

CONTEST PRESENTATION

The International Reading Contest (IRC) turns to best account the reading experience of the pre-university students, the aim being to encourage them to approach reading as a skill for life, through fictional, nonfictional and multimodal texts. The contest is organised based on the syllabus for the optional course called “Reading for life skills” and within the European reference framework LiFT-2, LAV, targeting 13-19- year-old students who are able to use reading for personal development. Thus, the students are assessed regarding their reading skills, their capacity of understanding fictional, nonfictional and multimodal texts, their ability to reflect upon these texts, to express their opinions, arguments and own interpretations in writing or in an oral presentation, or in a debate form.

The format of the contest comprises three levels of schooling: level 2 for 13-14 –year-olds, level 3 for 15-16-year-old students and level 4 for 17-19-year-olds. The contest used the types of student readers identified in the Lift-2 project, as well as the inventory of activities that would help students improve their reading abilities.

SUBJECT FOR THE WRITTEN TEST

The subject for the written test consists of three parts. Out of the 60 points allotted for it, 50% e.g. 30 points are given for the fictional text and 50% e.g. the remaining 30 points are given for the nonfictional plus the multimodal text (both of them belonging to the nonliterary field)

1. Part I - reading of the fictional text

The fictional texts chosen for the first subject belong to Romanian or foreign literature and are challenging in order to allow a reading for identification. For the two national stages, prose texts have been chosen (entire ones or excerpts) of about 2000 words, given the fact that the participants are supposed to have acquired a good reading pace. The texts are appropriate to the students’ reading level and to their interests.

They are as follows:

- (a) For level 1: *Mary Poppins* by P.L. Travers (fragment), *The Realm of a Thousand and One Pleasures* by Andre Marais (fragment), *The Old Man of the Moon* by Grace Lin (fragment);
- (b) For level 2: *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (fragment), *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (fragment), *The Travelling Trousers* by Ann Brashares (fragment);
- (c) *Bless the Animals and the Children* by Glendon Swarthout (fragment), *The Colombré Monster* by Dino Buzzati (entire text), *A Cat in the Rain* by Ernest Hemingway (entire text), *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafan (fragment);
- (d) *The Wheel of Paracelsus* by Jorge Luis Borges (entire text), *I Offer to Dream* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (entire text), *The Legend of Painting* by Michael Tournier (entire text), *Three Tales* by John Cheever (fragment).

The first part of the subject for the written test is based on the model of personal development in approaching the literary text, since fiction is actually in its deepest meaning a discourse about human nature and human condition. It is also derived from the underlying idea that reading is also a way of expanding knowledge and self knowledge, making the student aware of the cognitive and affective effects that the text produces in him/ her. The main processes targeted through the items are : comprehension (construction of meaning) and interpretation (which involves construction of

significance and questioning the constructed significance from the viewpoint of the revelation generated in the reader's mind). That is precisely why this first part is divided into 4 evaluation sequences, marked A to D, and differentiated by either the aimed cognitive levels or by the type of items, as follows:

- A. 4 items of multiple choice, worth 1 point each, aimed at recognizing some information which is clearly stated, as in the following example:

(1) *How old is Tibby?*

- a. 12
- b. 13
- c. 14
- d. 15

(level 2)

(2) *What could be seen from the window of the room in which the two Americans were staying?*

- a. *The sea*
- b. *The sea and the public garden;*
- c. *The sea, the public garden and the monument dedicated to the heroes;*
- d. *The sea, the public garden, the palm trees and the monument dedicated to the heroes;*

(level 3)

Or expressions of direct conclusions:

(1) *The maid looks concentrating attentively at the woman from America when she speaks in English because:*

- a. *she does not like her;*
- b. *the woman makes her feel anxious;*
- c. *she is trying to understand what she says;*
- d. *she is curious*

(level 3)

(2) *Why do the village children look enviously at Minli?*

- a. *because the girl has returned from the field;*
- b. *because the girl can afford to buy a golden fish;*
- c. *because the girl is different from them;*
- d. *because the girl talks to the fish merchant.*

(level 2)

- B. An item which asks establishing the time and the logical order of eight ideas in the text (placed in alphabetical order), aimed at the student's ability of grasping the chronology of the events. For each idea correctly placed 0,5 points is granted, this item allowing a maximum of 4 points:

(1) *Decide on the logical and temporal order of the following ideas in the text, then write only the corresponding numbers on the exam paper.*

- a. *The man is reading a newspaper.*
- b. *The man is talking to the stewardess.*

- c. *The man orders a double Martini and the woman a Sherry.*
- d. *The two passengers are having a meal.*
- e. *The woman goes to the toilet with the book.*
- f. *The woman is getting ready to go to bed.*
- g. *The woman and the man get into the same taxi.*
- h. *The woman is watching a film.*

