela's insult and decided to ignore it. 'She's probably right,' she mused, 'and, anyway, why should I make work for myself?' 10

- 3 That evening Rose's head was buried in her notes as the door of the room was thrown open and Jameela made her usual dramatic entrance. She was carrying a large shopping basket, from which peeped the provisions she had earlier promised to buy for their evening meal. From the doorway she kicked her sandals across the room in a flamboyant gesture. 'Well, that's that!' she exclaimed happily, brandishing a fistful of tickets, before flopping into the room's only armchair. 'There's nothing left to do except pass the exams, and we're off!' 15

- 4 The ensuing fortnight passed in a whirlwind of studying and examinations. Jameela's friend, Nizam, arrived to take the girls to the airport in his car, which spluttered and wheezed, as if it were not even certain itself that it was capable of such a task. 'Please, climb in, ladies,' he said, untying the piece of string which held the car's back door in place. 'Cool luggage,' he continued, nodding towards Jameela's decrepit and battered orange rucksack; its straps were so frayed that they were held together with tape, and several sweaters bulged from its top. At the same time he cast a disparaging eye over Rose's little suitcase, bought especially for this journey home. After a bumpy ride to the airport, the girls had a smooth flight, and were set to begin the next stage of their journey, which was to make their way to Central Station in the city centre to catch the express train to their home town. 20 25

- 5 As soon as the girls got off the plane at Terminal One, Rose pointed to a sign indicating that buses for Central Station left, not from this part of the airport, but from Terminal Two; they began to move as quickly as they could, a brisk walk at first and then a comfortable jog. A notice at the bus stop informed them that buses departed only every thirty minutes. A glance at their watches told them that a bus had just left – in fact, they could see its brake lights as it negotiated the corner. 'Not to worry,' said Jameela cheerfully. 'The local train station is just downstairs and we can travel from there to Central Station. I much prefer trains to buses.' 'At least there wasn't a queue for the automatic ticket machine,' thought Rose, as she and Jameela unzipped their bags to find money for the fare, before discovering that the machine accepted only credit cards and not cash. Smiling in order to conceal their embarrassment, the girls turned away. A long queue of people snaked in front of them, and they realised that this was the queue for the ticket office. 30 35 40

- 6 Eventually, clutching their tickets, the girls hurled themselves onto the elderly little train which would take them to Central Station. Sitting beside the door, her luggage at her side, Rose felt some of her tension leave her. 'Why not look on the journey as an adventure? Why couldn't she be more like Jameela?' These soothing thoughts were interrupted by disturbing ones that the train had already made several stops; in fact, it seemed to be stopping every kilometre or so. She had to remind herself that this was no express train; this was a train merely to serve the local community. Furthermore, the train was becoming increasingly busy; crowds got on, but nobody left; the girls' faces were pressed into the backs of standing passengers as the train crawled along the track. Apprehensively, the girls held onto their luggage; they had heard stories of pickpockets and thieves on busy local transport. Hunger pangs made Rose's stomach rumble; despite Jameela's confidence in her own organisational skills, she had forgotten to include a lunch break in their travel plans. 'Rose,' said Jameela awkwardly, 'I'm beginning to think we might miss the connecting train home. The train leaves Central Station at 7.07pm. I completely underestimated how long it would take us to transfer from the airport ...' Her voice tailed off into embarrassment. 45
- 7 Rose surprised them both by taking the initiative. 'The next stop is North Station. If we stay until Central, we'll definitely miss the train, and it's the last one home today. Let's get off at North and take a taxi.' Jameela stared at her in amazement; they both knew that poor students could not afford taxis. But Jameela was in no position to argue; her credibility lay in tatters. Carried by the crowd surging up the station steps, the girls followed the exit signs. It was 6.45pm. But their chosen exit brought them out at the back of the station, where there was no taxi rank. It was then that the frayed straps of Jameela's 'cool' rucksack snapped. Pedestrians jostled past, as the rucksack's contents spread all over the ground. 'Quickly!' shouted Rose, removing a plastic bag from her suitcase. 'Shove everything in here!' They then had to dash to the front of the station. It was 6.49pm. 'Can you get us to Central Station in fifteen minutes?' gasped Jameela. The driver indicated by an arrogant toss of his head that such a task would be no problem to a city gent like him. Who were these provincial girls anyway, with their out-of-town accents? 60
- 8 He accelerated violently away from the kerb. The girls closed their eyes as he recklessly wove through traffic, narrowly avoiding parked vehicles and pedestrians; he occasionally glanced at the girls to see if they were impressed by his driving prowess. When his mobile phone rang, he conducted an animated conversation with the caller, laughing uproariously at his own jokes and arranging a meeting for the following evening. 'That's if he lives until tomorrow,' thought Rose grimly. 70
- 9 At 7.02pm, the taxi stopped at Central Station, the driver smug that they had arrived with two minutes to spare. Luckily, the girls' train was leaving from Platform 3, which was near the main entrance. They ran at great speed down the platform. Rose followed some metres behind Jameela, aware that they were attracting a lot of attention, not only from passengers on the train but also from those on other platforms. But why was Jameela suddenly running back down the platform towards her? At that point, with sickening clarity, Rose realised that access to the train was on the other side; the carriage doors on this side were locked! A further frantic sprint down the correct side of the platform followed, but they made it with seconds to spare. 80
- 10 At the start of the train journey, Rose showed her exasperation with her friend by being uncommunicative. Furthermore, when Jameela spoke to her she avoided eye contact, but then she began to see the funny side. Little flashbacks from the nightmare journey replayed in her memory – the train packed to capacity, the jaunty rucksack no longer fit for purpose, Jameela's fists thumping on the wrong side of the carriage.... And suddenly she was doubled up with laughter. She read fear in Jameela's eyes. What would Rose tell Nizam about the rucksack? What would she tell Jameela's parents about her work rate that year? 90

'Don't worry, Jameela. We've been friends for so long. Let's keep it that way,' Rose smiled.

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