COMPREHENSION & SUMMARY

Must-Know Techniques

1. In this section, you are given a **passage**, and you are required to answer **six questions** based on the passage.

2. Before you start answering the reading comprehension part, **skim** the passage once to get the **general idea** of the passage. Then, **read** the questions.

3. Read the passage again carefully and find **keywords** that fulfil **the needs of the questions**.

4. Write the **answers** with the **relevant information**. Avoid lifting unnecessarily.

5. **State a word or a phrase** depending on the needs of the question. **10 marks** are allocated for this part.

6. **Summary** part requires you to summarise the passage. The summary must **not be longer than 130 words**, including the 10 words given.

7. Read the question and understand **what it requires**. You may need to focus on a certain aspect of the text.

8. **Include all the points** needed. It is also important to **rewrite the sentences** so that they have a smooth continuation. **15 marks** is allocated for this part.

TEXT 1

Section C

[25 *marks*]

Questions 26 – 31 *are based on the following passage.*

1 There is a photograph in my house that shows that I have four siblings. Actually, I have another sister whose picture isn't part of the family gallery. Her name is Irene, a name which my grandmother had chosen, for she looked as pretty and as fragile as a flower.

2 Irene lived with us for almost four years, and all that time she never spoke. I only remembered the way she grunted and cooed. She cried most of the time and rocked for hours as if in a trance. Finally, the doctor diagnosed her as mentally retarded. Father managed to get a maid who came in every day to help look after Irene. The maid would bathe her and put her in front of the television while she ironed our clothes. Irene loved to sit on the tricycle and the maid would push her around while we sang funny songs to amuse her.

3 At ten, I could tell that Irene strained my parents' marriage. They would argue about her all the time. They were desperate to find a suitable place for her. One day, Father told us that Irene would be going to ***a better home***. I could tell that Mother was greatly relieved that Irene was going away. I could still remember the day Irene left. She had no idea what was going on.

4 Initially, we used to visit Irene every weekend. The trips were very upsetting to all of us. The place where she lived was full of kids with funny eyes. They were uglier than Irene but as before, she had nothing to say to us. There was no way of telling what difference our presence made. Eventually, the trips stopped and we went only during Chinese New Year.

5 Over the years, Irene faded out of our lives. It happened with unexpected ease as we were all growing up. I was surprised that Mother was so indifferent. ***It was as if Irene had been a bad omen in her life*** and she was desperate to be rid of her.

6 Twenty years later, Irene came to haunt me once again. I had always remembered her but since nobody wanted to talk about her, we learned to push her to the back of our minds. One day, while shopping with my girlfriend, a bus stopped in front of us. Suddenly, a line of retarded people boarded the bus. The memories came rushing back and I went home the day and searched for a photo of Irene. It was as if I had come to a door and I had to make a decision.

7 Finally, I went to see my sister, Irene, for the first time after twenty years. The home was run by a non-profit organization for the retarded. After a few enquiries, I managed to locate her room. I felt nervous but I was determined to go through with it. The volunteer at the home stopped me before I could do anything. She told me that Irene was waiting for me in the canteen. "That's her," she said to me. A girl turned to stare at me. There was something in her eyes which was very familiar. I shook her hand. I was amazed to see how much she looked like Ivy, my younger sister. She mumbled

something and wandered off. The volunteer filled me in as Irene stitched some handicraft. Irene was very talented but she had a tendency to bite people when she was upset. I was also shown her writing and paintings. I asked if she understood what family was. I was told that Irene would be very sad each time Chinese New Year arrived as all the other inmates had visitors. Here, she was loved and people dwelt on her talents instead of her shortcomings. I was relieved and glad I came.

8 I called on my parents the next day to tell them about Irene. I even showed them some pictures which I had taken. My father immediately said that he would like to bring her home for Chinese New Year but Mother was against the idea. She described Irene as a terrible mistake. I felt sorry for her because I knew that Irene would forever be a thorn in her side even if she accepted her.

9 Over the next few years, I made sure that Irene was not alone during Chinese New Year. It was clear to me that there was a bond between my other siblings and her. We also took her for picnics and shopping but we were careful not to overload her. Some days, she would respond to us but other days, she would see us as strangers and our presence meant nothing to her. The social worker said that it was her way of protecting herself and we had to let her be. Yet, I was glad that I had opened that door and taken that step. I could tell that she was happy in her own little world, making some money from her handicraft and living life to the fullest, doing what she wanted. I do not think my parents were wrong in sending her away at that time for I understood my parents' anguish and concern for the rest of us. I just want them to remember that Irene is still a member of our family.

26 (a) From paragraph 1, how many siblings does the writer have?

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[1 mark]

(b) From paragraph 3, what does '***a better home***' refer to?

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[1 mark]

27 From paragraph 5;

(a) " ***It was as if Irene had been a bad omen in her life.***" (*Line 20*)

Why did Mother consider Irene as the bad omen in the family?

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[1 mark]

(b) Which **word** has the same meaning with having no particular interest or sympathy?

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[1 mark]

28 (a) From paragraph 6, what event led Irene back into the writer's life?

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[1 mark]

(b) From paragraph 7, why did the writer feel relieved?

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[1 mark]

29 (a) From paragraph 8, state **one evidence** that implies the writer's Father tried to rectify his mistakes towards Irene.

