



**Reading**

Comprehension

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Time:

Marks: **50 marks**

Comments:

---

Q1.

## *The Lost Queen*

*Maria and Oliver are attending a party in the garden of a house that used to belong to Maria's family. They sneak away to explore the grounds.*



Maria and Oliver were quite a distance from the party when they found the little rowing boat in the grassy shallows of a small lake beyond the garden.

Glancing nervously behind her, Maria suggested that they row out to the island in the middle of the lake. Oliver looked at her

questioningly. Maria explained that there was a secret monument on the island to one of her ancestors. This was a woman who had married a prince at the time when there was a struggle for the throne. The struggle had been between two rival families – one had a lion as its symbol, the winner had a bear.

“Come on,” Maria said impatiently.

Oliver rowed while Maria stood barefoot in the boat, staring straight ahead. The oars made a click-clack sound in the hush and haze of the summer afternoon. Ripples of water fanned out behind them as they crossed the glassy surface of the lake.

The tiny island, thick with creeping vines and roots, looked as if it floated. At its centre, an ancient oak tree towered over it. The tree's branches were like bent fingers, twisting and stretching outwards, until the tips of its leaves touched the still water. Oliver carefully steered the boat through a narrow opening in the branches. Then they stepped out of the boat, and into a murky green space under an umbrella of leaves. The air was cool and damp.

Maria led Oliver across the tangled ground to the hidden monument. It was a column of marble, weathered and mossy with age. A delicate crown sat at the top, and an inscription was carved into a flat slab at the base. Oliver used his thumbnail to scrape out the letters that were cut into it.

It was a name.

Maria's family name.

“You could have been a queen?” said Oliver, whispering.

Maria laughed gently in the gloom.

“We were the family of the lion,” she said.

Oliver could still hear the shouts and laughter of the party, up on the sunny lawn near the big house. But now the noise seemed to be getting further and further away.

**Q2.**

1. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Glancing nervously...*

**Find and copy one** word meaning relatives from long ago.

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

2. *The struggle had been between two **rival** families...*

Which word most closely matches the meaning of the word *rival*?

Tick **one**.

equal

neighbouring

important

competing

1 mark

3. Look at page 2.

How can you tell that Maria was very keen to get to the island?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

4. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Oliver rowed...*

**Find and copy one** word that suggests that the summer afternoon was quiet.

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

5. *...they crossed the glassy surface of the lake.*

Give **two** impressions this gives you of the water.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

6. Look at the paragraph beginning: *The tiny island...* to the paragraph ending: *...were cut into it.*

What impressions of the island do you get from these two paragraphs?

Give **two**.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

7. Write down **three** things that you are told about the oak tree on the island.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

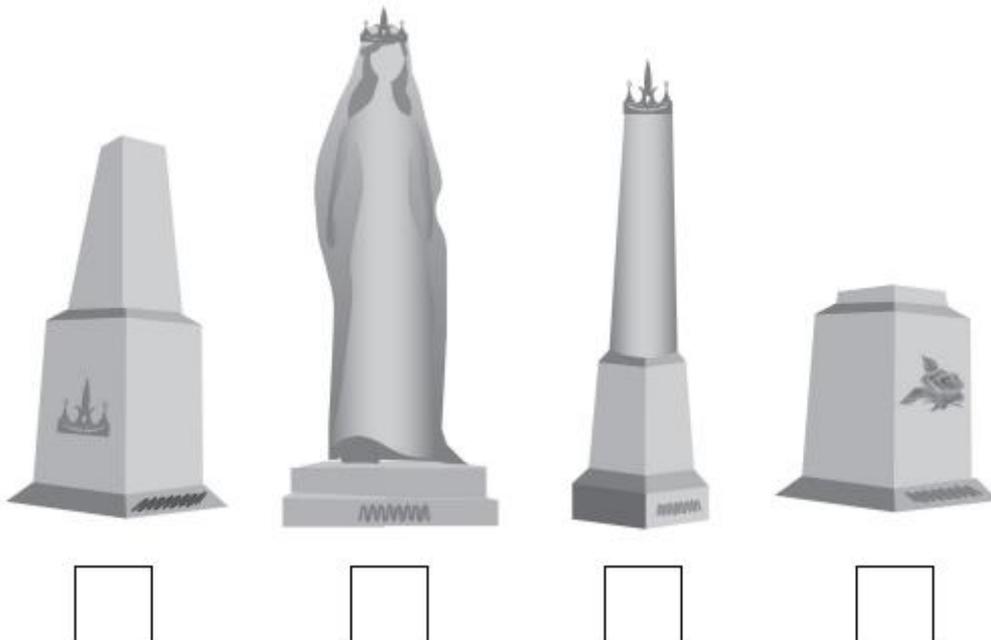
2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3 marks

8. Which of these drawings best represents the monument?

Tick **one**.



