



**ISA**  
**Reading**  
**Sample Materials**

**Grade 7**  
**Grade 8**  
**Grade 9**  
**Grade 10**

**Sample**



# ISA Reading Sample Materials

## Grade 7, Grade 8, Grade 9 and Grade 10

This collection of reading sample materials represents a typical range of reading material in ISA tests from Grade 7 to Grade 10. The purpose of this collection is to show teachers examples of the kinds of reading materials and questions that are used in the ISA.

### *Stimulus material*

This collection has four pieces of stimulus material:

- an argument;
- a narrative;
- a graph; and
- a description.

An actual ISA reading test has six or seven pieces of stimulus from a range of text types that also includes poems, tables, charts, expositions, diagrams and instructions. This collection has three questions per stimulus. An actual ISA reading test has four or five questions per stimulus. Depending on the grade level, an ISA reading test for Grades 7 to 10 has 32–36 questions.

### *Reading aspect*

There are 12 questions in this collection:

- 3 assess *retrieving information*;
- 6 assess *interpreting texts*; and
- 3 assess *reflecting on texts*

In an actual ISA test, the proportion of questions assessing each of the three aspects of reading would be similar to the proportion shown here. The reading aspect for each question is shown in the marking guide.

### *Question format*

This collection has 6 multiple-choice questions and 6 open-ended questions requiring students to write a response. An actual ISA test has a similar proportion of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Some of the open-ended questions only require an answer of one or two words, others require a sentence or two. Examples of both kinds of open-ended questions are included. The marking guide shows the open-ended questions are scored.

### **This collection of materials is not a test.**

The materials in this collection have NOT been selected to represent the typical range of difficulty of an ISA test. An actual ISA test is carefully constructed to ensure that the range of difficulty of the questions reflects the range of reading ability of the population for each grade.

The materials in this collection cover Grades 7, 8, 9 and 10. Some materials may be too hard for Grade 7 and some materials may be too easy for Grade 10. If a teacher wants to use some of these materials for students to practise on, it is important that the teacher only selects the stimulus pieces that are of an appropriate level of reading difficulty for their students.

Teachers should use this material as a model. Teachers can develop questions that assess similar kinds of skills using their own reading materials.

### Other ISA Sample Reading Collections

- Grades 3, 4 and 5
- Grades 5, 6 and 7

# Letter to the Editor

Peter Hildegard (in his letter of 15 May) has got it wrong. I did not spend the years I attended a mainstream school sitting on the sidelines 'feeling deprived and lonely' because I use a wheelchair while my fellow students 'engaged in boisterous playground activities'.

Instead I participated in all the activities available to me, both academically and socially. I learned about the world and how to engage in it, formed friendships and was aware that I had a right to expect the same opportunities as those that were available to my fellow non-disabled students. Through daily contact with a disabled student my peers also learned important lessons about diversity and acceptance.

We belong in the world. It is our world too. We share, with non-disabled people, the right to live in the community, attend regular schools, use the public transport system and so forth. Unfortunately for us, there remain access and attitudinal problems that prevent or restrict our participation, and this needs to change. This is everyone's responsibility.

Melissa Burgon

# Letter to the Editor

Use *LETTER TO THE EDITOR* on the opposite page to answer the questions below.

L7LML1

**1**

'Melissa's purpose in the first paragraph is to

- defend her own ideas.
- explore her own ideas.
- support another person's ideas.
- challenge another person's ideas.

L7LML5

**2**

Melissa calls others 'non-disabled' rather than 'abled'.

What point is she trying to make?

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L7LML7

**3**

The last paragraph begins with, 'We belong in this world'.

Who are 'we'?

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# Stairs

On the stairs, there was a clear, plain silence.

It was a short staircase, fourteen steps in all, covered in lino from which the original pattern had been polished away to the point where it had the look of a faint memory. Eleven steps took you to the turn of the stairs where the cathedral and the sky always hung in the window frame. Three more steps took you on to the landing, about six feet long.

'Don't move,' my mother said from the landing. 'Don't cross that window.'

I was on the tenth step, she was on the landing. I could have touched her.

'There's something there between us. A shadow. Don't move.'

I had no intention. I was enthralled. But I could see no shadow.

'There's somebody there. Somebody unhappy. Go back down the stairs son.'

I retreated one step. 'How'll you get down?'

'I'll stay for a while and it will go away.'

'How do you know that?'

'I'll feel it gone.'

'What if it doesn't go?'

'It always does. I'll not be long.'

I stood there, looking up at her. I loved her then. She was small and anxious, but without real fear.

'I'm sure I could walk up there to you, in two skips.'

'No, no. God knows. It's bad enough me feeling it; I don't want you to as well.'

'I don't mind feeling it. It's a bit like the smell of damp clothes, isn't it?'

She laughed. 'No. Nothing like that. Don't talk yourself into believing it. Just go downstairs.'

