

Cambridge Secondary 1 Progression Test

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Cambridge
Secondary 1

English Paper 2

Stage 9



Section A: Reading

Read this extract from *Sea of Whispers* by Tim Bowler and then answer the questions.

‘You must be able to see it, Tam,’ she said.

He didn’t answer. He just sat there next to her on the cliff-top, staring at the sea glass* in her hand. She turned her head and gazed about her: nothing moved on the rocky bluff and a heavy silence hung over the island. She thought of the others down in the bay and wondered why she couldn’t hear them. She felt sure their voices should reach her in this windless calm. She turned back to Tam and saw him watching her face.

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‘You’re meant to be looking at the sea glass,’ she said.

‘I can’t see anything in it, Hetty.’

‘I’ll hold it higher.’

She raised the sea glass. It looked dull against the bleak October sky, especially now that the light was fading, but the image was still there: a dark shape floating in the glass, as though breathed there by the sea.

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‘Can you see it now?’ she said.

But he was looking at her again.

‘Tam, it’s important.’

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‘I won’t see anything,’ he said. ‘I never do.’

‘But the sea glass was blank a moment ago and now it’s got a picture inside it.’

He peered at it again, but she knew he was feigning interest. She lowered the sea glass and closed it inside her hand. He glanced round at her.

‘I haven’t finished looking.’

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‘Never mind,’ she said. ‘You’re right. You’re never going to see anything. Nobody ever does.’ She frowned. ‘I’m the only strange person on Mora.’

Tam pulled his knees to his chest. ‘So what’s the picture this time? Or are you going to keep it to yourself? You’ve got really funny about the sea glass lately. What’s wrong?’

‘I don’t want you to laugh at me over the sea glass.’

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‘I’m not going to laugh at you.’

‘Other people do. It’s not our island in the sea glass, Tam. It’s not Mora.’

‘You said you saw it.’

‘I said I thought I did. But I was wrong. The picture started out looking like Mora, but then it changed.’

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‘Into what?’

‘Doesn’t matter.’ She flicked a small stone over the edge of the cliff, then thrust the sea glass into her pocket. ‘Let’s drop it.’

She turned her head and stared down from the cliff-top. The water below looked steely and still. She ran her eye over the rocky bar that stretched across the mouth of the bay as far as Eel Point. The giant boulders that guarded the anchorage* had no work to do in this unending calm: the sea was unruffled all the way to the horizon. She glanced at *The Pride of Mora*, sitting at her mooring. The island boat was bedecked with festive decorations, but all the flags hung limp.

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‘Looks like most people have arrived,’ said Tam, staring down too.

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Hetty looked over the shingle beach. It was crawling with figures arriving for the celebration. She searched for the spot where she’d found the sea glass that morning and saw Mungo and Duffy splashing stones there with Nessa and Jinty just behind them. Tam’s mother and father wandered past with Anna and Dolly and some of the families from the western cottages. A large crowd had already gathered near the top of the beach.

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Glossary:

*sea glass – sea glass begins as normal pieces of broken glass that are then persistently tumbled and ground by the sea until the sharp edges are smoothed and rounded

*anchorage – part of a harbour where it safe for boats to anchor

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