1 mark

9. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Maria led Oliver...*

(a) Why did Oliver find it difficult to read the inscription on the monument?

---

1 mark

(b) What did he have to do in order to read the inscription?

---

1 mark

10. What was revealed at the end of the story?

Tick **one**.

Oliver was keeping a secret.

The monument was damaged.

The two families were still enemies.

Maria's family did not win the throne.

1 mark

11. Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

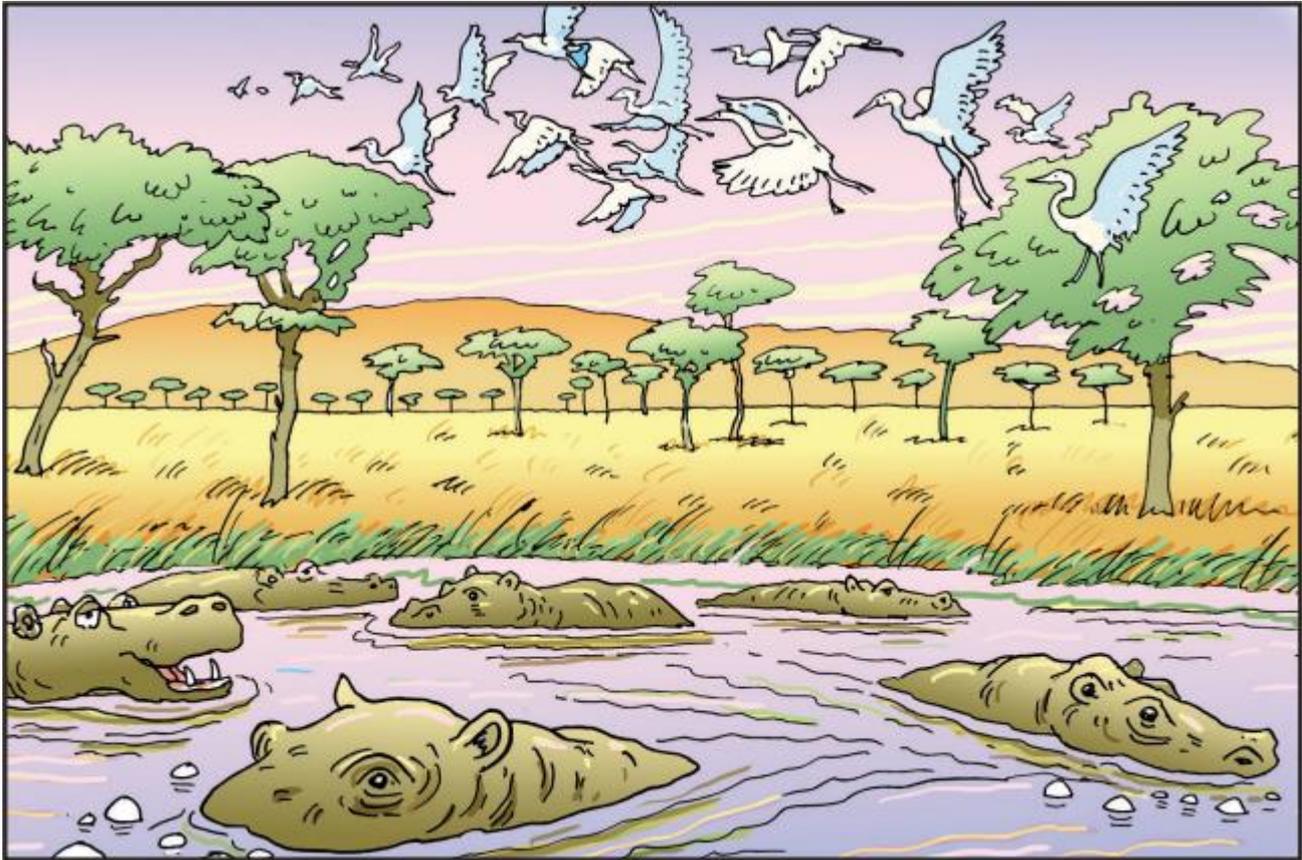
	True	False
Two families fought for the throne.		
Maria's family symbol was the lion.		
The monument was for a prince.		
It was hot on the island.		

