



ISEB COMMON PRE-TEST · ENGLISH

Sample Paper

Authentic-Style Practice for Year 6 & Year 7

TIME ALLOWED	25 minutes
TOTAL MARKS	20 marks (1 mark per question)
SECTIONS	3 — Comprehension · Missing Words · Spelling & Punctuation
ANSWER FORMAT	Multiple choice (A–E or A–D / N)
YEAR GROUP	Year 6 / Year 7 (ages 10–12)

*This sample paper replicates the style and difficulty of the real ISEB Common Pre-Test.
A full answer key with explanations is included at the end.*

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Instructions

- You have **25 minutes** to answer all 20 questions.
- Read the instructions at the start of each section carefully before you begin.
- For each question, choose the **one best answer** and mark its letter.
- Each question is worth **1 mark**. There is no penalty for a wrong answer.
- Work quickly and carefully. If unsure, move on and return to it at the end.

Sections in this paper:

1. Comprehension (Questions 1–10)
2. Missing Words (Questions 11–15)
3. Spelling and Punctuation Errors (Questions 16–20)

TIME ALLOWED

25 minutes

TOTAL QUESTIONS

20 questions

TOTAL MARKS

20 marks

RECOMMENDED TIMING

~75 sec / question

SECTION	NAME	QUESTIONS	SKILLS TESTED
1	Comprehension	1–10	Literal retrieval, inference, vocabulary in context, literary techniques
2	Missing Words	11–15	Grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction
3	Spelling & Punctuation	16–20	Spelling accuracy, punctuation rules, British English conventions

EXPERT TIPS FROM ELITE BRITISH ADMISSIONS

- > In Comprehension, always refer back to the passage — never answer from memory alone.
- > For vocabulary questions, try substituting each option into the sentence to find the best fit.
- > In Spelling & Punctuation, read each segment in your head to catch errors naturally.
- > Attempt every question — there is no penalty for a wrong answer.

Section 1 — Comprehension

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions that follow. Choose the one best answer (A–E) for each.

The Secret Garden

by Frances Hodgson Burnett

When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. It was true, too. She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression. Her hair was yellow, and her face was yellow because she had been born in India and had always been ill in one way or another. Her father had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with gay people. She had not wanted a little girl at all, and when Mary was born she handed her over to the care of an Ayah, who was made to understand that if she wished to please the Mem Sahib she must keep the child out of sight as much as possible.

So when she was a sickly, fretful, ugly little baby she was kept out of the way, and when she became a sickly, fretful, toddling thing she was kept out of the way also. She never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces of her Ayah and the other native servants, and as they always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything, because the Mem Sahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying, by the time she was six years old she was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived.

1. Based on the passage, why did Mary Lennox have a yellow face?

- ☐ A She spent too much time in the sun.
- ☐ B She had been born in India and was frequently ill.
- ☐ C She was a disagreeable-looking child.
- ☐ D She inherited her complexion from her mother.
- ☐ E She rarely went outside to play.

2. Which word best describes Mary's mother, based on the passage?

- ☐ A Devoted
- ☐ B Hardworking
- ☐ C Vain
- ☐ D Tyrannical
- ☐ E Sickly

3. What is the meaning of the word "fretful" as used in the passage?

- ☐ A Joyful and energetic
- ☐ B Quiet and observant
- ☐ C Distressed and complaining
- ☐ D Small and delicate
- ☐ E Ugly and unpleasant

4. Why did the servants always give Mary her own way?

- ☐ A They felt sorry for the sickly child.
- ☐ B They were afraid of Mary's uncle.
- ☐ C They wanted to keep her quiet so her mother would not be angry.
- ☐ D They loved her as their own daughter.
- ☐ E They were ordered to by the Government.

5. Which technique is used in the phrase “*as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived*”?

A Personification

B Simile

C Alliteration

D Metaphor

E Onomatopoeia

6. How did Mary's father spend most of his time, according to the passage?

A Going to parties with his wife

B Working for the English Government and being ill

C Looking after Mary

D Travelling around India

E Managing Misselthwaite Manor

7. Who primarily took care of Mary when she was a baby?

A Her mother

B Her uncle

C The English Government

D An Ayah

E Her father

8. Which of the following is NOT given as a description of Mary's appearance?

A Thin face

B Sour expression

C Dark eyes

D Light hair

E Thin body

9. What does “*familiarly*” suggest in “*She never remembered seeing familiarly anything but the dark faces*”?

A She saw them only occasionally.

B She saw them intimately, as a regular part of daily life.

