

# SSLC EXAMINATION, MARCH – 2024

## ENGLISH

Time: 2.5hrs

Total score: 80

Questions 1-5. Read the excerpt from 'The Snake and the Mirror' and answer the questions that follow. 1×5=5

I took a close look at my face in the mirror. I made an important decision - I would shave daily and grow a thin moustache to look more handsome. I was, after all, a bachelor, and a doctor! I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile. I made another earthshaking decision. I would always keep that attractive smile on my face... to look more handsome. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!

Again came that noise from above.

I got up, lit a beedi and paced up and down the room. Then another lovely thought struck me. I would marry. I would get married to a woman doctor who had plenty of money and a good medical practice. She had to be fat; for a valid reason. If I made some silly mistake and needed to run away she should not be able to run after me and catch me!

With such thoughts in my mind I resumed my seat in the chair in front of the table. There were no more sounds from above. Suddenly there came a dull thud as if a rubber tube had fallen to the ground... surely nothing to worry about. Even so I thought I would turn around and take a look. No sooner had I turned than a fat snake wriggled over the back of the chair and landed on my shoulder. The snake's landing on me and my turning were simultaneous.

1. What were the two important decisions taken by the homeopath?
2. Why did the homeopath want to marry a fat lady doctor?
3. How did the homeopath react when the snake landed on his shoulder?
4. Pick out a word from the passage that means 'happening or done at the same time'.
5. What lovely thought struck the homeopath's mind?

### Solution:

1. The homeopath decided to shave daily and grow a thin moustache to look more handsome. He also decided to always keep an attractive smile on his face.
2. The homeopath wanted to marry a fat lady doctor so that if he ever needed to run away after making a silly mistake, she would not be able to catch him.

3. The homeopath was shocked and terrified when the snake landed on his shoulder, and he froze in fear, unable to move.
4. The word from the passage that means 'happening or done at the same time' is "simultaneous."
5. A lovely thought that struck the homeopath's mind was that he would marry a rich lady doctor with a good medical practice.

Questions 6-9. Read the lines from the poem 'Mother to Son' and answer the questions given below:

1×4=4

But all the time  
 I've been a-climbin' on,  
 And reachin' landin's,  
 And turnin' corners,  
 And sometimes goin' in the dark  
 Where there ain't been no light.  
 So, boy, don't you turn back.  
 Don't you set down on the steps.  
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
 Don't you fall now-  
 For I've still goin', honey,  
 I've still climbin',  
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair

6. What is the message conveyed in the given lines?
7. What does the expression 'reachin' landin's' imply?
8. How did the speaker face the challenges in her life?
9. Which figure of speech is used in the line 'And life for me ain't been no crystal stair'?

**Solution:**

6. The message conveyed in the given lines is that life is full of struggles and challenges, but one should continue moving forward, despite difficulties, and not give up.
7. The expression 'reachin' landin's' implies making progress in life, overcoming obstacles, and achieving certain milestones or achievements.

8. The speaker faced the challenges in her life by persevering, continuing to climb, and not giving up despite difficult times and periods of darkness.

9. The figure of speech used in the line "And life for me ain't been no crystal stair" is metaphor, as life is being compared to a crystal stair, suggesting that it has not been easy or smooth.

10. Read the lines from the poem 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan' and prepare a note of appreciation focussing on the theme, images, and other poetic devices. 5

The old priest Peter Gilligan  
 Was weary night and day  
 For half his flock were in their beds  
 Or under green sods lay.  
 Once, while he nodded in a chair  
 At the moth-hour of the eve  
 Another poor man sent for him,  
 And he began to grieve.  
 'I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,  
 For people die and die;  
 And after cried he, 'God forgive!  
 My body spake not I!'

**Solution:**

Note of Appreciation: "The Ballad of Father Gilligan"

In W.B. Yeats' poem "The Ballad of Father Gilligan," the theme of exhaustion and selfless duty is explored. Father Peter Gilligan, a weary priest, is overwhelmed by the death of his parishioners. The line "For half his flock were in their beds or under green sods lay" uses imagery to show the emotional toll of loss.

Yeats employs symbolism with "the moth-hour" to convey Father Gilligan's physical and spiritual fatigue. The repetition of "For people die and die" highlights the relentless nature of death and the priest's burden. His cry, "God forgive! My body spake not I!" reflects his inner conflict and guilt.