1 mark

Q3.

## Wild Ride

This story takes place in a huge grassland area in southern Africa. The grasslands there are called 'savannah'.



Dawn was casting spun-gold threads across a rosy sky over Sawubona Game Reserve as Martine Allen took a last look around to ensure there weren't any witnesses. She leaned forward like a jockey on the track, wound her fingers through a silver mane, and cried, 'Go, Jemmy, go.'

The white giraffe sprang forward so suddenly that she was almost unseated, but she recovered and, wrapping her arms around his neck, quickly adjusted to the familiar rhythm of Jemmy's rocking-horse stride. They swept past the dam and a herd of bubble-blowing hippos, past a flock of startled egrets lifting from the trees like white glitter, and out onto the open savannah plain. An early morning African chorus of doves, crickets and go-away birds provided a soundtrack.

For a long time Martine had only ever ridden Jemmy at night and in secret, but when her grandmother had found out about their nocturnal

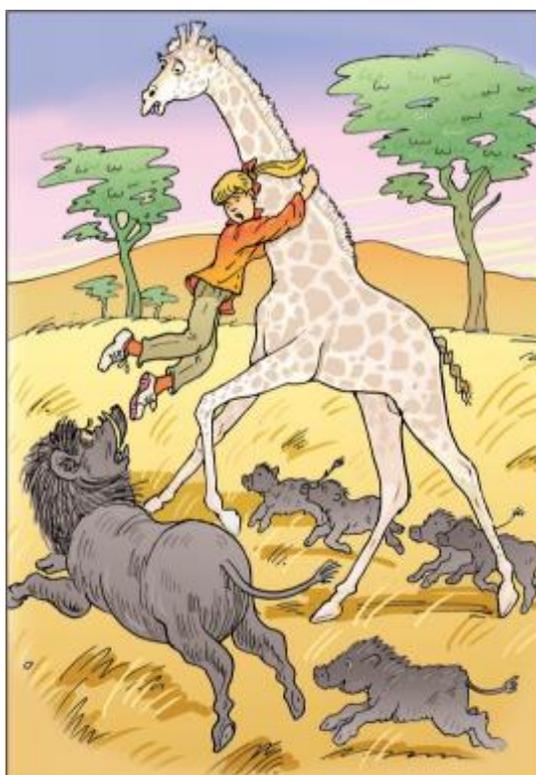
adventures she'd promptly banned them, on the grounds that the game reserve's deadliest animals were all in search of dinner after dark and there was nothing they'd like more than to feast on a giraffe-riding eleven-year-old. For a while Martine had defied her, but after several close calls and one terrible row with her grandmother, she had come to accept that the old lady was right. When lions were on the hunt, the game reserve was best avoided.

Another of her grandmother's rules was that Martine ride sedately at all times. 'No faster than a trot and, in fact, I'd rather you stuck to a walk,' she'd counselled sternly.

Martine had paid almost no attention. The way she saw it, Jemmy was a wild animal and it was only fair that he should have the freedom to do what came naturally, and if that meant tearing across the savannah at a giraffe's top speed of thirty-five kilometres per hour, well, there wasn't a lot she could do about it. It wasn't as if she had reins to stop him. Besides, what was the point of riding a giraffe if the most he was permitted to do was plod along like some arthritic pony from the local stables?

Jemmy clearly agreed. They flew across the grassy plain with the spring breeze singing in Martine's ears. 'Faster, Jemmy!' she yelled. 'Run for your life.' And she laughed out loud at the heart-pounding thrill of it, of racing a wild giraffe.

A streak of grey cut across her vision, accompanied by a furious, nasal squeal: 'Mmwheeh!'. Jemmy swerved. In the instant before her body parted company with the white giraffe's, Martine caught a glimpse of a warthog charging from its burrow, yellow tusks thrust forward. Had her arms not been wrapped so tightly around the giraffe's neck, she would have crashed ten feet to the ground. As it was, she just sort of swung under his chest like a human necklace. There she dangled while Jemmy pranced skittishly and the warthog, intent on defending her young, let out enraged squeals from below. Five baby warthogs milled around in



bewilderment, spindly tails pointing heavenwards.

The pain in Martine's arms was nearly unbearable, but she didn't let go. She adored warthogs – warts, rough skin, ugly ears and all – but their Hollywood movie star eyelashes didn't fool her. In a blink of those lashes, their tusks could reduce her limbs to bloody ribbons.

