

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/ENGLISH IB/TOPS/MACS/HANDOUT 11

NAME: _____

READING COMPREHENSION

Read the following selections and answer the questions that follow.

SELECTION 1/4

Tunnels are funny things, especially if you find yourself falling through one which is what happened to Dr. Science, Asha Bloom, Little Lola, and me as we were running away from King Bruce and his not so **lenient** girlfriend Veronica. The four of us were running so quickly that none of us really noticed the rather big hole in the ground. Asha tumbled first, then Dr. Science, and then Little Lola and I. As we fell toward the bottom I could hear King Bruce and Veronica arguing above us and I felt a little lucky to be tumbling in the darkness rather than being **lynched** and taken to the **gallows** by the two of them. They were both so crazy that there really was no telling what would have happened if they'd actually captured us again. I, for one, was happy not to have found out.

We reached the bottom of the tunnel with four large splashes. We couldn't see a thing, but we knew we were lucky the water had broken our fall. It was **pitch** black and the water was very cold. Of course, being the **pragmatic** one of the group, Dr. Science searched around in the pocket inside his white lab coat and found a little green glow stick. He snapped its middle and it began to emit a ghostly green glow. As our eyes adjusted to the faint light, we found that we were in a lagoon surrounded by several large doors. One of the doors looked as if it was made of metal and had many dents in a circular pattern all around it. Another was painted with all sorts of colourful splotches as if someone had delicately thrown paint at it. Another door, Asha's favourite, was covered in jewels. She sat in front of it and smiled. And the last door was rather dull compared to the other three; it was wooden and had some sort of map carved into it.

Almost immediately Asha Bloom, Dr. Science, and Little Lola began to argue about which door to open. "Well, clearly we should open the one with the map because it will help us discover our way out of here," Dr. Science said.

"No," argued Little Lola, "we should open this one with all the splotches because it's the most interesting."

"Are both of you completely crazy? We should open the one with all these amazing jewels because it probably has even more jewels behind it," Asha said, touching the diamond-encrusted door knob.

Of course, when you're in any kind of crisis it's best to remain calm and see how the given situation presents itself. As the three of my companions continued to **hysterically** argue about which door to open, I decided it best to see which door would actually open. My first pick, the metal door, swung open.

1. How do we know Dr. Science, Asha Bloom, Little Lola, and the narrator are being pursued by tyrants?

2. What is the meaning of “pitch” in the sentence, “It was pitch black and the water was very cold”? Explain your answer by referring to contextual clues from the paragraph that the sentence comes from.

3. How has the writer portrayed the four characters? Use the table below to help you organize an answer.

Characters	Personality Trait(s)	Quotations	Explanation (by elaborating on the quotations)

SELECTION 2/4

"You see," Dr. Science said **pompously** to the others, "your doors are completely **irrelevant** now."

"Your door is now irrelevant, too," Lola pointed out while Asha was trying madly to **pry** open her jewelled door.

"Why won't it open?" she said, kicking it. "I want more jewels."

"Calm down," Dr. Science said. "Have you forgotten that we've found the ultimate jewel? We have The Green Dragon."

"You mean I have The Green Dragon," Little Lola said resentfully. It was obvious that she was sick of being considered as someone who just tagged along. "And if the two of you want to have anything to do with my emerald, then you're going to have to start showing me a little bit more respect." As she said this, Little Lola dusted the dirt from her sneakers, scooped me up into her arms, stood up very straight and tall, and marched right through the open doorway. Asha Bloom stood quietly with her mouth open as Dr. Science straightened the collar of his white lab coat. They looked at each other a little stunned and followed Lola through the door. After all, if they wanted The Green Dragon, there was nothing else they could do but follow her.

Little Lola carried me for a while but before the others caught up with us she put me down. It surprised me that the floor **underfoot** felt more like smooth marble than the rocks and dirt I was expecting. As we walked along in the dark we could hear Dr. Science and Asha Bloom walking quickly toward us. Little Lola had no **inclination** to stop and wait for them. She was sick of how they treated her. "Ya know what, kitty, I'm so sick and tired of those two always treating me like I'm some kind of **pathological** idiot. If anyone has got a case of the stupids, it's Asha. All she does is fix her hair and look at herself in the mirror. And as for Dr. Science, he was supposed to have stolen the Green Dragon before all this mess happened so that Asha and I could –"before she could finish her **rant** we heard a noise and saw a light in front of us. Dr. Science and Asha must have seen the same thing because before too long they'd caught up to us.

