



Welcome to the HRM Secondary Academy English Department! This placement test is designed to help you find the best fit for your student in our English program. If you would like help evaluating any part of this test, please reach out to us at: [HRM English Department](#).

Read the following passage and then answer the questions.

The Vanishing Light

The lighthouse had stood on the rocky cliff for over a century, its powerful beam slicing through the darkness, guiding ships safely to shore. Generations of sailors had trusted its unwavering glow, but now, the once-reliable light flickered erratically, sometimes vanishing altogether.

Captain Hughes, a veteran sailor, had spent years navigating these waters, and the sudden inconsistency of the lighthouse unnerved him. A storm was rolling in, and without the beacon's guidance, the jagged coastline would become a death trap for unsuspecting vessels. Determined to uncover the cause, Hughes donned his thick coat and set off toward the lighthouse one stormy evening.

The wind howled through the trees, bending their skeletal branches as rain lashed against his face. The path was treacherous, slick with mud, but he pressed on, his boots slipping over wet stones. As he neared the towering structure, a flicker of movement caught his eye—a shadow darting past the lighthouse windows. He froze. Was someone inside? Could they be tampering with the light?

Heart pounding, Hughes pushed open the heavy wooden door. Inside, the air was damp, thick with the scent of seawater and oil. The spiral staircase loomed before him, its iron railing cold beneath his fingers as he ascended cautiously. At the top, he found Mr. Dawson, the elderly lighthouse keeper, hunched over the lantern's machinery, his face weary.

"It's failing," Dawson said grimly. "The gears are worn, and the oil reserves are nearly gone. I've done what I can, but it may not last the week."

Hughes exhaled sharply. Without the beacon, ships would be in grave danger. The storm outside raged on, and time was running out. He knew something had to be done—and fast.

On the line, print in CAPITAL LETTERS the best answer for each question.

Comprehension

- _____ 1. Captain Hughes' primary concern in the passage is the...
- A. safety of his ship and crew B. history of the lighthouse
C. weather conditions D. disappearance of Mr. Dawson
- _____ 2. Captain Hughes' decision to climb to the lighthouse suggests that he...
- A. is reckless and ignores danger.

- B. is curious but easily frightened.
 C. is determined and responsible.
 D. enjoys adventure for its own sake.
- _____ 3. Which phrase best describes the mood as Hughes nears the lighthouse?
 A. lighthearted and cheerful B. tense and suspenseful
 C. warm and nostalgic D. boring and predictable
- _____ 4. The significance of the shadow that Hughes sees in the lighthouse is that it...
 A. foreshadows that someone might be sabotaging the light.
 B. is a hallucination caused by the storm.
 C. is an illusion caused by flickering light.
 D. shows that Mr. Dawson is trying to scare Hughes away.
- _____ 5. What effect does the storm have on the story? It...
 A. provides a peaceful background.
 B. causes Hughes to change his mind about going inside.
 C. makes the lighthouse unnecessary.
 D. adds tension and urgency.
- _____ 6. How does the setting contribute to the overall mood of the passage?
 A. The stormy night and failing lighthouse create suspense.
 B. The lighthouse and the path create a peaceful and relaxing tone.
 C. The captain's journey adds a sense of humor to the passage.
 D. The stormy weather represents Hughes's fear of failure.
- _____ 7. Which theme is best supported by the passage?
 A. The past should always be honored, no matter the cost.
 B. Bravery and responsibility are necessary in times of crisis.
 C. Nature is stronger than human innovation.
 D. Old traditions should never be questioned.
- _____ 8. What does the dialogue between Hughes and Dawson reveal?
 A. Hughes doesn't trust Dawson to fix the lighthouse.
 B. Dawson has been careless in maintaining the light.
 C. Hughes has no idea how the lighthouse works.
 D. The lighthouse's failure is due to age and lack of resources.
- _____ 9. What best describes the relationship between Hughes and Dawson?
 A. They are old rivals who disagree often.
 B. They are strangers meeting for the first time.
 C. They share a common goal of protecting ships.
 D. Dawson resents Hughes for interfering.
- _____ 10. What do both Dawson and Hughes believe may happen without repairs?
 A. More sailors will visit them to help.
 B. Ships might crash into the rocky shore.
 C. The lighthouse will never be repaired.
 D. Dawson has a secret plan.