'Jemmy,' she said through gritted teeth, 'walk on. Good boy.'

Confused, the white giraffe started to lower his neck as he backed away from the warthog.

'No, Jemmy!' shrieked Martine as the warthog nipped at the toe of one of her boots. 'Walk! Walk on!'

Jemmy snatched his head up to evade the warthog's sharp tusks, and Martine was able to use the momentum to hook her legs around his neck. From there, she was able to haul herself onto his back and urge him into a sprint. Soon the warthog family was a grey blur in the distance, although the mother's grunts of triumph took longer to fade.

Martine rode the rest of the way home at a gentle walk, a thoughtful smile on her lips. That would teach her to show off – even if it was only to an audience of hippos. At the game reserve gate, Jemmy dipped his head and Martine slid down his silvery neck as though she was shooting down a waterslide. That, too, wasn't the safest way of dismounting, but it was fun. She gave the white giraffe a parting hug, and strolled through the mango trees to the thatched house.

#### Q4.

1. Circle the correct option to complete each sentence below.

(a) The text begins with Martine going out to ride her giraffe...

in the early morning.

at midday.

in the late afternoon.

at night.

1 mark

(b) Martine rode her giraffe...

slowly.

speedily.

safely.

fearfully.

1 mark

(c) Everything was fine on that day until...

her grandmother saw her.

they came across lions on the hunt.

they disturbed a warthog family.

they met a herd of hippos.

1 mark

(d) At the end of the text, Martine...

went back home unharmed.

carried on riding for hours.

ran home to get help.

cried all the way home.

1 mark

2. Look at the first paragraph, beginning: *Dawn was casting...*

How do you know that Martine wanted to keep this ride a secret?

---

---

1 mark

3. What were Martine's grandmother's rules about riding the giraffe?

Tick **two**.

- Ride only in daylight.
- Don't show off.
- Stay in the game reserve.
- Keep to a slow speed.
- No jumping.

1 mark

4. (a) What evidence is there of Martine being stubborn in the way she behaved with her grandmother?

Give **two** points.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

(b) What evidence is there of Martine being determined when she met the warthogs?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

5. ...milled around in bewilderment (page 3)

Explain what this description suggests about the baby warthogs.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

6. What evidence in the text is there that warthogs can be dangerous?

Give **two** examples.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

7. What helped Martine to get safely on Jemmy's back after the warthog's attack?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

8. The warthog mother made *grunts of triumph* (page 3)

Why was she triumphant?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

9. Do you think that Martine will change her behaviour on future giraffe rides?

Tick **one**.

yes

no

maybe

Explain your choice fully, using evidence from the text.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3 marks

10. In what ways might Martine's character appeal to many readers?

Explain fully, referring to the text in your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3 marks

11. Draw lines to match each part of the story with the correct quotation from the text.

setting •

• *For a while Martine had defied her*

past events •

• *In the instant before her body parted company*

action •

• *Dawn was casting spun-gold threads*

lesson •

• *That would teach her to show off*

1 mark

Q5.

# The Way of the Dodo

This is an article about the dodo, a bird that is now extinct.



An artist's impression of the dodo from 300 years ago.

The dodo was first sighted around 1600 on an island in the Indian Ocean. It was extinct by 1680. Since then the phrase 'dead as a dodo' has been used to describe something which is lifeless or has disappeared from the world completely. Because of its rapid disappearance, a number of myths developed about the dodo, for example that it was a fat, silly creature that brought its fate upon itself.

But what is the **truth** about the dodo?

For thousands of years the island of Mauritius was a paradise. It was spat out of the ocean floor by an underwater volcano 8 million years ago. With warm sun, plentiful food and no predators to speak of, the isolated island became a haven for a variety of unusual species, including reptiles and flightless birds.

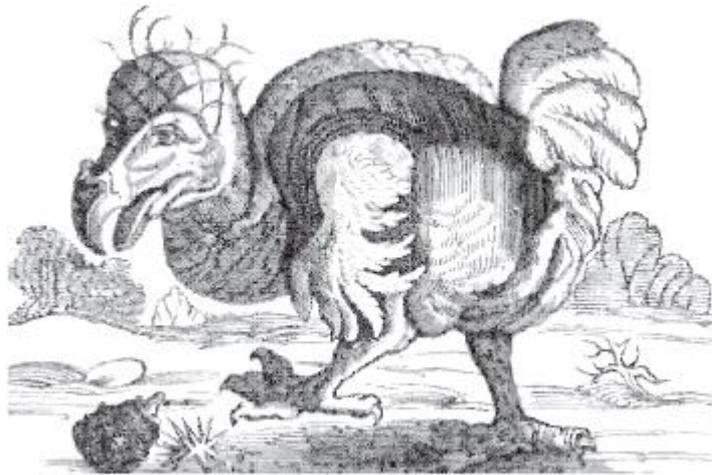
Then, in 1598, humans descended on this paradise, accompanied by their own animals – dogs, goats, cats (and a fair number of rats!). Curious and unafraid, the animals of Mauritius offered themselves up for slaughter and, within just a few decades, much of the island's unique wildlife had been wiped out forever.

