

PART C

READING COMPREHENSION

PRACTICE 1

You are going to read an extract from an article. For questions 1 to 8, choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) and mark the correct letter A, B, C or D on your answer sheet.

The ECG heart rate monitor beeped six times before it flatlined. She was the capable one who would go places, the radiant one whose smile was like a ray of light in a darkened world, the amiable one who didn't deserve a full stop in life at such a tender age. Five years as a paramedic, I have encountered one too many unpleasant scenes. But nothing could brace me for the sight of my sister's comatose broken body, her turquoise gown drenched with a single hue of red. To this day, no words can describe the flurry of emotions I experienced and the void that nearly swallowed me whole.

Looking back on all the time we spent together, once merry recollections, now elicit feelings of grief. My sister, Stella and I were raised by our affluent grandparents. Too engaged in their trading business to tend to two orphaned grandchildren, Stella and I were left in the care of governesses. Growing up in an elite society, our grandparents saw to it that we received the best education from erudite tutors, not to mention the etiquette lessons where we were taught to be ladylike and to carry ourselves with elegance. Stella was always prim and proper, the impeccable example of a noble woman. I, on the other hand, showed a blithe disregard for the graceful amenities of august society. My nonchalance, of course, riled my grandparents and exasperated Stella.

Stella and I were expected to be especially proficient in music. We took violin and piano lessons together. Thinking back, I commiserate immensely with my poor sister who sat through the lessons with a rueful grin while I mangled Chopin on the piano and Bach on the violin. Stella's playing, nonetheless, was beautiful and ever so distinctive from mine. She was invited for performances and recitals in prestigious concert halls.

Flashforward to the day of the accident, I remember her adorned with a turquoise gown and gold finery, all set to perform at her solo recital. Now that I know how the story ends, I can't help but be fixated on the flicker of disappointment on her face when I broke the news that I was unable to attend her recital due to my job obligations. Nonetheless, I pulled her into a tight embrace, assured her that she would pull everything off without a hitch and left for work. As usual, I had enough on my plate to worry about Stella. Arriving at my workstation, I gingerly scrutinised my tools, making sure I had everything essential for my shift. Five years into the job, I have grasped that there is no typical day in the life of a paramedic.

As evening came, thunder rumbled on the horizon and clouds signalled a torrential downpour. Just as I was enjoying the rhythm of the rain, my pager went off, beckoning my team to an intersection west of the local concert hall. Sirens wailing, our ambulance took off. Our trip, tedious to begin with, was rendered worse by the weather. By the time we arrived, the police had cordoned off the area. The accident scene was a horrifying sight, consisting of two vehicles rammed together by sheer force into a conglomerate of warped steel. I paced closer to the area, glass shards crunching below my feet. Within eyeshot, I saw a fireman trying to force the driver's side door free. Just then, I realised that the blood-streaked face pressed up against the passenger's broken window was Stella's.

"Get her out!" I yelled, working myself into a frenzy, "get her out of there this instant!" Realising that it was my sister whose life was on the line, my teammates held me back and did the work for me. My teammate took her pulse. "It's weak, but it's there."

In the hospital everything was a blur. All I remember was a doctor breaking the news that although a respirator was keeping her breathing, Stella was brain dead. I was at a loss for words, no language could express my grief. Gazing fondly at my sister, I realised then, that there was no energy to the lines of her face, hands that wiped my tears, brushed my hair and made soulful music now lay lifelessly at her sides. Taking a deep breath, tears flowing down my face, I clutched her hand and flipped off the respirator. Six beeps. The monitors flatlined. She was gone. Taken away much too soon.

- 1 In paragraph 1, what does the writer say about her sister?
 - A She was anxious around people.
 - B She had a bright future before her.
 - C She was concerned about the writer's future.
 - D She was still discouraged by her parents' premature death.
- 2 In her profession, the writer had to deal with ...
 - A gory scenes.
 - B job insecurities.
 - C demanding employers.
 - D competitive colleagues.
- 3 What proves that the writer's grandparents wanted the best for their granddaughters?
 - A They hired counsellors to help the girls deal with their loss and trauma.
 - B They doted on their granddaughters and raised the girls with love and devotion.
 - C They wanted their granddaughters to take over their flourishing trading business.
 - D They made sure the siblings had a well-rounded education under the guidance of highly competent instructors.
- 4 How did the writer feel about elite society's expectation of young ladies?
 - A She welcomed it.
 - B She couldn't be bothered by it.
 - C She thought it was discriminatory.
 - D She felt pressured to live up to it.
- 5 How was the writer's musical skills compared to her sister's?
 - A They were on par.
 - B The writer's musical skills were inferior to her sister's.
 - C The writer was more musically inclined than her sister.
 - D The writer's piano playing was exceptional whereas her sister was adept at violin.
- 6 "As usual, I had enough on my plate to worry about Stella." What do you understand from this statement?
 - A The writer had too much on her mind.
 - B The writer couldn't tolerate Stella's anxiety.
 - C The writer was worried about how Stella would feel.
 - D The writer was constantly anxious about Stella's well-being.
- 7 The team of paramedics arrived at the scene ...
 - A with difficulty.
 - B earlier than the police.
 - C without hindrance.
 - D late due to the heavy traffic.
- 8 Stella ...
 - A died peacefully.
 - B died prematurely.
 - C was killed on the spot.
 - D died on the way to the hospital