Vocabulary

- _____ 11. What is the meaning of **erratically** as used in the sentence: "The once-reliable light flickered erratically, sometimes vanishing altogether"?
 A. predictably B. unsteadily C. brightly D. quickly
- _____ 12. What does the word **treacherous** most likely mean in the sentence: "The

- path was treacherous, slick with mud, but he pressed on”?
- A. dangerous B. simple C. exciting D. hidden
- _____ 13. What is the meaning of **tampering** in the sentence: “Was someone tampering with the light?”
- A. repairing B. interfering C. admiring D. strengthening
- _____ 14. What does the word **loomed** suggest in the sentence: “The spiral staircase loomed before him...”? It...
- A. appeared small and unimportant. B. was easy to climb.
C. seemed tall and intimidating. D. moved quickly toward him.
- _____ 15. What does the word **urgency** mean in the sentence: “The stormy night and the failing lighthouse created suspense and urgency”?
- A. confusion B. excitement
C. a lack of concern D. a need for quick action

Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

- _____ 16. Which sentence uses the correct verb tense?
- A. By the time we arrived, the movie had already started.
B. By the time we arrived, the movie already starts.
C. By the time we arrived, the movie starts.
D. By the time we arrived, the movie will already start.
- _____ 17. Choose the correct use of **its/it's**.
- A. The dog wagged it's tail happily.
B. Its a beautiful evening.
C. The machine has lost its ability to function properly.
D. The lighthouse has lost all of it's power.
- _____ 18. Which sentence is correctly punctuated?
- A. The storm was loud however, we still went outside.
B. I have lived in three cities: Chicago, Houston, and Seattle.
C. She said "Let's meet at noon," and I agreed.
D. The teacher said, "this test will be difficult."
- _____ 19. Choose the sentence with proper apostrophe use.
- A. The childrens' door was left open.
B. Her mothers car was missing.
C. My science teachers' house was filled with books.
D. The boy's backpack was on the ground.
- _____ 20. Which sentence correctly uses a semicolon?
- A. I wanted to stay longer; but I had to leave.
B. The movie was thrilling; I couldn't look away.
C. She bought milk; eggs; and bread.
D. My friend is funny; and he tells great stories.

Writing. What is one of your favorite activities or hobbies? Write a 7-10 sentence paragraph explaining your favorite activity or hobby and why you enjoy it. Be sure to include specific details.

Answer Key

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

Paragraph Rubric: Choose the score (1-5) that best describes your students' writing

5 points:

- Begins with a topic sentence that addresses the prompt
- Follows a logical order throughout
- Provides specific descriptive/explanatory details
- Provides enough information to answer the prompt fully
- Has few distracting usage/mechanical errors

4 points:

- Begins with a topic sentence that may not directly address the prompt
- Follows a logical order for most of the paragraph
- Provides some specific descriptive details
- Provides some information, but the development is somewhat unclear or incomplete
- Has one or two distracting usage/mechanical errors

3 points:

- Begins with a topic sentence but does not address the prompt fully
- Follows a logical order for some of the paragraph
- Provides one or two specific explanatory details
- Provides information, but the development is unclear or incomplete
- Has three or four distracting usage/mechanical errors

2 points:

- Has a weak topic sentence
- The structure is somewhat confusing
- Provides mostly vague details
- Provides little information to develop the topic
- Has numerous distracting usage/mechanical errors

1 point:

- Has no topic sentence
- Has no sense of logical structure
- Explanatory details are lacking, unclear, or confusing
- Does not provide enough information to develop the topic
- Has numerous distracting usage/mechanical errors

Recommended for English 1-2 class: 18+/25 points