Overall, the poem uses imagery, symbolism, and repetition to convey the priest's weariness and the sacrifices involved in his role. It effectively portrays the theme of human frailty and the emotional strain of duty.

Questions 11-15. Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow.

1×5=5

An old man named Santiago had been fishing for days without catching anything. He was tired and hungry, but he was determined to catch a fish. One day, early in the morning, Santiago felt a tug on his line. He knew that this was no ordinary fish. This was the biggest fish he had ever caught. The fish fought hard, pulling the old man's boat far out to sea. Santiago fought back, reeling in the line as fast as he could. After hours of struggle, the old man finally landed the fish. It was a huge marlin, the largest he had ever seen. Santiago was exhausted, but he was also proud. He had caught the fish of a lifetime. As he was tying up the marlin, a group of sharks appeared. They began to circle the boat, waiting for a chance to attack. Santiago fought off the sharks for hours, but they were too many for him. One by one, they took pieces of the marlin, until there was nothing left but its skeleton. Santiago was heartbroken, but he knew that he had done his best. He had caught the fish of a lifetime, and he had fought bravely to protect it.

11. What was old Santiago determined to do?
12. How did the fish react when it was caught by Santiago?
13. Santiago was proud. Why?
14. What happened to the marlin caught by Santiago?
15. What did Santiago feel about his effort though he got only the skeleton of the marlin?

**Solution:**

11. Old Santiago was determined to catch a fish despite his exhaustion and hunger.
12. When the fish was caught by Santiago, it fought hard, pulling the old man's boat far out to sea.
13. Santiago was proud because he had caught the biggest fish of his life, the marlin, after a long struggle.
14. The marlin caught by Santiago was attacked by sharks, and after hours of fighting them off, it was left with nothing but a skeleton.
15. Although Santiago got only the skeleton of the marlin, he felt proud and content with his effort, knowing that he had done his best and fought bravely to protect the fish.

Questions 16-17. Answer any one of the following in about 120 words.

1×7=7

16. 'I've never owed a penny in my life - cash down, that's my motto and I want you to do the same'. These are the words of Aunt Jane from the play 'The Never-Never

Nest'. She was disappointed with Jack's and Jill's way of life. Their expenditure was beyond their earnings, In the light of your reading of the play, prepare a review of it (Hints-Jack and Jill live in a house with all modern amenities - Aunt Jane visits them upset to see them moving into a debt trap-advises them - warns them to change their lifestyle)

17. The boy in the story 'Adventures in a Banyan Tree' was excited and thrilled to witness the fight between the cobra and the mongoose. After reaching the house, he narrates the fight scene to his grandfather. Prepare the likely narrative.

(Hints - Boy sits on a platform - a huge black cobra glides out of a clump of cactus - a mongoose also emerges - come face to face - starts fighting - myna and jungle crow arrive - cobra strikes the crow - cobra weakens - mongoose wins the fight)

### Solution:

16. Review of 'The Never-Never Nest'

The one-act play The Never-Never Nest by Cedric Mount humorously critiques the practice of living on credit. Jack and Jill, a young couple, proudly show their luxurious home to Aunt Jane, complete with all modern amenities. However, Aunt Jane is shocked to learn that everything they own, including the house, furniture, and car, is bought on installments. She is disappointed to see them trapped in a debt cycle far beyond their income. Aunt Jane advises them to avoid living on credit and adopt a financially responsible lifestyle. Her sensible words highlight the dangers of reckless spending. The play effectively blends humor with a moral lesson, leaving the audience with a thought-provoking message on financial prudence.

17. Narrative by the Boy

When I returned home, I eagerly narrated the thrilling fight to Grandpa. "It all started when I was sitting on the banyan tree platform, Grandpa. A huge black cobra slid out of a cactus clump, its hood raised. Suddenly, a mongoose appeared, its fur bristling. They came face-to-face, hissing and growling. It was like watching a battle of champions! As they fought fiercely, a myna and a jungle crow hovered above, waiting to snatch an opportunity. The cobra struck the crow mid-flight, killing it instantly. But the mongoose didn't falter. It dodged the cobra's venomous strikes and pounced skillfully. With one final leap, the mongoose bit the cobra's hood. The cobra fell limp, and the mongoose triumphed! It was breathtaking!"