I went down, excited, and sat at the range with its red heart fire and black lead dust. We were haunted! I heard her moving upstairs. The house was all cobweb tremors. No matter where I walked, it yielded before me and settled behind me. She came down after a bit, looking white.

'Did you see anything?'

'No nothing at all. It's just your old mother with her nerves. All imagination. There's nothing there.'

# Stairs

*STAIRS on the opposite page is taken from a novel. Use STAIRS to answer the questions below.*

S0SS01

**4**

Which one of the following quotations from the text suggests that the mother had experienced the strange feeling before?

- 'Don't cross that window.'
- 'There's somebody there.'
- 'It always does.'
- 'It's a bit like the smell of damp clothes, isn't it?'
- 'where the cathedral and the sky always hung in the window frame.'

S0SS03

**5**

Is the writing effective in convincing you of a presence in the house?

- YES     NO

Fill in one box and explain your answer by referring to the passage.

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R050907

**6**

'On the stairs there was a clear, plain silence.'

Why do you think the author chose to begin the passage this way?

Explain your answer by referring to the rest of the passage.

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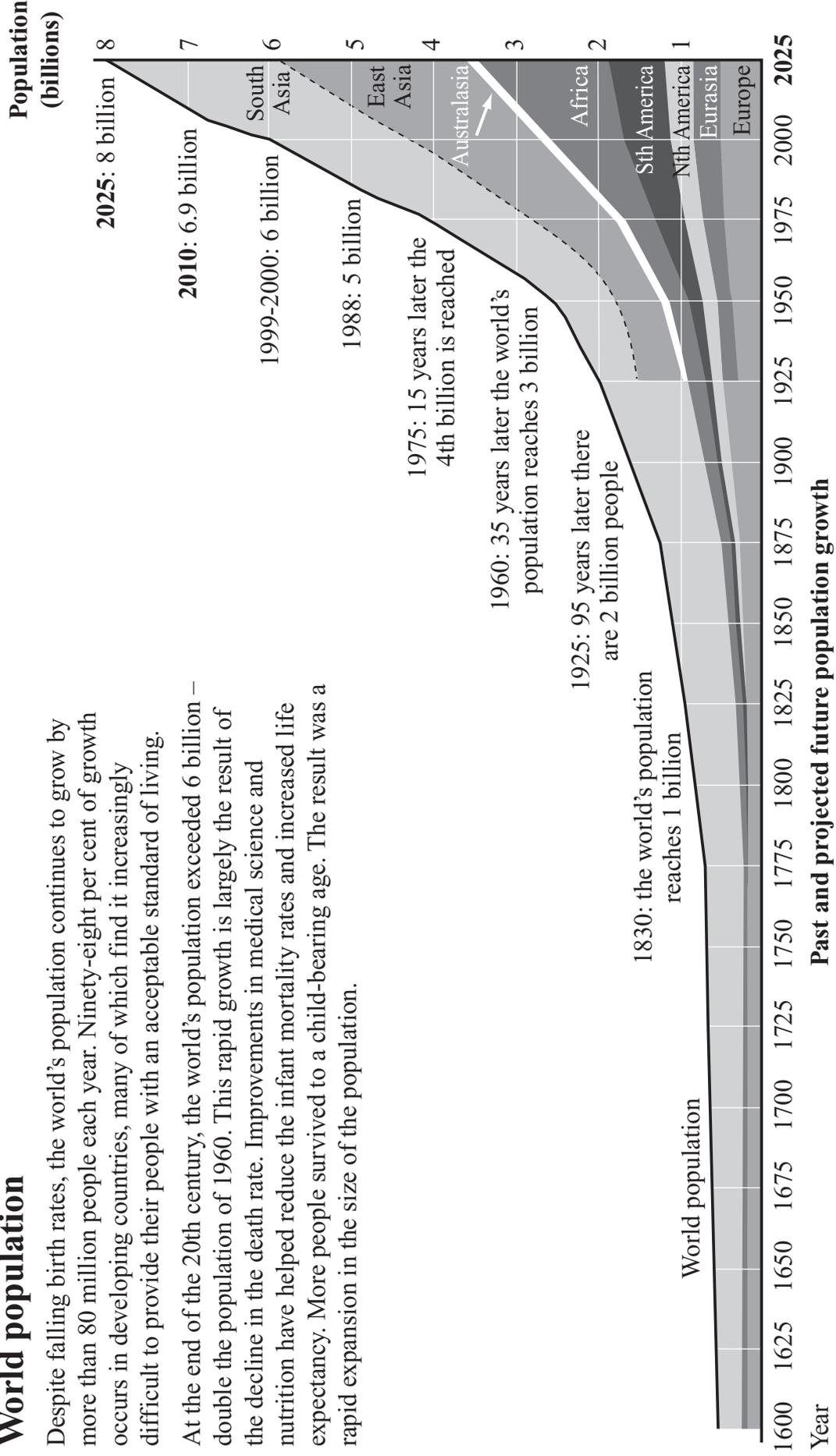
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# World Population

## World population

Despite falling birth rates, the world's population continues to grow by more than 80 million people each year. Ninety-eight per cent of growth occurs in developing countries, many of which find it increasingly difficult to provide their people with an acceptable standard of living.

