

SMETA ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Question Paper: Grade 9 - 10, Set 1

QUESTIONS
25

TIME ALLOWED
60 MIN

MAX MARKS
100

Instructions:

Read each question carefully. Each question has four options (A, B, C, D). Choose only one correct answer. Use a pencil or a blue/black pen. All the best!

★ GOOD LUCK ★ Think Clearly ★ Choose Boldly ★ Shine Proudly ★

SMETA Olympiads ★ Empowering Young Minds Worldwide

1 Choose the word that correctly completes the analogy.
Pusillanimous : Valiant :: Mendacious : ____

A Disingenuous

B Veracious

C Capricious

D Loquacious

2 Choose the single word that best substitutes the following definition:
"A literary technique in which the chronological sequence of events is interrupted by the insertion of scenes from an earlier time."

A Anagnorisis

B Anachronism

C Analepsis

D Anaphora

3 Which pair of words are anagrams of each other AND share a meaningful semantic relationship?

A LISTEN, SILENT

B GARDEN, DANGER

C STONE, NOTES

D EARTH, HATE

4 Choose the sentence in which ALL words are used correctly.
The ____ voted to ____ the proposal, ____ for one contentious clause that required further legal ____.

A council / accept / except / counsel

B counsel / except / accept / council

C council / except / accept / council

D counsel / accept / except / counsel

5 Which modal verb most precisely expresses a strong logical deduction in academic writing, as opposed to expressing mere possibility or obligation?

A might

B could

C must

D should

6 Choose the grammatically correct option to complete the sentence.
"The professor insisted on ____ the entire lecture before allowing students to submit questions."

A completing

B to complete

C complete

D have completed

7

Read the following lines:

"The factory clock devours the hours, spitting out the husks of days gone by."

Which two figures of speech are used, and what is their combined effect?

A

Personification and metaphor: humanising the clock while depicting time as consumed and wasted

B

Simile and hyperbole: exaggerating the speed of time to emphasise industrial efficiency

C

Alliteration and imagery: creating a rhythmic effect to celebrate industrial progress

D

Apostrophe and irony: addressing the clock directly while mocking industrial culture

8

"The magistrate is reviewing the evidence presented by both parties."

Which option correctly transforms this into passive voice?

A

The evidence presented by both parties is being reviewed by the magistrate.

B

The evidence presented by both parties are being reviewed by the magistrate.

C

The evidence was being presented by both parties and reviewed by the magistrate.

D

The evidence is reviewed by the magistrate from both parties.

9

Read the excerpt from a formal letter. Which sentence contains an inappropriate register?

(1) I am writing to formally register my dissatisfaction with the service I received on 14th March. (2) The level of incompetence was quite literally the worst thing I have ever experienced in my entire life. (3) I would be grateful if you could investigate this matter and provide a written response within fourteen days. (4) I trust that this matter will be resolved and look forward to your prompt reply.

A

Sentence 1

B

Sentence 2

C

Sentence 3

D

Sentence 4

10

What is the correct meaning of the idiom "hit the nail on the head"?

A

To complete a physically demanding task with great skill

B

To describe something accurately and precisely

C

To make a lucky guess without prior knowledge

D

To solve a problem by using force rather than reasoning

11 Combine the two sentences using an adverbial clause of **CONCESSION**.

Sentence 1: The new economic policy generated significant controversy. **Sentence 2:** Several analysts predicted it would stabilise inflation within a year.

- A** The new economic policy generated significant controversy, so several analysts predicted it would stabilise inflation within a year.
- B** Although the new economic policy generated significant controversy, several analysts predicted it would stabilise inflation within a year.
- C** The new economic policy, which generated significant controversy, stabilised inflation within a year.
- D** The new economic policy generated significant controversy because several analysts predicted it would stabilise inflation.

12 Which option correctly punctuates the sentence below?

The professor whose research on neurodiversity has revolutionised educational practice believes firmly that standardised testing is an inadequate and sometimes counterproductive measure of genuine intellectual potential.

- A** The professor, whose research on neurodiversity has revolutionised educational practice, believes firmly that standardised testing is an inadequate and sometimes counterproductive measure of genuine intellectual potential.
- B** The professor whose research on neurodiversity has revolutionised educational practice believes firmly that standardised testing is an inadequate and sometimes counterproductive measure of genuine intellectual potential.
- C** The professor, whose research on neurodiversity has revolutionised educational practice believes firmly, that standardised testing is an inadequate and sometimes counterproductive measure.
- D** The professor whose research, on neurodiversity, has revolutionised educational practice believes firmly that standardised testing is an inadequate measure.