Questions 18-20. Answer any two of the following. Each question carries five marks.  $2 \times 5 = 10$

18. The Literary Club of your school has decided to conduct a 'Book Fest' and an exhibition of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's works on July 5, Basheer Day. Prepare a notice inviting the public to the Fest.

19. Nilkanta was quite shocked when he saw Kiran pulling out the missing inkstand from his box. He was upset that Kiran had found out his prank. His last hope of

proving himself innocent failed miserably. He decided to leave the house. Before leaving, he jotted down his feelings in his diary. Prepare the likely diary entry.

20. Anton Chekhov's short story 'Vanka' portrays the plight of a nine year old boy named Vanka. Write a paragraph on the sufferings of the boy in Alyakhin's house.

### Solution:

18.

#### NOTICE

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> June

#### BOOK FEST & EXHIBITION OF VAIKOM MUHAMMED BASHEER'S WORKS

The Literary Club of [Your School Name] is pleased to announce a Book Fest and an Exhibition of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer's Works to be held on July 5<sup>th</sup>, Basheer Day. The event aims to celebrate the life and literary contributions of the renowned Malayalam writer Vaikom Muhammed Basheer.

Event Details:

Date: July 5<sup>th</sup>

Time: 10.00 A.M.

Venue: School Playground

Open to all book lovers and literary enthusiasts.

Come and explore Basheer's timeless works, enjoy the exhibitions, and be part of this special literary celebration.

We invite all to attend and celebrate the legacy of one of India's greatest writers.

For more information, contact:

Sourav Sharma

St. Francis School, Literary Club

19. Diary Entry by Nilkanta

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Diary,

Today, my heart feels heavier than ever. Kiran, the one person I trusted and admired, found the inkstand in my box. I don't know why I put it there—it was just a prank, but now it seems like the worst mistake of my life. The way she looked at me, with disappointment in her eyes, shattered me completely. I tried to explain, but the words just wouldn't come. Everyone must think I'm a liar and a thief now. I can't stay here anymore. I thought this house was my safe haven, but it's not. Tomorrow, I will leave quietly, taking only my memories. Maybe somewhere else, I can find the acceptance I long for.

Yours,

Nilkanta

## 20. Sufferings of Vanka in Alyakhin's House

Anton Chekhov's story Vanka poignantly portrays the misery of nine-year-old Vanka, an apprentice in Alyakhin's household. Vanka is subjected to relentless abuse and overwork. His master and mistress treat him cruelly, scolding and beating him for minor mistakes. He sleeps in a cold storeroom, with no proper bed, and eats leftover scraps. Loneliness intensifies his suffering, as he has no one to comfort him. The harsh environment crushes his spirit, making him long for the warmth and love of his grandfather. Chekhov's vivid description of Vanka's hardships highlights the exploitation and plight of vulnerable children during that era, evoking deep sympathy from the reader.

Questions 21-25. Answer any three of the following. Each question carries six marks.

3×6=18

21. The boy in the story 'Adventures in a Banyan Tree' was very much thrilled about his acquaintance with the grey squirrel. He writes a letter to one of his friends telling him about his friendship with the squirrel. Prepare the likely letter.

22. Martha Salinas was awarded the Scholarship Jacket for maintaining the highest grades for eight years by her school. She delivered a speech after receiving the Scholarship Jacket. Prepare the text of the speech.

23. You were inspired by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's speech and decided to include an interview with Adichie in your school magazine. As one of the editors of the school magazine, prepare six questions to interview her.

24. Kiran, one of the central characters in the story "The Castaway", was loved by everyone in the family. Based on the reading of the story, prepare a character sketch of Kiran.