Knowing that he'd never get The Green Dragon from Lola without apologizing, Dr. Science tried to smooth things over with her. "Lola, you shouldn't run off like that. You could get hurt and we wouldn't want you to get hurt. You're so important to us."

Sensing that Dr. Science's apology was completely **synthetic**, Lola said, "You two think I'm just some dumb kid. Well, this dumb kid isn't going to give you what you want. You can't have The Green Dragon."

Asha quickly thought it might be a good idea for her to try a different **tactic**. "Come on, Lola, don't be like that. You know we were worried. Why else do you think we came rushing after you? And besides, if either of us had wanted to we could have taken The Green Dragon from you already. What's most important is that the three of us stick together so that we can get it to the museum. You know that's been the plan this whole time." It seems that Asha's attempt to **placate** Little Lola worked much better than Dr. Science's. After Asha had finished her **plea** the three of them stood in the strange underground tunnel looking at the light in front of them and leaving their fight behind.

4. Describe at least two of the narrator's physical attributes by using evidence from the selection above.

5. What is the name of the "emerald" that Lola talks about before scooping the narrator into her arms? How do you know?

6. How does Lola's body language suggest that she is angry?

7. In your own words, describe Dr. Science's tactic of getting The Green Dragon from Lola.

8. In your own words, describe Asha's tactic of getting The Green Dragon from Lola.

9. In your own words, explain why Asha's tactic is better than Dr. Science's in placating Lola.

SELECTION 3/4

On one hand I was relieved that the three of them were getting along again because I could keep track of them a little easier, but on the other hand I was worried because three criminal minds working together are worse than one or two. I was also slightly taken aback by what Asha mentioned about getting The Green Dragon to a museum. Why on earth would she want to take one of the most valuable objects in the world to a museum? It didn't make any sense to

me. The only thing I could imagine these three doing in a museum is **vandalizing** walls or stealing artwork – and they wouldn't need a priceless emerald for that. Another piece of their strange puzzle had fallen into my lap, and as we all walked toward the light in the tunnel, my mind began to race with different **scenarios**. I was more than a little tired of their company. But **realistically**, the only way I'd ever find out what they were up to was to stick with them.

It was clear that as we walked toward the light in the tunnel that someone else was near. The closer we got the more voices we heard. Asha Bloom, Little Lola, and I approached the voices cautiously, but Dr. Science acted as if by being **reluctant** we were **procrastinating**. "Would you hurry up?" he said impatiently when we were mere feet from where the light was coming. He was acting quite strange, even for Dr. Science. It was as if he was **anticipating** something once we reached the light and all those voices. He was acting like he knew what was going to happen and by leading the way for the rest of us, it was obvious that he knew where he was.

When we'd finally reached the spot we heard a voice yell out, "Who's there?" The sound of the voice was actually kind of pleasant. It had a kind of **euphony** to it as if the person behind it had taken years and years of singing lessons. But when none of us answered the question the voice changed from pleasant to **obtrusive** and threatening. "If you value your lives, you'd best reveal who you are. Many lives had ended at that very spot on which you're standing. I demand that you tell me who you are or you will all be **inflicted** with terrible physical and **psychological trauma**."

"Sebastian, is that you?" asked Dr. Science while Asha Bloom and Little Lola looked at each other in complete shock. How did Dr. Science know who the voice was?

"Dr. Science?"

"Yes, it's me, Sebastian. Now stop this nonsense and let us in."

Suddenly, a large rock wall opened and bright light flooded the tunnel. A large room was revealed behind the wall and a young gentleman wearing jeans, a t-shirt, and sneakers came toward us. "Come on in and take a look around. Come see what we've done to the place since you left," the gentleman said.

"It looks as if you've been busy with those improvements I suggested, Sebastian," Dr. Science said.