13 Choose the word that most precisely fits the blank.

"The scientist's explanation of quantum entanglement was _____, reducing complex theoretical physics to vivid analogies that even non-specialists could follow."

- A** verbose
- B** terse
- C** lucid
- D** pedantic

14 Which sentence most effectively demonstrates "showing" rather than "telling" the reader that a character is anxious?

- A** She was extremely anxious about the interview.
- B** She had never been so nervous in her entire life before that moment.
- C** She rehearsed her answers three times on the bus, checked her phone compulsively at the reception desk, and asked for a glass of water she never drank.
- D** Everyone in the room could see that she was feeling very worried about what was going to happen.

15 A journalist uncovers a document revealing governmental corruption. Publishing serves the public but would endanger the source. The journalist chooses not to publish.
Which proverb most accurately captures the ethical tension?

- A** The end justifies the means
- B** With great power comes great responsibility
- C** A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
- D** The pen is mightier than the sword

16 The words "assertive" and "aggressive" both describe someone who pursues goals firmly.
What is the key difference between them?

- A** Assertive implies confident, respectful self-expression; aggressive implies forceful and potentially hostile behaviour.
- B** Aggressive is a formal term used in professional settings; assertive is more casual and conversational.
- C** They are exact synonyms and carry identical connotations in all contexts.
- D** Assertive implies physical strength; aggressive implies verbal persistence and argument.

Read the passage carefully and answer Questions 17 - 20

To remain silent in the presence of injustice is not neutrality: it is complicity. Yet the calculus of moral courage is rarely so straightforward. The whistleblower who exposes institutional corruption risks professional ruin, social ostracism, and in some cases, physical danger. The witness who speaks against a powerful abuser may find that truth, however well-documented, is no match for wealth and influence. The romanticised narrative of moral courage, the solitary hero who speaks truth to power and is ultimately vindicated, obscures a far more common reality: that many who speak out are not vindicated, at least not in their lifetimes. History reserves its posthumous applause for those who were right in ways that subsequent generations found convenient to acknowledge. This is not an argument for silence. It is, rather, a case for honesty about what moral courage actually demands. It demands the willingness to act rightly without the guarantee of a satisfying outcome. It requires what the philosopher Aristotle called *phronesis*, practical wisdom, the capacity to navigate moral complexity without retreating into the false comfort of absolute rules.

17 What does the author mean by the phrase "posthumous applause" in the second paragraph?

- A** Recognition given to historical figures through public monuments and statues.
- B** The selective historical memory that celebrates only those whose courage proved convenient to acknowledge retrospectively.
- C** The tendency of contemporary society to celebrate living activists above historical ones.
- D** Academic recognition awarded to philosophers who theorised about moral courage.

18 The author's primary purpose in the second paragraph is to:

- A Argue that moral courage is ultimately futile and should be replaced by pragmatic accommodation.
- B Challenge the romanticised narrative of courage by honestly acknowledging that right action often goes unrewarded.
- C Suggest that well-known historical activists were more courageous than unnamed individuals.
- D Provide historical evidence that societies always eventually recognise and reward moral courage.

19 What does the author mean by phronesis in the final paragraph?

- A The willingness to sacrifice personal wellbeing for the collective good without reservation.
- B The philosophical concept of absolute moral rules that guide all ethical decision-making.
- C Practical wisdom: the capacity to navigate moral complexity with discernment and good judgement.
- D The Aristotelian virtue of physical courage demonstrated in difficult or dangerous situations.

20 The overall argument of the editorial can best be summarised as:

- A Speaking out against injustice is always the morally correct choice, regardless of personal consequences.
- B True moral courage involves acting rightly with clear-eyed honesty about the complexity and cost of doing so.
- C The historical record proves conclusively that moral courage is always vindicated in the end.
- D Modern individuals lack the moral courage displayed by historical activists and whistleblowers.

Read the passage carefully and answer Questions 21 - 25

There is a particular species of disorientation that belongs only to the act of returning. I had not been back to the house on Meridian Street for eleven years, and what struck me first, as I turned the key in the lock, was not the familiar smell of old wood and lavender I had rehearsed so many times in memory, but the smallness. The ceilings I had known as vaulted and imposing had contracted. The hallway, down which I once ran with the reckless velocity of childhood, was barely four steps wide. Memory, I understood then, is not a recording but a construction. We do not store the past; we rebuild it, each time, from fragments, and in rebuilding, we enlarge, distort, and idealise. The rooms I had carried within me were not the rooms I now stood in; they were the rooms I had needed to carry. Yet I did not feel deceived. The house had been exactly what I needed it to be when I needed it. If my memory had made it larger, it was because I had been smaller: in age, in experience, in my knowledge of how much world there was. The shrinking of Meridian Street was not a loss; it was a measure of how much I had grown. I closed the door behind me, and felt, for the first time in years, that I was precisely the right size for the life I had been living.