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[1 mark]

(b) From paragraph 9, how did the writer know that Irene was happy in her own little world?

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[1 mark]

30 In your opinion, why do think the writer did not blame her parents for sending Irene to the home?

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[2 marks]

31 Based on the passage given, write a summary on:

- his feelings when he met her
- what the writer did during and after he met Irene
- how the writer and his family members treated her

Credit will be given for use of own words but care must be taken not to change the original meaning.

Your summary must:

- be in continuous writing (not in note form)
- use material from **line 31 to 58**
- not to be longer than **130 words including the 10 words** given below

Imagine that you are the writer. Begin your summary as follows:

When the writer saw his sister for the first time, ...

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(*15 marks*)

TEXT 2

Section C

[25 marks]

Questions 26 – 31 are based on the following passage.

1 It was a Sunday afternoon. Our cargo ship, M/V Danau Toba, was anchored about 16 kilometres from the Indonesian island of Tarakan, off the east coast of Borneo to pick up a shipment of plywood. I was a Deck Cadet, at 23, the youngest member of a crew of 24. As Sunday was our day off, most of the crew had gone ashore while others stayed in their cabins. I was practising shooting basketball on the deck of the ship when all of a sudden the ball bounced off the net and went over the starboard railing. I rushed to the railing and spotted it bobbing in the water 40 feet below. Seeing a ladder on the side of the ship down to the waterline, I thought I could rescue my ball and easily climb back on deck. Without thinking, I took off my shirt and dived into the sea.

2 I reached the ball after a few strokes, but when I turned back towards the ship, I realized I was being carried away by the current. I let go of the ball and began swimming hard towards the ladder but quickly gave up – the current was too strong. Feeling exhausted, I turned with the current and swam back to the ball, which I grabbed onto as a life raft. As I drifted away into the Celebes Sea, I noticed that the anchor chain at the ship's starboard was pulled very tightly, a sign of how strong the current was.

3 I kept my spirits up. With the help of the basketball, I had little trouble keeping afloat, and I was confident that I would be rescued. Almost two hours had passed and it was getting dark. I saw a fishing boat passing nearby and started shouting. "Help!! Help me!!!' But no one heard, perhaps because the boat's motor was too loud.

4 Now it was completely dark. I could still see the lights of the vessels, including my own, in the anchorage area, waiting to take on cargo. I guessed ***they*** were about 2.5 nautical miles (4.6 kilometres) away. Despite my situation, I remained calm and confident that I would soon be rescued. Then my legs started to cramp. When I was in college, I was once overcome by ***agonizing cramps*** while swimming and had to be rescued by a friend. Even though the pain wasn't too bad now, I knew I could be in trouble.

5 I thought about my fiancée Rochelle Rexes back in Mandaluyong. We had met almost three years earlier, and I had spent a lot of time since then working at sea so that we could have a good start in life. I started to pray to God to help me stay alive as I was too young to die and I was getting married in a few months' time.

6 I looked at one of the ***anchored ships***, which was busy taking on cargo from a barge on her portside. I knew that the crew on the barge and the small tugboat that accompanied it would be Indonesian. I took a deep breath and shouted, "TULUONG!" I'm not sure why, at that moment, I used the word for help from my native tongue, Tagalog. What I didn't know was that Indonesians used a similar word for help.

7 Fortunately, a stevedore named Manding, who was working on the tugboat, heard

my shouts. He quickly approached his Captain and switched on the searchlight. When they saw me waving in the water, they manoeuvred the boat towards me. As it came up beside me, they threw me a life ring attached to a rope. When I grabbed hold of it, they pulled me on the board. By that time, I had been in the water for around four hours. 40

8 I told my rescuers what had happened and how stupid I had been to have jumped into the water. I was surprised to learn that half of their bargo's cargo would soon be loaded onto my own ship. Less than an hour later, I returned to the M/V Danau Toba. Amazingly, no one on the ship even knew I was gone.

(Adapted from *Reader's Digest*, March 2010 *)*

26 (a) From paragraph 1, where was the writer?

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[1 mark]

(b) From paragraph 2, why did the writer let go of the ball?

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[1 mark]

27 From paragraph 4,

(a) what does the word ***they*** in line 21 refer to?

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[1 mark]

(b) How could the ***agonizing cramps*** made the writer in trouble?

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[1 mark]

28 From paragraph 5, state two reasons why he needed to stay alive?

(i) ……

(ii) ……

[2 marks]

29 From paragraph 6,

(a) why do you think the Indonesian crew could hear the writer shouting?

……

[1 mark]

(b) what does the phrase ***anchored ships*** suggest?

……

[1 mark]

30 In your opinion, why do you think no one on the ship realised his absence? Give your reasons.

(i) ……

(ii) ……

[2 marks]

31. Based on the passage given, write a summary on:

- the problems the writer encountered when he was swept out to the sea and
- how he managed to get to safety

Credit will be given for use of own words but care must be taken not to change the original meaning.

Your summary must:

- be in continuous writing form (not in note form)
- use materials from **lines 10 to 40**
- not be longer than **130 words, including the 10 words** given below.

Begins your summary as follows:

When the writer turned back towards the ship, he realised .....

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[15 marks]