"Um, excuse me," Asha finally said, "but before you two get all friendly and start to **reminisce**, would you mind telling me exactly what's going on?"

"Oh dear, how rude of me," said the gentleman. "I'm not very used to having guests."

"Sure, sure, but who are you? Where are we? Why do you live at the end of a tunnel?" Asha said as she started **interrogating** the young gentleman.

"My name is Sebastian Fresh and this is my hideout."

"What are you hiding?" Little Lola asked while she looked around the large cave-like room. Her question amused both Dr. Science and Sebastian Fresh and they started to chuckle. The two of them obviously had a good **rapport** with each other.

"Look around you. What do you see?" Sebastian asked.

"I see a bunch of paintings and sculptures," Lola answered.

"And jewels," Asha added.

"Well then, there's your answer. We hide priceless works of art," Sebastian said and looked at Dr. Science before the two of them started to laugh again.

10. What is the narrator ambivalent about in his or her relationship with Dr. Science, Lola, and Asha? Use your own words to answer this question.

11. As the four characters walk towards the light in the tunnel, the narrator mentions three observations that lead to him/her forming three opinions. Use the boxes below to distinguish between observations and opinions.

OBSERVATIONS	OPINIONS
	Someone else was near.
Asha, Lola, and the narrator approached the voices cautiously, and Dr. Science said, "Would you hurry up?"	
	Dr. Science was moving towards the light in an impatient manner.

12. How is Sebastian's sudden appearance an anti-climax after "large rock wall opened up and bright light flooded the tunnel"?

SELECTION 4/4

"I don't get it. What's so great about a bunch of paintings?" Lola asked **skeptically**. Her question caused Asha to join Dr. Science and Sebastian's laughter leaving Lola feeling **dejected**. While the three of them laughed at her, Lola's anger grew and grew. She didn't like feeling **ostracized**. It wasn't her fault she didn't know anything about art.

Sensing that Lola's temper was quickly reaching its **capacity**, Sebastian Fresh stopped laughing and offered to show her around. "Let me give you a grand tour, my new friend. I'll explain the whole operation."

Little Lola **vacillated** for a moment. Part of her just wanted to take The Green Dragon and leave Dr. Science and Asha Bloom behind in the tunnel, but the other part of her really wanted to understand why they'd come so far to end up in a tunnel full of art. Lola found herself in a **quandary**, but eventually made the decision to stick around because something inside told her that The Green Dragon would be more valuable if she could use it as a bargaining tool. Besides, if she left now Dr. Science and Asha Bloom would eventually hunt her down and steal the emerald from her anyway. Little Lola concluded that it was best to **reconcile** with the fact that Dr. Science and Asha Bloom were going to tease her, but it didn't really matter what any of them said because she had what they wanted in her hat. She took **refuge** in this knowledge, which allowed her terrible mood to **convalesce** and improve a great deal.

"I'm terribly sorry to have laughed like that, my dear," Sebastian Fresh said as he put his arm around Little Lola and led her toward a table where a man wearing a welding mask and some heavy gloves was holding a blow torch. "I know what it's like to be considered **provincial** and it isn't at all nice. In fact, it wasn't until I met Dr. Science that my knowledge of art started to blossom."

"How long have you known Dr. Science?" Lola asked.

"Quite a while, he was one of my mentors," Sebastian responded.

Without saying much more about the history of his relationship with Dr. Science, Sebastian Fresh began to tell Little Lola all about his operations in the tunnel. "You see," he said in a **studious** voice as they watched the man with the blow torch **weld** together two pieces of steel, "art is priceless because the ideas behind it are priceless. And yet, there are a lot of people in the world who pay a lot of money to own the **manifestation** of the idea."

13. How does Lola try to recover from her terrible mood?

14. What is a “provincial” person like? Use contextual clues to help you answer this question.

VOCABULARY

Write a sentence for the words below. Make sure that each sentence reflects the meaning of the word or phrase. Feel free to change the form of the word.

1. Hysterical: _____

2. Psychological trauma: _____

3. Interrogate: _____

4. Ostracize: _____

5. Vacillate: _____

6. Reconcile: _____

7. Refuge: _____

THE END