21 What is the primary function of the word "smallness" in the opening paragraph?

- A It establishes a tone of disappointment and regret about the irreversible passage of time.
- B It introduces the central tension between remembered experience and present reality that drives the essay.
- C It emphasises the physical neglect and deterioration of the house during the narrator's long absence.
- D It suggests that the narrator feels personally diminished by the experience of returning.

22 What does the author mean when they write that "memory is not a recording but a construction"?

- A That memories are inherently unreliable and therefore cannot be trusted or acted upon.
- B That we rebuild the past each time we recall it, shaping it according to our emotional needs and desires.
- C That advances in technology have made it possible to record memories with far greater accuracy than before.
- D That the narrator's memory was specifically distorted by the length and circumstances of their absence.

23 The phrase "the reckless velocity of childhood" is an example of which literary device?

- A A personification, attributing human recklessness to the abstract concept of velocity.
- B A transferred epithet, where "reckless" describes the child's nature rather than the speed itself.
- C A metaphor, comparing the experience of childhood directly to a racing vehicle.
- D An oxymoron, combining two logically contradictory concepts within a single phrase.

24 Which of the following best expresses the central insight of the final paragraph?

- A Returning home inevitably leads to a profound sense of loss and irreversible disillusionment.
- B The narrator recognises that the enlarged memory of home was appropriate to who they were then, and their changed perception reflects personal growth.
- C The narrator decides to accept the smallness of the house pragmatically because it cannot be physically changed.
- D Memory distortion is ultimately harmful because it generates unrealistic expectations about places and people.

25 The tone of the essay as a whole can best be described as:

- A** Melancholic and despairing, mourning what has been irretrievably lost to the passage of time.
- B** Detached and analytical, examining the mechanisms of memory with scientific precision.
- C** Reflective and accepting, finding meaning and growth in the contrast between memory and present reality.
- D** Nostalgic and sentimental, longing for the simplicity and freedom of an idealised childhood.

Answer Key

SMETA English Olympiad • Grade 9 - 10 • Set 1

1. B	2. C	3. A	4. A	5. C
6. A	7. A	8. A	9. B	10. B
11. B	12. A	13. C	14. C	15. B
16. A	17. B	18. B	19. C	20. B
21. B	22. B	23. B	24. B	25. C

SMETA ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Question Paper: Grade 9 - 10, Set 2

QUESTIONS
25

TIME ALLOWED
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Instructions:

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1 Choose the word that correctly completes the analogy.

Verbose : Succinct :: Opulent : ____

A Austere

B Lavish

C Ornate

D Extravagant

2 Choose the single word that best substitutes the following definition:

"The study of the origin and history of words."

A Philology

B Etymology

C Lexicography

D Semantics

3 The old sailor knew how to tack skilfully against the wind, but during the storm the nails he used to tack down the sail came loose.

Which best explains the two uses of "tack"?

A Both refer to sailing techniques, but at different speeds.

B The first means to change direction using wind; the second means to sail directly downwind.

C The first means to sail a zig-zag course against the wind; the second means to fasten with a small nail.

D Both uses mean the same thing: to fasten something temporarily.

4 Choose the option that correctly completes the sentence.

"By the time the ship reaches port next week, the crew ____ at sea for over two months."

A will be

B has been

C had been

D will have been

5 Choose the idiom that best completes the sentence.

Mariana worked tirelessly on the proposal for weeks, refusing every shortcut, determined to ____ before presenting it to the board.

A leave no stone unturned

B jump on the bandwagon

C cut corners

D beat around the bush

6 Choose the correct phrasal verb to complete the sentence.

The negotiations had stalled for months until the two delegations finally managed to _____ their differences and sign the treaty.

A give up on

B iron out

C look into

D call off

7 Choose the correctly punctuated sentence.

A The committee, having reviewed the proposal thoroughly rejected it unanimously.

B The committee having reviewed the proposal thoroughly, rejected it unanimously.

C The committee, having reviewed the proposal thoroughly, rejected it unanimously.

D The committee having, reviewed the proposal thoroughly, rejected it unanimously.

8 Choose the sentence with the correct determiner usage.

A Few of the evidence was compelling enough to convince the jury.

B Little of the witnesses were willing to testify.

C Much of the witnesses testified under oath.

D Little of the evidence was compelling enough to convince the jury.

9 "The negotiations crawled forward like a wounded animal, each concession dragged out in agony."

Which figure of speech dominates this sentence?

