

Fiction: Comprehension Practice 4

Text for **Section A**, an extract from ‘*A Dangerous Game*’ by Malorie Blackman

‘Come on, Sam,’ said Billy. ‘Show them you can do it.’

The cheers and jeers of the crowd around Sam were so loud that he could only just hear his best friend Billy. Sam tried to ignore the frantic beat of his heart slamming against his ribs. He tried to ignore the deafening noise all around him. Instead, he forced himself to focus on his arms. Big mistake! The muscles in Sam’s upper arms felt like they’d locked solid and caught fire!

5

‘Come on, Sam!’ Billy’s yells were even more urgent now.

‘What a wimp!’ said another voice. ‘Look at the sweat dropping off his forehead. He’s only done four press-ups and he’s ready to pass out.’

Sam didn’t need to look up to know who’d just spoken. Brandon.

10

I am not a wimp, Sam thought. *I’ll show you maggot-face*! I can do this, I know I can. I just need to push!* Sam tried to relax his arm muscles a tiny bit – so that they’d unlock without the rest of his body crashing to the floor.

Push!

Sam gritted his teeth so hard they felt like they’d shatter at any second. He tried to force his arms to push the rest of his body upwards. At that moment, Sam felt as if he had an adult elephant sitting on his back. His mum was always nagging him about how skinny he was and how he needed to put on more weight to become stronger. But Sam didn’t feel the least bit strong right then!

15

‘Almost, Sam. Almost,’ screamed Billy. He sounded like he was about to burst a blood vessel. But Sam had never been so grateful for the sound of Billy’s voice. He could do it ... *He could do it ...*

20

He couldn’t!

Sam collapsed in a heap on the gravel below him. A sharp piece of stone dug into his chin, but Sam didn’t even wince. No matter how much his chin might hurt, it couldn’t compare to how awful he felt inside. He’d failed.

25

‘Oh!’ The crowd gave a disappointed sigh – as if Sam had let them all down as well. He turned his head. Some of them were drifting away already. Others were looking at him and shaking their heads.

‘I told you he wouldn’t be able to do five press-ups,’ Brandon sneered. ‘I’m surprised he could manage four.’

30

‘Shut up, Brandon,’ snapped Billy. ‘Sam did his best.’

‘His best isn’t up to much,’ Brandon replied. ‘His best is less than my worst!’

‘Leave him alone,’ said Billy. ‘He’s only just got over being ill ...’

‘When is he going to stop using that as an excuse for being so useless?’
Brandon said, unimpressed.

Sam wished his friend would shut up. He knew that Billy was only standing up for him, but it wasn’t making him feel any better. In fact, it was just the opposite – Billy was making him feel worse. Sam had his breath back now and scrambled to his feet.

35

40

*Glossary

maggot-face – a rude, childish insult

Section A: Reading

Spend 30 minutes on this section.

Read the **Text** in the insert, and answer questions 1–9.

- 1** Look at the first line of the text.

Why does Billy speak to Sam? Tick (✓) **one** box.

to encourage him ☐

to distract him ☐

to criticise him ☐

to humour him ☐

[1]

- 2** Look at lines 1–6.

(a) What is *cheers and jeers* an example of? Tick (✓) **one** box.

alliteration ☐

metaphor ☐

rhyme ☐

simile ☐

[1]

(b) Give **one** quotation from the text that tells us Sam is feeling nervous.

_____ [1]

(c) The writer says the noise is *deafening*.
What does this tell us about the noise?

_____ [1]

(d) What does the writer mean when she says Sam's arms *felt like they'd locked solid and caught fire*? Tick (✓) **one** box.

His arms are burnt.

☐

His arms are sore.

☐

His arms are strong.

☐

His arms are trapped.

☐

[1]

3 Look at lines 7–14.

(a) Sam and Brandon are **not** good friends.

Give **two** examples of their behaviour which show us this.

• _____

• _____

[2]

(b) The writer emphasises the word *Push* by writing it in *italics* and putting it on a separate line.

Why does the writer want to emphasise the word?

[1]

4 Look at lines 15–23.

(a) Which word means ‘break’?

_____ [1]

(b) What literary technique does the writer use in line 17?

_____ [1]

(c) The writer wants to show the reader that Sam really believes he can carry on doing press-ups.

How does the writer show this? Give **two** ways.

• _____

• _____ [2]

(d) Why is an exclamation mark used in line 23?

Tick (✓) **one** box.

To show:

fear

☐

uncertainty

☐

confusion

☐

disappointment

☐

[1]

5 Look at lines 24–29.

(a) Explain in your own words why Sam feels *awful*. Give **two** reasons.

- _____
- _____ [2]

(b) Which word does *them* replace?

_____ [1]

(c) Give **one** two-word phrase that means 'leaving slowly'.

_____ [1]

6 Brandon compares himself to Sam.

Explain in your own words what Brandon is comparing. Give **one** quotation from the text to support your answer.

Explanation: _____

Quotation: _____

[2]

7 Look at lines 30–36.

(a) Which phrase tells us that Sam has been unwell recently?

_____ [1]

(b) Give **one** example of a word that has a negative prefix.

_____ [1]

8 Look at lines 37–40.

(a) Find **one** example of a pronoun.

_____ [1]

(b) Find **one** phrase that means 'stood up'.

_____ [1]

9 Read the whole text again. Would you like Billy as a friend? Tick (✓) **one** box.

Yes ☐

No ☐

Give **two** reasons why, using evidence from the text.

- _____
- _____ [2]

Section B: Writing

Spend 30 minutes on this section.

- 10** Read the final paragraph of the extract again.
Now continue the story to explain what the characters did next.

Ideas to help you:

- Plot What did Sam do next?
 Did Brandon and his friends leave?
 Did Sam start to feel better?
- Characters Sam
 Billy
 Brandon
 anyone else?
- Setting at a school?
 at a park?
 somewhere else?

Space for your plan:

Write your continuation of the story on the next page.

[25 marks]