

## English Skill Builder – Set F

### Passage (approx. 640 words):

On a crisp autumn morning, the citizens of Ashgrove gathered in the town square to witness the unveiling of a monument that had been years in the making. The monument was not to a military hero or a political leader, but to a teacher—Miss Eleanor Reeves, who had dedicated her entire life to the education of Ashgrove’s children. She was known not only for her unwavering commitment to her students but also for her belief that knowledge was the foundation of a just and compassionate society.

Miss Reeves had passed away three years earlier, and the townspeople had unanimously agreed that her influence deserved a permanent tribute. The unveiling drew villagers of all ages—some who had sat in her classroom decades earlier, others who had only heard stories about the legendary teacher. The air was filled with a reverent hush, broken only by the occasional rustle of leaves. Children stood on tiptoe, craning their necks to see the monument beneath its heavy cloth covering.

When the cloth was drawn back, a bronze figure of Miss Reeves was revealed, standing tall with an open book in her hand. Her eyes seemed fixed not on the past but on the future, as if still urging her pupils to dream bigger and reach farther. The crowd erupted in applause, and several of her former students could be seen wiping tears from their eyes.

Among them was Michael Turner, a man in his fifties who credited Miss Reeves with altering the course of his life. He had been a restless boy, often more interested in roaming the fields than in arithmetic. But Miss Reeves had recognized his talent for storytelling and encouraged him to pursue it. Today, Michael was a published author, and he had returned to Ashgrove to deliver a short speech.

In his remarks, Michael recalled how Miss Reeves would linger after class to read his essays and challenge him to refine his arguments. “She taught us that words are not just tools but bridges,” he said. “She believed every child had a voice worth cultivating. And she taught us to listen, not only to ourselves but to each other.”

The audience listened intently, and many nodded in agreement. It was widely acknowledged that Miss Reeves had instilled in her students not just academic knowledge but also a moral compass. She often reminded them that intelligence without empathy was dangerous, and that true learning meant using one’s abilities to better the lives of others.

After the speeches concluded, townspeople placed flowers at the base of the statue. The children were encouraged to write notes to Miss Reeves, which they tucked into a small box that would be preserved beneath the monument. The notes contained hopes, dreams, and promises: a girl declaring she wanted to be a doctor, a boy promising to treat others with kindness, a teenager vowing to use his skills in technology to help the elderly.

As the sun began to set, casting the statue in a golden glow, Michael reflected on the enduring power of a single individual to shape countless lives. Miss Reeves' legacy was not just in the monument of bronze but in the living, breathing aspirations of the town itself.

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**Guiding Question:**

How does the author use the unveiling of the monument to convey the enduring influence of Miss Reeves on her community?



## English Skill Builder – Set G

### Passage (approx. 620 words):

The railway station at Portwell was always bustling, its platforms echoing with the shuffle of boots, the chatter of travelers, and the shrill calls of vendors hawking their wares. Yet to Amelia, who had arrived that morning with a suitcase no larger than a loaf of bread, the station felt more like a crossroads between her past and her uncertain future. For seventeen years, she had lived in the quiet countryside, where the rhythm of her days was dictated by the sun and the seasons. Now, with her family facing financial hardship, she was being sent to the city to work as a seamstress.

Amelia's mother had packed her bag carefully, placing inside not only her clothes but also a small hand-stitched handkerchief embroidered with the family's initials. "So you remember us when you feel alone," her mother had said, her voice trembling despite her brave smile. Amelia clutched the handkerchief now as she waited for the train, fighting back tears.

The train arrived in a cloud of steam, and Amelia boarded, her heart pounding. She found herself seated next to an older woman who was knitting. The woman glanced at Amelia's tear-stained face and offered her a kind smile. "First time leaving home?" she asked gently. Amelia nodded, unable to find words. The woman patted her hand reassuringly and began to tell her about the city—the crowded streets, the endless opportunities, the hardships but also the friendships one could forge.

As the train sped through the countryside, Amelia gazed out the window at the fields she had known all her life. She felt as though the train was not just carrying her to the city but pulling her away from the familiar rhythm of her childhood. Yet there was also a flicker of excitement deep within her. For years, she had stitched clothes for her siblings, creating designs that had earned compliments from neighbors. Perhaps in the city, she could hone her talent further.

When the train finally arrived, Amelia stepped onto the crowded platform. The noise and bustle were overwhelming, but she held her mother's handkerchief tightly, drawing strength from it. The woman who had sat beside her gave her a final smile and whispered, "You'll do well, child. Just don't forget where you come from."