A Simile, comparing the pace of negotiations to a wounded animal

B Metaphor, directly equating negotiations with an animal

C Personification, giving negotiations human agony

D Hyperbole, exaggerating the slowness of negotiations

10 Choose the sentence containing a noun clause.

A Because the evidence was inconclusive, the case was dismissed.

B What the committee decided remains confidential.

C The witness, who arrived late, testified reluctantly.

D Although the trial was lengthy, the verdict came quickly.

11 Choose the sentence with a correctly used non-restrictive relative clause.

- A** The lawyer that argued the case was highly experienced.
- B** The lawyer who argued the case, was highly experienced.
- C** The lawyer, who had thirty years of experience, argued the case brilliantly.
- D** The lawyer whom argued the case was highly experienced.

12 Choose the grammatically correct sentence.

- A** Having finish the report, she submitted it before the deadline.
- B** Finishing the report, she was submitted before the deadline.
- C** Have finished the report, she submitted it before the deadline.
- D** Having finished the report, she submitted it before the deadline.

**13 "The engineers had completed the bridge inspection before the storm arrived."
Choose the correct passive voice version.**

- A** The bridge inspection had been completed by the engineers before the storm arrived.
- B** The bridge inspection was completed by the engineers before the storm arrived.
- C** The bridge inspection has been completed by the engineers before the storm arrived.
- D** The bridge inspection is completed by the engineers before the storm arrived.

**14 Renata said, "I have already submitted my application."
Choose the correct indirect speech version.**

- A** Renata said that she has already submitted her application.
- B** Renata said that she had already submitted her application.
- C** Renata said that she already submitted her application.
- D** Renata says that she had already submitted her application.

**15 After losing the contract to a rival firm, the manager reminded her team that setbacks were temporary and encouraged them to keep pursuing new clients.
Which proverb best fits her message?**

- A** Too many cooks spoil the broth
- B** A stitch in time saves nine
- C** Where there's a will, there's a way
- D** Actions speak louder than words

16 Which opening is most appropriate for a formal proposal submitted to a company's board of directors?

- A Hey everyone, just wanted to pitch an idea I had.
- B So basically, I think we should try this new approach.
- C I guess this could work if we're lucky.
- D This proposal outlines a strategic initiative to enhance operational efficiency across departments.

Read the poem carefully and answer Questions 17 - 20

The Orchard in November

The branches, stripped of all their gold, stand black against a paling sky; yet underneath the frost-hard soil a stubborn root refuses to die.

The farmer does not mourn the leaves that scattered wide on autumn's breath; he trusts the quiet work of roots, the patience buried under death.

For spring will come, as it has come through every winter, harsh and long, and what appeared a barren field will rise again, astonishing, in song.

17 What does the phrase "a stubborn root refuses to die" most likely suggest?

- A An underlying resilience persists despite outward signs of decline.
- B The tree is diseased and will not survive the winter.
- C The farmer is stubbornly refusing to accept the season's change.
- D The roots are literally fighting against the frost.

18 What is the dominant tone of the poem?

- A Despairing and bitter
- B Hopeful and reassuring
- C Sarcastic and detached
- D Anxious and uncertain

19 Which literary device is most evident in "what appeared a barren field will rise again, astonishing, in song"?

- A Simile
- B Onomatopoeia
- C Personification, attributing "rising" and "song" to the field's renewal
- D Alliteration

20 What central theme does the poem most clearly explore?

- A The inevitability of loss
- B The farmer's isolation
- C The unpredictability of weather
- D Resilience and renewal beneath apparent barrenness

Read the passage carefully and answer Questions 21 - 25

Roughly a mile beneath the ocean's surface, sunlight has long since disappeared, yet the water is far from dark. Nearly three-quarters of deep-sea creatures generate their own light through a chemical reaction called bioluminescence, produced when a molecule called luciferin reacts with oxygen inside specialised cells.

The uses of this glow are startlingly varied. The anglerfish dangles a luminous lure above its jaws to draw in unsuspecting prey. Certain species of squid eject a cloud of glowing ink instead of the ordinary dark kind, blinding predators with light rather than concealing themselves in darkness. Some small crustaceans emit a burst of blue light when startled, not to attract a mate or lure prey, but to attract something bigger: a larger predator that might, in turn, eat whatever was threatening them in the first place, a defence marine biologists have nicknamed the 'burglar alarm' strategy.

What makes bioluminescence remarkable is not merely its prevalence but its precision. Species have evolved to control the colour, duration, and pattern of their light with an accuracy that puts most human-made signalling systems to shame, using the same basic chemistry for camouflage, communication, hunting, and defence, sometimes within a single organism.

