

# HIGHGATE

## 11+ test for entry – Exemplar 2

### ENGLISH

**Time allowed: 45 minutes**

Make sure that you check your work thoroughly to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Name	
Current school	

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

*In this extract, a group of children in India begin a game of hide and seek.*

1 It was still too hot to play outdoors. They had had their tea, they had been washed and had their hair brushed, and after the long day of confinement in the house that was not cool but at least a protection from the sun, the children strained to get out. Their faces were red and bloated with the effort, but their mother would not open the door, everything was still curtained and shuttered in a way that  
5 stifled the children, made them feel that their lungs were stuffed with cotton wool and their noses with dust and if they didn't burst out into the light and see the sun and feel the air, they would all choke.

'Please, ma, please,' they begged. 'We'll play in the veranda<sup>1</sup> and porch - we won't go a step out of the porch.'

10 'You will, I know you will, and then-'

'No - we won't, we won't,' they wailed so horrendously that she actually let down the bolt of the front door so that they burst out like seeds from a crackling, over-ripe pod into the veranda, with such wild, maniacal yells that she retreated to her bath and the shower of talcum powder and the fresh sari that were to help her face the summer evening.

15 They faced the afternoon. It was too hot. Too bright. The white walls of the veranda glared stridently<sup>2</sup> in the sun. The bougainvillea<sup>3</sup> hung about it, purple and magenta, in great balloons. The garden outside was like a tray made of beaten brass, flattened out on the red gravel and the stony soil in all shades of metal - aluminium, tin, copper and brass. No life stirred at this arid time of day - the birds still drooped, like dead fruit, in the papery tents of the trees; some squirrels lay limp on the wet earth under the  
20 garden tap. The outdoor dog lay stretched as if dead on the veranda mat, his paws and ears and tail all reaching out like dying travellers in search of water. He rolled his eyes at the children - two white marbles rolling in the purple sockets, begging for sympathy - and attempted to lift his tail in a wag but could not. It only twitched and lay still.

25 Then, perhaps roused by the shrieks of the children, a band of parrots suddenly fell out of the eucalyptus tree, tumbled frantically in the still, sizzling air, then sorted themselves out into battle formation and streaked away across the white sky.

The children, too, felt released. They too began tumbling, shoving, pushing against each other, frantic to start. Start what? Start their business. The business of the children's day which is - play.

'Let's play hide-and—seek.'

30 'Who'll be It?'

'You be It.'

'Why should I? You be -'

'You're the eldest -'

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<sup>1</sup> Veranda – a raised platform around the outside of a house

<sup>2</sup> Stridently – loudly and harshly

<sup>3</sup> Bougainvillea – a climbing plant with bright flowers

'That doesn't mean -'

35 The shoves became harder. Some kicked out. The motherly Mira intervened. She pulled the boys roughly apart. There was a tearing sound of cloth but it was lost in the heavy panting and angry grumbling and no one paid attention to the small sleeve hanging loosely off a shoulder.

40 'Make a circle, make a circle!' she shouted, firmly pulling and pushing till a kind of vague circle was formed. 'Now clap!' she roared and, clapping, they all chanted in melancholy unison<sup>4</sup>: 'Dip, dip, dip - my blue ship -' and every now and then one or the other saw he was safe by the way his hands fell at the crucial moment - palm on palm, or back of hand on palm - and dropped out of the circle with a yell and a jump of relief and jubilation.

45 Raghu was It. He started to protest, to cry 'You cheated - Mira cheated - Anu cheated -' but it was too late, the others had all already streaked away. There was no one to hear when he called out, 'Only in the veranda - the porch - Ma said - Ma said to stay in the porch!' No one had stopped to listen, all he saw were their brown legs flashing through the dusty shrubs, scrambling up brick walls, leaping over compost heaps and hedges, and then the porch stood empty in the purple shade of the bougainvillea and the garden was as empty as before; even the limp squirrels had whisked away, leaving everything gleaming, brassy and bare.

*Games at Twilight, Anita Desai.*

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<sup>4</sup> Melancholy unison – said together, sadly

1. **Re-read lines 1 – 14.** Give three quotations that show how the children are feeling.  
**(3 marks)**

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2. **Re-read lines 15 – 23.** Choose one word or image that shows how the writer makes the garden seem hot and uncomfortable?

Describe how your word or phrase shows this by writing about its meaning and associations.

**(5 marks)**

Word or phrase: .....

Associations and what these show: .....

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