



**The Manchester
Grammar School**

Founded 1515

Entrance Examination 2024

English Section B - Comprehension

Comprehension Passage

Printed in this booklet you will find the passage on which the comprehension paper is based. The questions are printed in the blue booklet and you should write your answers in the spaces provided on those pages.

You have a minimum of 5 minutes to read through the passage carefully, making any notes that you need alongside the text. You should not begin answering questions until the 5 minute period has finished.

Do not open this booklet until told to do so.

Read through the passage very carefully. We recommend that you spend at least five minutes reading and re-reading the following material before you begin to answer the questions.

Yanni, his parents and baby sister Ari have moved to a new area and he is going to go to a new school. Yanni is meeting Amy for the first time.

“Wow,” Amy mumbled. “This is awkward, isn’t it?”

She stood at the end of the table, shifting from foot to foot like a nervous horse. The thunder growled; the wind clawed at the window panes. Yanni didn’t reply. He felt like if he opened his mouth all the words he’d forced down would suddenly come out at once.

“You’re going to Riddleton, right? That’s where I go. I can show you around on your first day, if you’d like,” Amy offered. 5

Yanni felt his fingers grip the table. The new school was the last thing he wanted to think about now. The feeling in his stomach was getting worse, like a drawstring being pulled tighter.

“I’m going to check on Ari,” he said, pushing away from the table.

Amy blinked, all hope gone in a puff of smoke. “Can... can I help with something, or – ” 10

Yanni didn’t reply – he didn’t even let her finish the sentence. He stormed out of the room and up the stairs, leaving her alone. He knew he was being rude, but he couldn’t help it. He felt angrier than he’d ever felt in his life. He seethed past the row of family photos that Mum and Dad had hung in the hallway, his blood raging in his head, the drawstring inside his stomach pulling tighter and tighter, like it was attached to the pin of a grenade. 15

He came to Ari’s bedroom door. Mum and Dad had spent all afternoon sorting it out: the curtains were up now, and the mirrored wardrobe, and her night light was on. Dad had even built a set of shelves for all her toys. Yanni’s room was still a cold, carpetless box.

Ari was fast asleep in her cot, tucked up like a bun in her baby sleeping bag. She looked so warm, so peaceful, so happy. Yanni stood beside the cot and gazed down at her. 20

“This is all your fault,” he whispered.

Ari shifted in her sleep. Nothing that Yanni could say mattered to her. She didn’t even know he was talking.

Yanni could have stopped there, but he didn’t. Words were itching at the back of his throat. He had a stomach full of anger and he wanted it out. 25

“I never wanted to come here,” he said. “I never even wanted a sister. I never wanted any of this.”

The words were rising now, demanding to be spoken. Yanni gripped the edge of the cot and found, to his surprise, that his hands were shaking. He suddenly caught sight of himself in the mirrored wardrobe – a nasty, angry little boy, unloved and unwanted – and it was all too much. The words he’d held inside him for months came tumbling out. 30

“I hate you,” said Yanni. “I hate you and I wish you’d never been born.”

And that was when everything changed.

* * *

Yanni felt the shift in the room first – as if the whole house had flipped to face a different direction. The light flickered. There was a faint sound of chimes from somewhere in the distance, a half-step out of tune with one another. He had a sudden sense that he was no longer alone.

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“Well, well! What do we have here?”

Yanni swung round in shock. He *wasn’t* alone. There was someone standing in the bedroom doorway. The light in the corridor was too dim to make out their face. All Yanni could see was that the stranger was very thin, and very tall, and stood ramrod straight with their arms behind their back. “Who are you?” asked Yanni.

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The stranger leaned back and gave a high trill of laughter. “What a question! Who do you think I am, young man?”

Yanni was stumped. It wasn’t the answer he’d expected. “Um... Mr Edwards, from down the road?”

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“Right first time!” said the man cheerfully. “Now, aren’t you going to invite me in?”

Yanni’s head was spinning. Why had Amy let Mr Edwards in without telling him? Why had he come upstairs on his own? Yanni hadn’t even heard the front door open. “Er... sure, but –”

With the simple grace of a fox, the man slipped through the doorway and into the room. Yanni was suddenly filled with a certainty that he had been tricked – that a threshold had just been crossed and could not be uncrossed. The man stood in the light of the bedroom, angling his neck like a bird.

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Yanni stared at the man standing in front of him. He had never seen anyone who looked quite like him before. He was... Well, he was beautiful, for one thing. His face was sleek and chiselled, his teeth were like polished marble and his hair hung down in folds of grey silk.

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But something about the man’s beauty was wrong, somehow. His skin was as white as sheep’s bone. He must have been almost seven feet tall: the top of his head practically brushed the ceiling. But that wasn’t the strangest thing about him. It was his eyes: Yanni had never seen eyes so dark before. He couldn’t even tell where the pupils began.

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He froze. A voice at the back of his head suddenly spoke, high and urgent.

Don’t talk to him. He shouldn’t be here. He’s a stranger.

Yanni suddenly understood, deep down in his gut, that he could not let this man find out Ari was here. He stole a glance over his shoulder. Luckily she was still fast asleep in her cot. He stepped in front of her, blocking her from view.

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END OF PASSAGE