21 According to the passage, what chemical process produces bioluminescence?

- A A reaction between a molecule called luciferin and oxygen inside specialised cells.
- B Heat generated by the pressure of deep ocean water.
- C Sunlight stored during the day and released at night.
- D Bacteria that infect deep-sea creatures and glow independently.

22 What is unusual about the "burglar alarm" strategy described in the passage?

- A The creature uses light to hide from all predators simultaneously.
- B The creature emits light to attract a larger predator that might attack its own attacker.
- C The creature uses light only to communicate with others of its own species.
- D The creature releases light to imitate the appearance of a larger, more dangerous animal.

23 Why does the author mention the squid's glowing ink cloud?

- A To show that all deep-sea creatures use light in the same way.
- B To argue that squid are more intelligent than other deep-sea creatures.
- C To illustrate a use of bioluminescence, blinding rather than concealment, that differs from more familiar defensive tactics.
- D To explain how squid produce normal, non-luminous ink.

24 What does the author suggest by comparing bioluminescent control to "human-made signalling systems"?

- A That deep-sea creatures are more technologically advanced than humans.
- B That bioluminescence and human technology serve identical purposes.
- C That scientists have already replicated bioluminescence artificially.
- D That the precision of natural bioluminescent control is impressively sophisticated, rivalling engineered systems.

25 The overall purpose of the passage is to:

- A Inform the reader about the variety and precision of bioluminescence in deep-sea life.
- B Persuade the reader to support deep-sea conservation funding.
- C Narrate a marine biologist's personal expedition to the deep sea.
- D Compare bioluminescence unfavourably to other forms of animal communication.

Answer Key

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1. A	2. B	3. C	4. D	5. A
6. B	7. C	8. D	9. A	10. B
11. C	12. D	13. A	14. B	15. C
16. D	17. A	18. B	19. C	20. D
21. A	22. B	23. C	24. D	25. A

SMETA ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Question Paper: Grade 9 - 10, Set 3

QUESTIONS
25

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Instructions:

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1 Choose the word that correctly completes the analogy.

Frugal : Extravagant :: Reticent : ____

- A Silent
- C Reserved

- B Loquacious
- D Timid

2 Choose the single word that best substitutes the following definition:

"A word that sounds the same as another but has a different meaning and spelling."

- A Synonym
- C Homophone

- B Antonym
- D Homograph

3 Which word is an anagram of "LISTEN" that also relates to it in meaning, as a form of quiet observation?

- A TINSEL
- C INLETS

- B ENLIST
- D SILENT

4 Solve the riddle:

"I have keys but no locks. I have space but no room. You can enter, but you can't go outside."

What am I?

- A A keyboard
- C A map

- B A house
- D A piano

5 Which sentence is compound-complex?

- A Although it rained, the match continued.
- C The players went home early, and the coach left too.

- B Although the storm arrived suddenly, the coach cancelled practice, and the players went home early.
- D The storm, which arrived suddenly, cancelled practice.

6 After the merger, employees were told to prepare for major changes, and the CEO warned that some restructuring decisions would be difficult, but necessary "growing pains." What does "growing pains" mean in this context?

- A** Physical discomfort experienced by employees during long work hours.
- B** A medical condition affecting young employees specifically.
- C** Difficulties that accompany a period of necessary growth or change.
- D** A permanent problem with no resolution.

7 Arrange the sentences to form a coherent paragraph.
 1. As a result, many coastal cities have begun investing in adaptive infrastructure. 2. Rising sea levels pose an increasing threat to coastal communities worldwide. 3. These projects range from movable flood barriers to elevated buildings. 4. Without such measures, billions of dollars in property could be at risk within decades.

- A** 1, 3, 2, 4
- B** 3, 4, 2, 1
- C** 2, 3, 1, 4
- D** 2, 1, 3, 4

8 Which modal verb best expresses a polite, tentative suggestion in formal correspondence?

- A** might
- B** must
- C** shall
- D** will

9 Choose the correctly punctuated sentence.

- A** The proposal covers three areas, budget, timeline and staffing.
- B** The proposal covers three areas: budget, timeline, and staffing.
- C** The proposal covers three areas; budget, timeline, and staffing.
- D** The proposal covers three areas budget, timeline, and staffing.

10 Choose the grammatically correct sentence.

- A** She made him to apologize for his mistake.
- B** She let him to apologize for his mistake.
- C** She made him apologize for his mistake.
- D** She made him apologizing for his mistake.

11 Which closing is most appropriate for a formal email requesting a meeting with a client?

A Catch you later!

B Thanks a bunch, bye!

C See ya!

D I look forward to your response and appreciate your time.

12 Solve the riddle:

"The more you take, the more you leave behind."
What am I?