Amelia nodded. Though her future was uncertain, she felt a small ember of determination ignite within her. The city might be daunting, but she would not let fear define her. She would stitch not only garments but also a new life for herself, one seam at a time.

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### Guiding Question:

How does Amelia's journey on the train symbolize her transition from childhood to adulthood?

## English Skill Builder – Set H

### Passage (approx. 610 words):

The old oak tree stood at the edge of Brookfield Park, its roots sprawling like veins across the earth and its branches stretching toward the sky. For generations, the tree had been a gathering place for the townsfolk—hosting picnics, secret meetings, and countless whispered confessions beneath its wide canopy. To children, it was a fortress; to lovers, a sanctuary; to elders, a reminder of time's passage.

When the town council announced plans to cut down the tree to make space for a new road, the community erupted in protest. People argued that the oak was more than wood and leaves—it was history. But the council countered that progress required sacrifice.

Among the protesters was a high school student named Leah, who had grown up climbing the oak's branches and sketching its silhouette in her notebooks. She felt the tree was part of her identity, a constant presence in a life otherwise filled with change. Her parents had divorced, her best friend had moved away, and her school was undergoing renovations, but the oak had remained, steady and unshaken.

Leah decided to write an article for the local newspaper, urging readers to consider what would be lost if the oak were destroyed. "This tree has stood longer than any of us," she wrote. "It has sheltered our stories and held our secrets. If we cut it down, we cut away part of ourselves." Her words struck a chord, and soon letters of support poured into the editor's office.

The council, however, remained unmoved, citing the need for modern infrastructure. On the day the workers arrived with chainsaws, dozens of townspeople formed a human chain around the oak. Leah was at the center, her arms linked with strangers who shared her determination. The standoff lasted hours until the mayor himself came to the site. Seeing the depth of the community's passion, he reluctantly ordered the workers to stand down.

A compromise was eventually reached: the road would be rerouted, sparing the oak but increasing construction costs. The decision was controversial, but for Leah and many others, it felt like a victory. The oak remained a silent witness to their struggle, a living reminder that voices united in purpose could reshape the future.

Months later, Leah visited the tree and placed her hand against its rough bark. She thought of the generations before her and those yet to come who would find comfort beneath its branches. The oak had endured storms and droughts, and now it had survived the threat of human ambition. To Leah, it symbolized resilience—not only of nature but of community.

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### Guiding Question:

In what ways does the oak tree symbolize both personal and communal resilience in the passage?

## English Skill Builder – Set L

### Passage (approx. 635 words):

The market in Riverton was unlike any other place in town. Every Saturday morning, it came alive with a flood of voices, scents, and colors. Farmers displayed crates of ripe apples and baskets of fresh herbs, while artisans arranged handwoven scarves and carved trinkets on wooden tables. Children ran about with pastries in their hands, and musicians played violins or guitars on the corners, filling the air with melody. Yet, behind the bustle, there was an unspoken truth: the market was under threat of closure.

A new shopping plaza had opened on the edge of town, offering convenience and cheaper prices. Slowly, Riverton's residents began drifting there for their weekly purchases. Many vendors at the market struggled to compete. For years, however, the market had been more than just a place of trade—it was the beating heart of Riverton's community.

Among the vendors was Mr. Dwyer, a baker whose family had sold bread at the market for three generations. "It isn't just bread we sell," he would tell his customers with a smile. "It's a piece of our family, baked fresh every morning." His words carried a truth that many townspeople felt but seldom articulated: the market was a place of connection, not merely transaction.

When rumors spread that the council might close the market in favor of new developments, citizens began to rally. A group of high school students started a petition, arguing that the market preserved traditions and supported local livelihoods. They gathered hundreds of signatures, including those of elderly residents who had attended the market since childhood. Letters poured into the local newspaper, emphasizing that the market represented Riverton's identity.

On the day of the council meeting, the town square filled with a crowd larger than any the market had ever seen. People held signs reading, "Save Our Market!" and "Local Roots, Local Future." Vendors offered free samples of their goods, reminding everyone of the flavors that tied them to this place. When it was his turn to speak, Mr. Dwyer told the council that closing the market would not only erase a tradition but fracture a community.

The council debated late into the evening before announcing that the market would remain open. Cheers erupted, and tears glistened in the eyes of both vendors and customers. The market, once taken for granted, had now been defended with conviction. From then on, Riverton's market became not just a Saturday habit but a conscious choice—a symbol of what the town valued most.

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### Guiding Question:

How does the author use the conflict between the market and the shopping plaza to highlight the theme of community identity?