C She saw them from a distance.

D She saw them as strangers.

E She saw them only in dreams.

10. What was the main reason Mary was sent to Misselthwaite Manor?

A To recover from her illness

B To live with her uncle

C To receive a better education

D To attend parties

E To learn how to behave

Section 2 — Missing Words

Choose the best word to complete each sentence so that it makes sense and is correct English (A–E).

11. The headmaster announced that the trip would be postponed _____ the heavy snowfall.

A
despite

B
due to

C
however

D
although

E
instead of

12. After searching for hours, the detective found the hidden key _____ the loose floorboard.

A

over

B

above

C

beneath

D

through

E

across

13. The athlete trained _____ every day to prepare for the championship.

A

hardly

B

lazy

C

rigorous

D

rigorously

E

tired

14. Neither the teacher _____ the students expected the fire alarm to ring.

A

or

B

and

C

nor

D

but

E

yet

15. The ancient castle, which had stood for centuries, was _____ beautiful in the moonlight.

A

completely

B

breathlessly

C

absolutely

D

totally

E

incredibly

Section 3 — Spelling and Punctuation Errors

Each sentence is divided into four labelled parts. Find the part that contains a mistake and mark its letter. If there is no mistake, mark N.

16. The brilliant scientist made an incredible discovery in her laboratory.

A	B	C	D	N
The brilliant scientist	made an incredible	discovery in her	laboratory.	No mistake

17. “Please make sure you bring your books to class tomorrow,” said Mr Smith.

A	B	C	D	N
“Please make sure	you bring your books	to class tomorrow,”	said Mr Smith.	No mistake

18. The fierce dragon breathed fire and chased the knights' across the valley.

A	B	C	D	N
The fierce dragon	breathed fire and	chased the knights'	across the valley.	No mistake

19. My favorite subjects are Mathematics, History and Physical Education.

A	B	C	D	N
My favorite subjects	are	Mathematics, History	and Physical Education.	No mistake

20. The committee finally reached a consensus after hours of argueing.

A	B	C	D	N
The committee finally	reached a consensus	after hours	of argueing.	No mistake

— END OF PAPER —

SECTION 1 — COMPREHENSION (Q1-10)

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
B	C	C	C	B
Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
B	D	C	B	B

SECTION 2 — MISSING WORDS (Q11-15)

Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
B	C	D	C	E

SECTION 3 — SPELLING & PUNCTUATION (Q16-20)

Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20
D	N	C	A	D

Q1 B
The text states her face was yellow “because she had been born in India and had always been ill.”

Q2 C
Her mother “cared only to go to parties and amuse herself” — self-absorbed behaviour best matches *vain*.

Q3 C
“Fretful” means expressing distress and irritation — a baby who is unhappy and complaining.

Q4 C
They gave her her own way “because the Mem Sahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying.”

Q5 B
The phrase compares Mary to a pig using “as...as”, making it a *simile*.

Q6 B
He “had held a position under the English Government and had always been busy and ill himself.”

Q7 D
Mary was “handed over to the care of an Ayah” — a nursemaid in colonial India.

Q8 C
Thin face, thin body, light hair and a sour expression are all mentioned; *dark eyes* are not.

Q9 B
“Familiarly” here means in a close, habitual way — the servants were her only familiar sight.

Q10 B
The opening sentence states she “was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle.”

Q11 **B**

Due to indicates cause. “Despite” means the opposite; the others are conjunctions.

Q12 **C**

Beneath describes something hidden under the floorboard.

Q13 **D**

An adverb modifies the verb “trained”; *rigorously* is the adverb form.

Q14 **C**

“Neither” pairs with *nor* — the correlative pair *neither...nor*.

Q15 **E**

Incredibly is the most natural, idiomatic adverb with “beautiful.”

Q16 **D**

Spelling: “labratory” should be *laboratory*.

Q17 **N**

No mistake — speech marks, comma and full stop are all correct.

Q18 **C**

“knights” wrongly uses an apostrophe; here it is a simple plural: *knights*.

Q19 **A**

British English: “favorite” should be *favourite*.

Q20 **D**

Drop the silent “e” before “-ing”: “argueing” should be *arguing*.

HOW DID YOU SCORE? — SCORE INTERPRETATION GUIDE

- **18–20:** Excellent — performing at the level of the most selective schools (125+ standardised).
- **14–17:** Good — on track for competitive entry. Target the question types you found hardest.
- **10–13:** Developing — focused work on inference and grammar will lift your score.
- **Below 10:** More preparation needed. A specialist tutor can build core skills systematically.
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