A Footsteps

B Time

C Memories

D Shadows

13 Identify the type of clause underlined in:

"The reason why the merger failed remains unclear."

A Adverbial clause

B Noun clause acting as subject complement

C Relative clause

D Independent clause

14 Choose the single word that best substitutes the following definition:

"A statement that appears self-contradictory but may reveal an underlying truth."

A Analogy

B Anecdote

C Paradox

D Euphemism

15 Which sentence uses rhetorical persuasion most effectively in an argumentative essay?

A Some people think recycling might possibly help the environment a little.

B Recycling is a thing some cities do.

C Recycling could be considered, perhaps, a reasonably good idea.

D Failing to act on recycling today condemns future generations to a planet buried in waste.

16 Choose the sentence with correct determiner usage.

- A Neither of the two proposals was approved by the board.
- B Neither of the two proposals were approved by the board.
- C Either of the proposals were rejected outright.
- D Both of the proposal was rejected outright.

Read the notice carefully and answer Questions 17 - 20

Regional Youth Writing Competition, Call for Entries

The Northbridge Literary Society invites writers aged 13 to 18 to submit original short stories (under 2,000 words) on the theme 'Turning Points' by the 30th of November. Entries must be submitted electronically via the society's website, accompanied by a completed entry form. A panel of published authors will judge submissions on originality, structure, and use of language. Winners will be announced at the annual Northbridge Literary Gala in December, with the first-place entry published in the Society's anthology. Entrants are limited to one submission each, and previously published work will not be considered.

17 According to the notice, what is required for an entry to be considered valid?

- A Submission by post along with a printed manuscript.
- B Electronic submission with a completed entry form, and the work must be unpublished.
- C A minimum word count of 2,000 words.
- D A letter of recommendation from a teacher.

18 What will happen to the first-place entry?

- A It will be read aloud at a school assembly.
- B It will be submitted to a national competition.
- C It will be published in the Society's anthology.
- D It receives a cash prize of an unspecified amount.

19 What is the overall purpose of this notice?

- A To criticise the quality of previous competition entries.
- B To announce the winners of a past competition.
- C To advertise membership fees for the Literary Society.
- D To invite young writers to submit entries to a competition, explaining the rules and deadline.

20 Which detail would most affect a student who has already had a story published in a school magazine?

- A The rule that previously published work will not be considered.
- B The word count limit of 2,000 words.
- C The requirement to submit via the society's website.
- D The date of the Literary Gala in December.

Read the passage carefully and answer Questions 21 - 25

The Chamber Beneath the Library

Ines had been cataloguing the university archive's oldest shelf for three weeks before she noticed that one wall sounded different when she knocked on it. Every other wall in the basement returned the dull, solid thud of packed stone. This one rang slightly hollow, a fact she might have dismissed had she not spent her childhood exploring her grandfather's crumbling farmhouse, where hollow walls had usually meant something.

She did not tell her supervisor immediately. Instead, she spent two evenings quietly measuring the room's dimensions against the building's original 1890 blueprints, which she found, after some searching, folded inside a forgotten filing cabinet. The numbers did not match. According to the blueprints, the basement should have extended four metres further than the wall in front of her allowed.

When she finally reported her findings, her supervisor was sceptical, until a contractor's scan confirmed a sealed space behind the wall, undisturbed for over a century. It turned out to be a small storage chamber, not a hidden treasure room, containing nothing more dramatic than decades-old ledgers and a bricked-up ventilation shaft. Ines was almost disappointed. And yet, she thought, as she photographed the dusty shelves for the record, there was something satisfying in having been right about the hollow wall at all, treasure or not.

21 What first made Ines suspicious about the basement wall?

- A A strange smell coming from behind the wall.
- B The wall sounded hollow when she knocked on it, unlike every other wall in the basement.
- C A note she found describing a hidden room.
- D Her supervisor told her to investigate that specific wall.

22 Why does the passage mention Ines's childhood at her grandfather's farmhouse?

- A To explain why she dislikes old buildings.
- B To show that she is afraid of enclosed spaces.
- C To suggest a personal reason she recognised the significance of a hollow wall.
- D To explain her interest in architecture as a career.

23 What evidence did Ines gather before reporting her findings?

- A A rumour from a colleague about a hidden room.
- B A photograph of a crack in the wall.
- C An old newspaper article about the building.
- D A comparison between the basement's actual dimensions and the original 1890 blueprints.

24 What does Ines's reaction at the end of the passage, "almost disappointed... yet... satisfying," most likely reveal?

- A She valued being proven right through careful reasoning more than the disappointing contents of the chamber.
- B She regretted ever investigating the wall.
- C She was angry that the chamber contained no treasure.
- D She planned to seal the chamber again immediately.