(level 4)

- C. 4 semi objective items aiming at students' ability to recognize explicit information, direct conclusions expressed, interpretation of ideas or information, which involves making connections and also evaluating the content of the support text:

(1) *On the exam paper, do the following tasks, by writing complete sentences:*

- a. *Write three sequences from the text which provide information about the fact that Michael is not sorry for what he's doing.*
- b. *Name two things that Michael does after coming out from the bathroom, which he knows are not allowed.*
- c. *Explain what Mary Poppins means by saying: "Today you have got out of bed on your left side."*

(2) *Explain why Michael is trying not to reveal the fact that he is curious to find out what is glittering on the path.*

(level 1)

- D. An item of reduced length (15/30 lines) which asks formulating and supporting evaluation thoughts referring to the text/ the situations in the text or making connections with real life. Here are some of the tasks used at various stages of the contest:

(1) *Explain in a text of 15-20 lines, based on the given fragment, why you think or do not think that Michael could be considered a bad child.*

(level 1)

(2) *Write a text of 15-20 lines in which you support your point of view about the chances that the six boys have to succeed, given their personality.*

(3) *Some students in a class have read the story called "The Colombrè Monster" by Dino Buzzati and have different opinions about its significance: some believe that Stefano Roi failed his destiny, others believe the opposite, that he succeeded. Write a letter of 20-30 lines to these students in which you support your own point of view regarding this matter.*

(level 3)

(4) *Two people who have read the story called "The Legend of Painting" by Michael Tournier are talking to each other:*

"I think that the Greek painter did not deserve to win because he didn't create a work of art."

"Really? I believe on the contrary that he did deserve to win because integrated art into life. "

Write two texts of 15-30 lines each, in which you support both points of view expressed by the two readers, based on Michael Tournier's text.

(level 4)

2. Part II - reading a nonfictional text

The second part of the subject has a nonfictional support text- scientific, journalistic, injunctive etc.- an entire text or an excerpt. At the former contests, the following types of texts have been used:

- (a) announcements;
- (b) instructions for using a product;
- (c) cooking recipes;
- (d) newspaper or online articles;
- (e) scientific articles;
- (f) informative articles;
- (g) guarantee papers;
- (h) adaptations of commentaries from various blogs.

These texts have, by creating two evaluative sequences marked by A and B, as follows:

A. 5 items of recognition of explicit information or of expression of direct conclusions, as in the exemple:

- (1) Write sentences in answer to each of the following tastes, using the text given:
 - a. Mention two reasons for which Adina prefers street advertisements.
 - b. Write from Lucian's answer one opinion and one fact.
 - c. In Miriam's answer there is a contradiction. Explain what it consists in.
 - d. Mention, from Cosmin's answer, two advantages of street advertisements.
 - e. Present in a text of 4-8 lines the difference between Cosmin's answer and the others' answers.

(level 3)

B. an item of the short essay type which asks supporting an opinion or formulating some evaluation thought by providing arguments in each case:

- (1) Chose an idea expressed by Alexandra that you disagree with. Write a 20- line text in which you support your choice, expanding on two counter arguments regarding Alexandra's opinion .

3. Part III - reading a multimodal text

The multimodal text means integrating various forms of text so as they generate significances. Belonging to this category are: visual design, photographs, magazines, e-books, websites, video products, plans etc. The former contests used the posters of some campaigns, advertisements, cartoons, internet pages, a fragment from a post on a social network, the underground plan of Athens. The structure of this part of the subject has undergone changes, so that at the latest sitting of the contest it had four items aiming at the student's ability to recognize in the multimodal text some explicit information or expression of direct conclusions, as in the following example which used the Athens underground plan as a support:

- (1) Imagine you are in Athens (Greece) and use the underground as means of transport. Look at the picture of the underground plan of this city and read the following information:

Line (English)- line

ISAP – electric Metro

SUBURBAN RAILWAY –suburban metro (connecting Athens with the town of Corinth, 80 km away from Athens)

NATIONAL RAILWAY STATION –train station

PARKING –car park

1. You have arrived in Athens and your hotel is near Omonia underground stop. Say how you will do to reach your destination, changing the subway line only once.
2. Piraeus Harbour is among your tourist objectives. If you start from Omonia stop, how many stops do you need to go before you get off?

3. You are at Acropoli stop and you need to reach Irimi. For this purpose you need to use two subway lines in Athens. For each line, find the names of the final stops, following the forward direction of the subway.
4. In maximum 10 lines explain the necessity of using colours in the underground plan.