## English Skill Builder – Set M

### Passage (approx. 615 words):

The first snowfall of winter arrived suddenly, blanketing the city in silence. For most residents, it was an inconvenience—slippery sidewalks, delayed buses, and icy roads. But for twelve-year-old Javier, it was a moment of magic. He pressed his face against the frosted window, mesmerized by the flakes swirling like dancers through the air. To him, snow meant freedom: snowball fights, sledding, and the joy of shaping a blank world into something new.

Yet this year was different. Javier's father had been laid off from his job, and his mother was working double shifts at the hospital. The family's laughter, once frequent, had grown rare. The weight of uncertainty pressed on Javier, though he didn't fully understand it. When he ran outside to make snow angels, he noticed his father watching from the porch, his expression weary but softening.

Later that day, Javier returned indoors with a plan. He rummaged through drawers and boxes, collecting scraps of colored paper, ribbon, and glue. With determination, he began creating homemade holiday decorations. His younger sister, curious, joined in, and soon the living room table was covered with paper snowflakes and hand-drawn stars. The house, once dim and heavy, slowly brightened with their creations.

When their mother came home late that evening, her tired eyes widened at the sight of the transformed living room. She smiled—a genuine smile Javier hadn't seen in weeks—and hugged both children tightly. Even his father, drawn in by the warmth of the moment, began to hum a carol.

The snow outside continued to fall, but inside the house, something more powerful took root: resilience. Javier realized that while he couldn't change his parents' struggles, he could still bring joy into their lives. The decorations weren't just ornaments; they were reminders that hope could be crafted even from the simplest materials.

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### Guiding Question:

How does the author use the snowfall and Javier's actions to explore the theme of resilience in the face of hardship?

## English Skill Builder – Set N

### Passage (approx. 630 words):

The lighthouse on Greystone Cliff had stood for nearly a century, its beam sweeping across the waves, guiding sailors safely to shore. To the townspeople, it was a landmark as steady as the tides themselves. But to Clara, whose grandfather had been the lighthouse keeper, it was something more personal—a beacon of memory.

After her grandfather's passing, Clara visited the lighthouse often. She would climb the narrow staircase to the lantern room, listening to the echo of her footsteps and imagining his steady hands maintaining the great lamp. Though automated systems had long replaced keepers, she felt his presence in the creak of the wooden floorboards and the salty air.

One afternoon, Clara discovered a box tucked beneath a loose board in the lighthouse. Inside were notebooks filled with her grandfather's reflections: weather records, sketches of passing ships, and personal musings. In one entry, he wrote, "*A lighthouse does not ask if the sea will rage; it simply shines.*" Clara closed the notebook with tears in her eyes, struck by the wisdom hidden in his words.

When developers announced plans to decommission the lighthouse and turn the cliffside into a tourist resort, Clara felt as though her grandfather's legacy was under siege. She organized a campaign to preserve the lighthouse, sharing passages from his notebooks with the community. "This isn't just stone and glass," she argued. "It's our history, our connection to the sea, and a symbol of constancy."

The campaign gained momentum. Fishermen spoke of nights when the light had saved them from disaster. Families recalled picnics near the cliff, watching the beam cut through fog. Even students volunteered to help restore the structure, cleaning graffiti and painting railings.

Eventually, the council decided to protect the lighthouse as a heritage site. The news was met with celebration, but for Clara, the true victory was more intimate. Standing in the lantern room, holding her grandfather's notebooks, she felt the beam stretch across both sea and time. The lighthouse would continue to shine—not just for sailors but for generations who sought guidance in their own storms.

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### Guiding Question:

In what ways does the lighthouse function as both a literal and symbolic guide in the passage?



## Markscheme for English Skill Builder Sets F–H

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### General Assessment Criteria (aligned with IB-style expectations)

#### Level 1 (0–2 marks):

- Response is very brief, incomplete, or irrelevant.
- Little or no understanding of the passage.
- Ideas are unsupported, vague, or copied directly from the text.

#### Level 2 (3–4 marks):

- Some understanding of the passage and guiding question.
- Limited analysis with basic reference to the text.
- Expression is simple; arguments lack development.

#### Level 3 (5–6 marks):

- Adequate understanding of the guiding question.
- Some analysis with reference to specific textual details.
- Arguments are reasonably clear but may lack depth or balance.

#### Level 4 (7–8 marks):

- Good understanding of the guiding question and author's techniques.
- Clear, focused analysis supported with relevant textual evidence.
- Response shows awareness of literary devices and themes.
- Expression is generally coherent and structured.