25. Prepare a profile of Rabindranath Tagore using the details given.

Birth: 7 May 1861, Kolkata

Occupation: Poet, Novelist, Dramatist, Essayist, Fictionist, Playwright

Spouse: Mrinalini Devi

Notable Works: Gitanjali, Bhikarini, Kabuliwala, The Hungry Stones, The Runway, The Broken Nest

Awards and Honours: Nobel Prize in Literature (1913)

Death: 7 August 1941, Kolkata

**Solution:**

21. Letter to a Friend About Friendship with the Squirrel

208, Swarnadham, Hira Colony, Mumbai-400052

20 January 2025

Dear Swarup,

I hope this letter finds you well. I must tell you about an amazing friendship I've formed with a little grey squirrel here! At first, he was shy and cautious, running away the moment I moved. But with patience, I gained his trust by feeding him crumbs and nuts. Now, he runs up to me without fear and even perches on my shoulder sometimes.

Watching his antics from the banyan tree is the highlight of my day. He's so quick and clever, darting about with his bushy tail swishing. I've learned so much about kindness and trust from this tiny creature. I wish you could meet him—you'd love him!

Take care and write back soon.

Yours,

Soham/Sohini

22. Speech by Martha Salinas on Receiving the Scholarship Jacket

Good morning respected teachers, friends, and esteemed guests, I stand before you today with immense gratitude and pride as the recipient of the Scholarship Jacket. This honor means more to me than just an award—it is a testament to the hard work, perseverance, and sacrifices that have shaped my journey.

For eight years, I have strived to give my best in academics, fueled by the encouragement of my teachers and the unwavering support of my family. This jacket symbolizes not just personal achievement but the values of fairness and integrity upheld by our school.

I dedicate this achievement to everyone who believed in me and to every student who dreams of success. Remember, with determination and honesty, anything is possible. Thank you!

23. Interview Questions for Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

What inspired you to become a storyteller, and how did your upbringing influence your writing?

Your works often challenge stereotypes. How do you approach balancing cultural authenticity and universal appeal in your stories?

"The Danger of a Single Story" has inspired millions. Can you share an experience that made you realize the impact of a single story?



What role do you think literature and storytelling play in shaping social change and empowering marginalized voices?

As a writer, how do you deal with criticism, especially when addressing sensitive themes like race and gender?

What advice would you give to aspiring writers who want to tell authentic, impactful stories?

#### 24. Character Sketch of Kiran

Kiran, a central character in *The Castaway* by Rabindranath Tagore, is a compassionate, kind-hearted woman who brings warmth to everyone around her. She is affectionate and motherly, especially toward Nilkanta, the young orphan who finds solace in her presence. Her empathetic nature allows her to connect deeply with people, offering them comfort and care.

Kiran is also open-minded and nurturing, evident in her acceptance of Nilkanta into her home despite societal norms. However, her tender heart often leaves her vulnerable to being misunderstood. Her interactions with Nilkanta showcase her innate goodness and ability to see beyond appearances, making her a symbol of love and understanding in the story.

#### 25. Profile of Rabindranath Tagore

Birth: 7 May 1861, Kolkata

Occupation: Poet, Novelist, Dramatist, Essayist, Fictionist, Playwright

Spouse: Mrinalini Devi

Notable Works: *Gitanjali*, *Bhikharini*, *Kabuliwala*, *The Hungry Stones*, *The Runaway*, *The Broken Nest*

Awards and Honours: Nobel Prize in Literature (1913)

Death: 7 August 1941, Kolkata

Rabindranath Tagore, a versatile and eminent literary figure, is renowned for his wide-ranging contributions to Indian literature and culture. His works, including *Gitanjali* (which earned him the Nobel Prize), reflect his deep insight into spirituality, human emotions, and social issues. Tagore's writings continue to inspire generations and his legacy as a poet, playwright, and thinker endures.

Questions 26-30. Details of the batsmen who hit centuries in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 are given in the table below. Study the table and answer the questions that follow:

5

Batsman	Country	Centuries	Runs	Score & Against
Quinton de Kock	South Africa	4	594	174 (Bangladesh)

Rachin Ravindra	New Zealand	3	578	123 (England)
Virat Kohli	India	3	765	117 (New Zealand)
Glenn Maxwell	Australia	2	397	201 (Afghanistan)
Mitchell Marsh	Australia	2	426	177 (Bangladesh)

26. Who hit the most number of centuries in the ICC World Cup 2023?
27. Who is the highest aggregator of runs in the ICC World Cup 2023?
28. Glenn Maxwell scored 201 in the ICC World Cup 2023 against .....
29. How many centuries did Mitchell Marsh score in ICC World Cup 2023?
30. Which country is represented by two players in the table?

