You are going to read an extract from a novel. For questions **1-6**, choose the answer (**A**, **B**, **C** or **D**) which you think fits best according to the text. 5

'Claire, it's Ruth.' Claire held back a sigh and walked into the kitchen to put the coffee machine on. A phone call from her sister was never over quickly.

'Ruth, darling. How are you?' As she waited for her sister to start describing in detail her latest disaster, Claire mulled over how much to reveal about her new business assignment. Her family would have to be told something, of course. Not that they ever came to visit, or called her home phone, or sent her letters. Still, it seemed only right to tell them it meant she was moving out for twelve months. Tuning back into the phone call, Claire realised she had missed some key information and tried to catch up with what her sister was talking about.

'So the doctor said it was probably lack of sleep. You know Sky is a bad sleeper and her nightmares have been worse since she started Year Two.' Claire worked out that someone was unwell, but was unsure whether it was her sister or her six-year-old niece.

Claire thought about her own schooling. Her parents had paid for the best, obviously, although Claire often wondered whether that was to ensure their three children didn't affect their lifestyle, rather than to give their off spring a good start in life. T e school had encouraged independence and character but had no time for tears and tantrums. Claire had learned quickly to work hard and stay out of trouble. More than could be said for Ruth. It had been a constant disappointment to her parents that, while their first and third children both achieved academic success, Ruth only acquired a reputation for bad behaviour.

Ruth's next sentence sharply interrupted Claire's thoughts.

'The tests are the week after next. That's why I'm calling. Is there any chance you could come and look after Sky? It's half-term and most of her friends are going skiing. Of course we can't afford that…'

Claire inhaled deeply and forced herself not to rise to the bait. Ruth was always poor and begrudged Claire her success.

Claire accepted that looking after a child on your own probably limited your career options, but look at the 'Harry Potter' author J. K. Rowling, it hadn't held her back. She was convinced Ruth could help herself if only she'd try harder. Claire was almost too irritated by the thinly-veiled criticism to react to the request, but not quite.

'Have Sky? How long for? When?' Claire could hear panic in her voice and forced herself to breathe in deeply. Once she was sure she was back in control of her emotions she said in a slow voice, 'I start a new work assignment on 1st March, and I'll … be on the road a lot. You know. Meeting clients.'

'Dining out on someone else's credit card.' Ruth's voice cut in.

'There's more to it than that,' Claire responded quickly. Then, before Ruth could start the age-old argument, Claire (*line 33*) consciously lowered her voice.

'Tell me the day you need me to have Sky, I'll check my diary.'

'Well, it's two days, actually.' Ruth sounded embarrassed.

Thinking about minding a six-year-old for two days almost made Claire choke. She gulped down her coffee and wondered if she could use the new assignment as an excuse.

There was something in Ruth's voice, though, that made her pause.

'Can't Mum take care of her? I thought Mum and Dad were the perfect grandparents?' It seemed odd to Claire that two people who had no time for their own children could go mad over someone else's, even if they were their grandkids.

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'Er, Mum's coming with me, to the hospital.'
Ruth's words finally got through to Claire. 'Just what tests are you having exactly?'
'Weren't you listening? You never listen to me.'
Claire almost smiled at the petulant tone in Ruth's voice. For a moment they were twelve and fourteen again.

1 When Claire realises who is phoning her, she
- **A** expects to hear some good news.
- **B** tries to hide her true feelings.
- **C** hopes it will be a long conversation.
- **D** knows exactly what she will say to Ruth.

2 Why doesn't Claire know who is ill?
- **A** Ruth didn't make it clear who she was talking about.
- **B** None of her other relatives had written to her about it.
- **C** She was away on business when the illness began.
- **D** She wasn't paying attention when Ruth was speaking.

3 How does Claire feel about her school?
- **A** She would have achieved more at a better school.
- **B** Her parents never appreciated how successful she was there.
- **C** Her sister was better suited to that school than she was.
- **D** She may have been sent there for the wrong reasons.

4 What is Claire's attitude to Ruth's financial problems?
- **A** She feels they are largely Ruth's own fault.
- **B** She wishes she could do more to help Ruth.
- **C** She thinks Ruth could get any well-paid job she wanted.
- **D** She feels guilty about having more money than Ruth.

5 What does 'it' on line 33 refer to?
- **A** spending the f rm's money
- **B** the task Claire has been given
- **C** looking after Ruth's daughter
- **D** the reason Claire sounds stressed

6 What do we learn about Claire and her family?
- **A** Her relationship with her sister has completely changed since their childhood.
- **B** She realises that her parents treated her very well when she was a child.
- **C** She doesn't understand why her parents are so close to their grandchildren.
- **D** She accepts that her mother is more interested in Ruth than in her.

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