25 What is the central theme of the passage?

- A The dangers of exploring old buildings without permission.
- B The value of careful observation and persistence, even when the outcome isn't dramatic.
- C The rivalry between Ines and her supervisor.
- D The history of the university's founding in 1890.

Answer Key

SMETA English Olympiad • Grade 9 - 10 • Set 3

1. B	2. C	3. D	4. A	5. B
6. C	7. D	8. A	9. B	10. C
11. D	12. A	13. B	14. C	15. D
16. A	17. B	18. C	19. D	20. A
21. B	22. C	23. D	24. A	25. B

SMETA ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Question Paper: Grade 9 - 10, Set 4

QUESTIONS
25

TIME ALLOWED
60 MIN

MAX MARKS
100

Instructions:

Read each question carefully. Each question has four options (A, B, C, D). Choose only one correct answer. Use a pencil or a blue/black pen. All the best!

★ GOOD LUCK ★ Think Clearly ★ Choose Boldly ★ Shine Proudly ★

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1 Which word logically completes the sequence:
Seed, Sprout, Sapling, ____?

- A Bloom
- C Tree

- B Wilt
- D Root

2 Choose the word that correctly completes the analogy.
Ambiguous : Clear :: Redundant : ____

- A Superfluous
- C Excessive

- B Verbose
- D Essential

3 "The board decided to table the motion until the next meeting."
In this sentence, "table" means:

- A To postpone discussion of something.
- C To reject something outright.

- B To place something physically on a table.
- D To publish something formally.

4 "The government should implement the new policy immediately."
Choose the correct passive voice version.

- A The new policy should be implementing by the government immediately.
- C The new policy should implement by the government immediately.

- B The new policy should be implemented by the government immediately.
- D The new policy should have been implemented by the government immediately.

5 The reporter asked the minister, "Will the reforms take effect next year?"
Choose the correct indirect speech version.

- A The reporter asked the minister if the reforms will take effect next year.
- C The reporter asked the minister whether the reforms would take effect the following year.

- B The reporter asked the minister that would the reforms take effect the following year.
- D The reporter asked the minister if the reforms would take effect next year.

6 Choose the sentence with the correctly used participial phrase.

- A Exhausted from the long journey, the hotel welcomed the travellers.
- B Exhausting from the long journey, the travellers checked into the hotel.
- C The travellers checking into the hotel, exhausted from the long journey.
- D The travellers, exhausted from the long journey, checked into the hotel.

7 Which phrase is an example of an oxymoron?

- A deafening silence
- B bright light
- C quick response
- D heavy rain

8 "While renewable energy adoption has accelerated globally, critics argue that storage technology has not kept pace, leaving grids vulnerable during peak demand."
What is the main concern raised in this sentence?

- A Renewable energy is too expensive to adopt widely.
- B Storage technology has lagged behind the growth of renewable energy adoption.
- C Grids are becoming obsolete.
- D Peak demand no longer exists.

9 Despite months of preparation, the launch failed spectacularly, and the CEO admitted the team had "bitten off more than they could chew."
What does this idiom mean?

- A They ate poorly during the project.
- B They completed the project ahead of schedule.
- C They took on a task more difficult than they could manage.
- D They refused to attempt the project at all.

10 Choose the sentence with correct apostrophe usage.

- A The company's quarterly reports were released on time.
- B Its' too early to determine the outcome.
- C The children's toys were scattered across the room's, floor.
- D The witness's testimony contradicted the officer's report.

11 Identify the clause type:
"Wherever the committee meets, controversy inevitably follows."

- A Adverbial clause of place
- B Noun clause
- C Relative clause
- D Adverbial clause of time

12 Which sentence is most appropriate as the opening line of a formal report analysing declining student attendance?

- A Attendance has been going down and that's not great.
- B This report analyses the recent decline in student attendance and identifies its primary contributing factors.
- C Nobody really understands why attendance is dropping, but here we go.
- D Attendance dropped, which is kind of a problem.

13 "The critic's review, while ostensibly balanced, devoted three paragraphs to praise and a single dismissive sentence to critique."

What can be inferred about the critic's actual stance?

- A The critic was entirely negative about the work.
- B The critic gave equal weight to praise and critique.
- C Despite claiming balance, the critic was substantially more favourable than critical.
- D The critic refused to take any position.

14 Choose the grammatically correct sentence.

- A She avoided to answer the question directly.
- B She avoided answer the question directly.
- C She avoided to answering the question directly.
- D She avoided answering the question directly.

15 After ignoring early warning signs, the company faced a crisis that could have been prevented with timely action. Which proverb best captures this situation?

