LATE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS 2011

YEAR 4

ENGLISH

Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Instructions:

- Answer all the questions on the exam paper.
- Make sure you check your work carefully for errors in spelling, expression and grammar usage.
- Answer each question as clearly and as neatly as possible.

GOOD LUCK!
Reading Comprehension: (20 marks)

Read the following extract by Paul Theroux about traveling on the New York underground (subway) and answer all of the questions that follow it as carefully and as clearly as possible.

Subterranean Gothic

When people say the subway frightens them, they are not being silly or irrational. It is no good saying how cheap or how fast it is. The subway is frightening. It is also very easy to get lost in the subway, and the person who is lost in New York City has a serious problem. New Yorkers make it their business to avoid getting lost.

It is the stranger who gets lost. It is the stranger who follows people hurrying into the stair-well; subway entrances are just dark holes in the sidewalk- the stations are below ground. There is nearly always a bus stop near the subway entrance. People waiting at a bus stop have a special pitying gaze for people entering the subway. It is sometimes not pity, but fear, bewilderment, curiosity, or fatalism; often they look like miners' wives watching their men folk going down the pit.

The stranger's sense of disorientation down below is immediate. The station is all tile and iron and dampness; it has bars and turnstiles and steel grates. It has the look of an old prison or a monkey cage.

Buying a token, the stranger may ask directions, but the token booth-reinforced, burglar-proof, bulletproof-renders the reply incoherent. And subway directions are a special language: 'A train...Downtown...Express to the Shuttle...Change at Ninetieth for the two...Uptown....The Lex...CC...LL....The Local...”

Most New Yorkers refer to the subway by the now-obsolete forms 'IND', 'IRT', 'BMT'. No one intentionally tries to confuse the stranger; it is just that, where the subway is concerned, precise directions are very hard to convey.

Verbal directions are incomprehensible, written ones are defaced. The signboards and subway maps are indiscernible beneath layers of graffiti....

Graffiti is destructive; it is anti-art, it is an act of violence, and it can be deeply menacing. It has displaced the subway signs and maps, blacked-out the windows of the trains and obliterated the instructions. In case of emergency-is cross-hatched with a felt-tip. These seats are for the elderly and disabled-a metre-long signature obscures it. The subway tracks are very dangerous; if the train should stop, do not-the rest is black and unreadable. The stranger cannot rely on printed instructions or warnings, and there are few cars out of the six thousand on the system in which the maps have not been torn out. Assuming the stranger has boarded the train, he or she can feel
only panic when, searching for a clue to his route. Panic: and so he gets off the train and then his troubles really begin.

He may be in the South Bronx or the upper reaches of Broadway on the Number 1 line, or on any one of a dozen lines that cross Brooklyn. He gets off the train, which is covered in graffiti, and steps on to a station platform which is covered in graffiti. It is possible (this is true of many stations) that none of the signs will be legible. Not only will the stranger not know where he is, but the stairways will be splotched and stinking-no Uptown, no Downtown, no Exit. It is also possible that not a single soul will be around, and the most dangerous stations—ask any police officer—are the emptiest....

This is the story that most people tell of subway fear. In every detail it is like a nightmare, complete with rats and mice and a tunnel and a low ceiling. Those who tell this story rarely have a crime to report. They have experienced fear. It is completely understandable—what is worse than being trapped underground?—but it has been a private horror. In most cases, the person will have come to no harm. He will, however, remember his fear on that empty station for the rest of his life.

When New Yorkers recount an experience like this they are invariably speaking of something that happened on another line, not their usual route. Their own line is fairly safe, they’ll say; it’s cleaner than the others; it’s got a little charm, it’s kind of dependable; they’ve been taking it for years. Your line has crazy people on it, but my line has ‘characters’. This sense of loyalty to a regularly used line is the most remarkable thing about the subway passenger in New York. It is, in fact, a jungle attitude.

In any jungle, the pathway is a priority. People move around New York in various ways, but the complexities of the subway have allowed the New Yorker to think of his own route as something personal, even original. No one uses maps on the subway—you rarely see any.

1. In what ways is the subway frightening? Give two examples (2 marks)
2. What expressions create that sense of fear? Find 3 examples of words/phrases that Theroux uses to create the sense of fear. (3 marks)

3. What does Paul Theroux consider to be the most frightening aspect of subway travel in New York? Explain your reasons for choosing this aspect and support your comments with reference to the text. (3 marks)

4. What is unusual about the fear experienced by the subway traveler? Use quotes to support your answer. (2 marks)

5. Find three words/phrases that describe what a stranger would see in the subway. Explain the effect of these words and how they make the reader feel (6 marks)
6. Explain the meaning of these phrases as they are used in the passage:
   (4 marks)
   - Pitying gaze (paragraph 2)
   - Monkey cage (paragraph 3)
   - Incoherent (paragraph 4)
   - Indiscernible (paragraph 6)
Directed Writing: (15 marks)

Based on your reading of the passage write around 200 words on the following task: Imagine that you are a stranger to New York and have taken the subway for the first time. Write your thoughts. You should describe your feelings and impressions.
Writing Task: (15 marks)

Write the description of an uncomfortable experience, real or imaginary, in which you describe what happened and how you felt. You might want to use the following points to help you:

- Where?
- Who?
- When?
- Sounds?
- What happened?

Remember that the choice of vocabulary is very important to the effect you achieve. You should write between 200-250 words.