**Solution:**

26. Quinton de Kock hit the most number of centuries in the ICC World Cup 2023 with 4 centuries.
27. Virat Kohli is the highest aggregator of runs in the ICC World Cup 2023, with 765 runs.
28. Glenn Maxwell scored 201 in the ICC World Cup 2023 against Afghanistan.
29. Mitchell Marsh scored 2 centuries in the ICC World Cup 2023.
30. Australia is represented by two players in the table, Glenn Maxwell and Mitchell Marsh.

31. Report the following dialogue. 2

Satyajit Ray: What can we do to let the tiger free in the bamboo grove?

Thorat: We can tie a thin wire round the tiger's neck.

(a) Satyajit Ray asked .....

(b) Thorat replied .....

**Solution:**

(a) Satyajit Ray asked **what they could do to let the tiger free in the bamboo grove.**

(b) Thorat replied **that they could tie a thin wire round the tiger's neck.**

32. Complete the following passage using the appropriate forms of the phrasal verbs from the ones given below. 4

Vanka ..... (a) his mind to post the letter he had written. He ..... (b) his coat and ran to the place where the post box was kept. It was not easy for him to ..... (c) the cold outside. He wanted to come back before his master and mistress ..... (d) -.

(make up, put up with, turn up, put on)

**Solution:**

Vanka (a) **made up** his mind to post the letter he had written. He (b) **put on** his coat and ran to the place where the post box was kept. It was not easy for him to (c) **put up with** the cold outside. He wanted to come back before his master and mistress (d) **turned up**.

33. There are a few errors in the passage given below. They are underlined. Edit them. 4

Kiran have (a) enjoyed being with the villagers steaming with fun. But here of (b) the riverside, she could not tolerate the heavy burdan (c) of doing nothing. That was their point of discussion. He lost his spirit when she suddenly stopped responding and turn (d) her head away.

**Solution:**

Kiran had (a) enjoyed being with the villagers steaming with fun. But here on (b) the riverside, she could not tolerate the heavy burden (c) of doing nothing. That was their point of discussion. He lost his spirit when she suddenly stopped responding and turned (d) her head away.

34. Complete the conversation between Ali and Zahra. 5

Zahra: You are upset, ..... (a) ?

Ali: Yes, dear

Zahra: (b)..... ?

Ali: I lost your shoes at Akbar Aqa's shop.

Zahra: (c) .....?

Ali: Yes, I searched the place properly, but couldn't find it.

Zahra: If you don't get my shoes, .....(d)

Ali: Don't tell Father, he will beat both of us.

Zahra: What shall I wear tomorrow?

Ali: You had better .....(e)

Zahra: OK. I will wear your sneakers.

**Solution:**

Zahra: You are upset, aren't you? (a)

Ali: Yes, dear.

Zahra: What happened? (b)

Ali: I lost your shoes at Akbar Aqa's shop.

Zahra: Did you search the place properly? (c)

Ali: Yes, I searched the place properly, but couldn't find it.

Zahra: If you don't get my shoes, what will I do? (d)

Ali: Don't tell Father, he will beat both of us.

Zahra: What shall I wear tomorrow?

Ali: You had better wear my sneakers. (e)

Zahra: OK. I will wear your sneakers.

35. Complete the following passage choosing the right words from those given in brackets. 4

Grandad was probably standing ..... (a) the gate at this moment, screwing up his eyes to look at the bright red light coming ..... (b) the church windows, or stumping about in his felt boots, fooling ..... (c) the servants. His rattle would be fastened ..... (d) his belt.

(at, from, in, with, to)

**Solution:**

Grandad was probably standing **at** (a) the gate at this moment, screwing up his eyes to look at the bright red light coming **from** (b) the church windows, or stumping about in his felt boots, fooling **with** (c) the servants. His rattle would be fastened **to** (d) his belt.

36. Read the following sentences and identify the Noun Phrase in the subject position. 2

(a) A long supporting gable rested on the beam over the wall.

(b) The boy turned out to be a boon to everyone in the village.

**Solution:**

(a) A long supporting gable rested on the beam over the wall.

(b) The boy turned out to be a boon to everyone in the village.