One of the victims was a large, flightless relative of the pigeon. The island invaders started to call the bird a 'dodo', which meant 'silly bird'.

Although the dodo was hunted for food, this was not the main reason it

died out. It is more likely that having never faced predators before, and unable to fly away, the adult birds fell prey to dogs and cats. Meanwhile, their eggs and chicks, defenceless in their nests on the ground, were easy pickings for rats.

Less than 100 years after man's arrival, the dodo, which had once numbered in the hundreds of thousands, slipped into the pages of folklore.



**A drawing of a dodo from around 1646.**

Until a few years ago, all knowledge of the dodo came from secondary reports from the time that were not always reliable, a handful of remains and just one complete skeleton. Nobody knew what the dodo really looked like. Before cameras, newly discovered animals could only be drawn or painted. However, many of the artists had no knowledge of natural history and were more interested in producing colourful paintings of animals than recording their true likeness.

Then, in 2005, a team of scientists unearthed thousands of dodo bones in some mud flats in Mauritius. The remains date back to over 4,000 years ago, when the island was suffering from a lengthy drought. The mud flats would have formed a freshwater oasis in an otherwise parched environment. It is thought that most of the animals, while trying to reach the slowly receding waters of the lake, became stuck and died of thirst or suffocation. However, clearly some dodos survived as they did not become extinct until much later.

This discovery is helping to rehabilitate the image of this much-ridiculed bird. The very fact that the dodo was still alive and well on Mauritius 4,000 years after a drought that claimed the lives of thousands of animals is an indication of the bird's ability to survive. The remains are also helping scientists to find out more about the anatomy of the dodo, for example that it was a much slimmer bird than

any pictures suggest.

As scientists learn more about the dodo, and begin to see the bird in a new light, we are reminded that the dodo was badly misjudged. Maybe it is humans who should be judged, as we can have a devastating impact on the natural world. No other creature should be allowed to go the way of the dodo.



**A modern reconstruction of a dodo.**

**Q6.**

1. Look at the paragraph beginning: *For thousands of years...*

What does the word *spat* suggest about how the island of Mauritius was formed?

---

---

---

1 mark

2. *Curious and unafraid, the animals of Mauritius offered themselves up for slaughter...*  
(Page 1)

Why were the dodos *curious and unafraid*?

---

---

1 mark

3. **Find** and **copy one** word from page 1 that tells you that some of the animals on Mauritius were only found there.

---

1 mark

4. (a) Give **two** reasons why Mauritius was a *paradise* for animals before humans arrived.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

Look at the paragraph beginning: *One of the victims...* to the bottom of page 1.

- (b) Give **two** reasons why the dodo became extinct after humans arrived.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

5. Look at the paragraph beginning: *One of the victims...*

What does the word *invaders* suggest about the humans arriving on Mauritius?

---

---

1 mark

6. Why were artists' drawings from the time of the dodo not always accurate?

---

---

1 mark

7. *The mud flats would have formed a freshwater oasis in an otherwise **parched** environment.*

Give the meaning of the word *parched* in this sentence.

---

1 mark

8. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Then, in 2005...*

**Find and copy one** word or group of words that shows that scientists were not sure what happened to most of the animals during the drought on Mauritius.

---

1 mark

9. What does *rehabilitate the image* of the dodo mean?

Tick **one**.

restore a painting of the dodo

rebuild the reputation of the dodo

repair a model of the dodo

review accounts of the dodo

1 mark

10. According to the text, how did the discovery of the dodos' bones help to change the image of the dodo?

---

---

1 mark

11. Below are some summaries of different paragraphs from this text.

Number them 1 – 6 to show the order in which they appear in the text.

The first one has been done for you.

An important lesson is learnt.

Reasons for the extinction of the dodo.

Summary of the plight of the dodos.

New information is discovered about the dodo.

An explanation for the unreliable evidence.

Humans arrived on Mauritius.

1 mark