- A A stitch in time saves nine
- B Too many cooks spoil the broth
- C Every cloud has a silver lining
- D Actions speak louder than words

16 Which sentence most effectively uses an appeal to logic (logos) rather than emotion in an argumentative essay?

- A Think of the children who will suffer if we do nothing!
- B Data from twelve independent studies confirm a direct correlation between the policy and reduced emissions.
- C Everyone knows this is simply the right thing to do.
- D It would be heartbreaking to ignore this issue any longer.

Read the passage carefully and answer Questions 17 - 20

How Octopuses Taste the World Through Their Skin

An octopus does not experience touch the way a human does. Each of its roughly two thousand suckers contains its own cluster of chemical receptors, meaning the octopus can taste an object simply by touching it, long before any signal about flavour would normally reach a brain. In effect, an octopus's arms do their own preliminary tasting independently of its central nervous system.

This distributed intelligence extends further than taste. Each arm contains so many neurons that scientists estimate roughly two-thirds of an octopus's total neurons reside not in its brain but in its arms, allowing an arm to solve simple problems, such as manoeuvring around an obstacle, without waiting for instructions from the brain at all. Researchers have even observed a severed octopus arm continue to reach for food for a short time afterward, a startling demonstration of just how independently each arm can operate.

None of this means the octopus's brain is unimportant. It still coordinates the arms for complex tasks, such as opening a jar or escaping a tank, feats that require genuine problem-solving rather than reflex alone. What octopuses reveal, rather, is that intelligence does not have to be centralised to be effective; it can be distributed, delegated, and remarkably decentralised, and still produce one of the most capable problem-solvers in the animal kingdom.

17 According to the passage, how can an octopus "taste" an object?

- A By absorbing chemicals through its skin over several minutes.
- B By using specialised taste organs located near its eyes.
- C Through chemical receptors in its suckers, which taste on contact.
- D By analysing scent particles carried through the water.

18 What does the passage suggest about the distribution of an octopus's neurons?

- A All of an octopus's neurons are located in its brain.
- B Neurons are evenly split between the brain and a single arm.
- C Neurons exist only in the arms, with no central brain at all.
- D The majority of an octopus's neurons are located in its arms rather than its brain.

19 Why does the author mention the severed arm reaching for food?

- A To provide a striking illustration of how independently an octopus's arms can function.
- B To argue that octopus arms feel no pain.
- C To suggest that octopuses can regenerate lost arms instantly.
- D To criticise researchers for conducting the experiment.

20 What is the author's main point in the final paragraph?

- A The octopus's brain plays no meaningful role in its behaviour.
- B Intelligence can be effective even when distributed across a body rather than centralised in a brain.
- C Octopuses are less intelligent than previously believed.
- D Opening a jar requires no real problem-solving ability.

Read the poem carefully and answer Questions 21 - 25

The Clockmaker's Apprentice

He taught me not to rush the gears,
to let each tiny tooth align,
"A clock that's forced will lose its time,"
he said, and pressed my hand in mine.

I wanted speed; he wanted true.
I learned, in time, he'd been right all along:
the hours we saved by going slow
were hours that never once went wrong.

21 What lesson does the apprentice learn from the clockmaker?

- A Speed matters more than precision in craftsmanship.
- B Clocks are impossible to repair correctly.
- C Careful, patient work produces more reliable results than rushed work.
- D The apprentice should have quit the trade.

22 What does the line "A clock that's forced will lose its time" most likely mean on a figurative level?

- A Clocks are fragile and break easily.
- B The clockmaker dislikes teaching apprentices.
- C Time cannot be measured accurately.
- D Rushing a careful process, in life generally, often leads to errors or failure.

23 Which literary device is most evident in the final two lines:
"the hours we saved by going slow / were hours that never once went wrong"?

- A Paradox, juxtaposing "saved" and "going slow" to suggest an unexpected truth.
- B Simile, comparing hours to a physical object.
- C Onomatopoeia, imitating the sound of a clock.
- D Hyperbole, exaggerating the apprentice's success.

24 What is the overall tone of the poem?

- A Regretful and mournful.
- B Reflective and appreciative.
- C Angry and confrontational.
- D Comic and mocking.

25 What central theme does the poem most clearly explore?

- A The decline of traditional craftsmanship in modern times.
- B The apprentice's desire to leave the trade.
- C The value of patience and precision over haste.
- D The difficulty of the clockmaking profession.

Answer Key

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1. C	2. D	3. A	4. B	5. C
6. D	7. A	8. B	9. C	10. D
11. A	12. B	13. C	14. D	15. A
16. B	17. C	18. D	19. A	20. B
21. C	22. D	23. A	24. B	25. C