#### Level 5 (9–10 marks):

- Excellent understanding of the guiding question and the passage's deeper meaning.
- Well-developed analysis with insightful commentary on author's choices.
- Wide range of textual evidence integrated smoothly into argument.
- Sophisticated and persuasive expression; strong sense of structure and purpose.

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### Set F – Guiding Question:



*How does the author use the unveiling of the monument to convey the enduring influence of Miss Reeves on her community?*

- **Low Level (1–2):** Mentions that the community liked Miss Reeves but does not explain why the monument is important.
  - **Mid Level (5–6):** Explains that the monument symbolizes respect and highlights Miss Reeves’ role as a teacher; references Michael’s speech.
  - **High Level (9–10):** Insightfully connects the imagery of the statue (book in hand, gaze toward the future) with her legacy of learning; integrates analysis of how townspeople’s emotions and children’s notes illustrate the ripple effect of her influence.
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#### **Set G – Guiding Question:**

*How does Amelia’s journey on the train symbolize her transition from childhood to adulthood?*

- **Low Level (1–2):** States Amelia is moving to the city without linking it to maturity.
  - **Mid Level (5–6):** Recognizes the train ride as a shift from her rural home to responsibility in the city; notes her mother’s handkerchief as comfort.
  - **High Level (9–10):** Connects the physical journey with emotional growth, contrasting innocence (childhood countryside) and independence (city work). Explores the symbolism of the handkerchief as a tie to the past and the ember of determination as her step into adulthood.
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#### **Set H – Guiding Question:**

*In what ways does the oak tree symbolize both personal and communal resilience in the passage?*

- **Low Level (1–2):** Mentions people wanted to save the tree, but little analysis.
  - **Mid Level (5–6):** Notes Leah’s personal connection and community protests as examples of resilience.
  - **High Level (9–10):** Insightfully explains how the oak embodies stability amidst personal change (Leah’s life) and collective resistance against external pressures. Integrates how the tree’s survival mirrors the endurance of shared values and intergenerational identity.
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#### **Marking Notes for Teachers**

- Responses should balance **textual evidence** with **interpretation**.
- Encourage students to consider both **literal** (events, actions) and **figurative** (symbols, themes, emotions) dimensions.
- Strong answers often connect **authorial choices** (imagery, symbolism, character reflection) with **larger ideas** (legacy, resilience, growth).
- Reward originality and depth of thought, not formulaic repetition.

#### Set L – Guiding Question:

*How does the author use the conflict between the market and the shopping plaza to highlight the theme of community identity?*

- **Low-level response (1–2):** Mentions that the plaza is cheaper and the market is old, without linking to identity.
  - **Mid-level response (5–6):** Recognizes that the conflict shows how tradition competes with modernity; notes Mr. Dwyer and the petition.
  - **High-level response (9–10):** Explains how the market symbolizes continuity, tradition, and belonging, while the plaza represents impersonal consumerism. Connects imagery of food, music, and signs (“Save Our Market”) to community pride and values.
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#### Set M – Guiding Question:

*How does the author use the snowfall and Javier’s actions to explore the theme of resilience in the face of hardship?*

- **Low-level response (1–2):** Says that Javier likes snow and makes decorations, without linking to resilience.
  - **Mid-level response (5–6):** Recognizes that Javier’s decorations help his family feel better, showing resilience.
  - **High-level response (9–10):** Explains how snowfall contrasts external coldness with internal warmth; analyzes Javier’s creativity as symbolic of resilience. Connects decorations and renewed family unity with hope forged in adversity.
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#### Set N – Guiding Question:

*In what ways does the lighthouse function as both a literal and symbolic guide in the passage?*

- **Low-level response (1–2):** States the lighthouse helps ships, without noting symbolism.
- **Mid-level response (5–6):** Mentions the lighthouse guided ships and also represents Clara’s grandfather’s memory.
- **High-level response (9–10):** Insightfully analyzes dual role: literal guide for sailors and symbolic guide for Clara/community. Connects grandfather’s words (“it simply shines”) to resilience, heritage, and intergenerational wisdom. Explains how preserving the lighthouse protects identity and values.

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### Teacher Notes

- Strong responses integrate **symbolism and imagery** with themes.
- Encourage students to consider **contrasts** (market vs. plaza, snow vs. hardship, lighthouse vs. tourism).
- Reward responses that connect individual experiences (Javier, Clara) with **wider communal significance**.
- At the top level, students should show **nuanced interpretation**, not just summary.