At the end of the 20th century, the world's population exceeded 6 billion – double the population of 1960. This rapid growth is largely the result of the decline in the death rate. Improvements in medical science and nutrition have helped reduce the infant mortality rates and increased life expectancy. More people survived to a child-bearing age. The result was a rapid expansion in the size of the population.



# World Population

Use the information in *WORLD POPULATION* on the opposite page to answer the questions below.

S7PL04

7

According to the graph, which area is expected to have the smallest population in the year 2010?

- Europe
- Australasia
- North America
- South America
- South Asia

S7PL05

8

How many years did it take for the world's population to rise from three to four billion?

- 3
- 4
- 15
- 35

S7PL06

9

According to the graph, in 2025 the predicted population for South Asia is about

- 2 billion.
- 4 billion.
- 6.9 billion.
- 8 billion.

# Lunch Pictures



'Initially, I don't think I was even aware of street photography,' says Gus Powell. 'It was a natural thing for me. I grew up in New York, I was an only child, so I'd do a lot of walking around the city. But after a time I wanted to bring something back from my wanderings...so I started taking these pictures. I wasn't aware that I was part of a tradition. It was just a natural impulse.'

Over the last three years Powell has been escaping his office job during lunch breaks and scouring the immediate vicinity for chance moments of beauty and drama. The idea came when a friend gave him a copy of *Lunch Poems* by Frank O'Hara. These odes to New York, penned in the poet's lunch hour, led Powell to his own project, Lunch Pictures, which are the basis for the book:

'My full time job was cutting down on my picture time, so the Lunch Pictures were a salvation... I found there was enough for me to work with just in the middle of the day.'

'How funny you are today  
New York like Ginger  
Rogers in Swingtime and  
St. Bridget's steeple  
leaning a little to the left'

*Frank O'Hara, 'Steps'*

What is great is how Powell turns the project's constraints, which he compares to the focusing structure of a sonnet, to his advantage. 'I liked the discipline of shooting this one area over the years, just watching the light change and the seasons pass. All these different moments are caught in the same time and space – midday, within five blocks of my work. Most of

us are making these patterns, especially in the city. It's a matter of seeing that there's a complexity to them that we should stop and enjoy.'

Sometimes when you look into Powell's pictures, you're jolted by the image staring back. Street photography's

credo of authenticity generally means that we watch unseen. But when the subject catches us observing them the effect is both compelling and unnerving. 'There's a huge tradition of the invisible street photographer – from Cartier Bresson to Robert Frank onward,' explains Powell. 'I'm six foot five, which can make that kind of difficult!'



# Lunch Pictures

*LUNCH PICTURES on the opposite page is an extract from an article that appeared in an art magazine.*

*Use the LUNCH PICTURES to answer the questions below.*

R040501

**10** Why does Powell mention that he was an only child?

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R040502

**11** Why did Powell begin the Lunch Pictures project?

List two reasons.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

R040503

**12** How do the 'constraints' of the Lunch Hour project impact on Powell's work?

- It is hard for him to focus on his work.
- It is hard for him to find subjects.
- He is able to explore a single theme in great detail.
- He is able to take photographs unseen.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Q1** 'feeling deprived and lonely'

'engaged in boisterous playground activities'

**Why does Melissa place quotation marks ( ' ' ) around these words in her letter?**

*Aspect:* Reflecting

*Descriptors*

2 pt: Explain the significance of inverted commas (indicating quotation) in a letter to the editor and infer who is being quoted from context.

1 pt: Explain the significance of inverted commas (indicating quotation) in a letter to the editor.

### Marking Guide

2 pt: Refers specifically to quote from Peter.

- Peter Hildegard wrote them in his letter.
- They are little quotes Hildegard made in his letter.
- It's what Peter Hildegard said.
- Because by not changing the words he used she can comment them and give us an idea about what he said. [Implied understanding that she has used the quote from Peter Hildegard]

1 pt: Refers to quoting someone else.

- Someone else said that.
- She has copied it from somewhere.
- People have said these words to her.

0 pt: Vague or incorrect.

- She is speaking.
- because they are describing her
- The writer is saying those words to the reader.
- So you take more notice.
- They were activities she could not do.
- She thinks they're lies.
- They are the key words to the sentence.

**Q2** Melissa calls others 'non-disabled' rather than 'abled'.

**What point is she trying to make?**

*Aspect:* Reflecting

*Descriptor:* Use everyday knowledge to explain the purpose of the author's choice of words in a letter to the editor.

## Marking Guide

- 1 pt: Refers to undermining conventions of normality, affirmative action or the promotion of equality.
- She is saying disabled is good and the others have a problem.
  - Because they are abled does not mean they are gifted.
  - Everyone is 'able' whether they have a disability or not.
  - that everyone is equal no matter if they can walk or not
  - So they feel what it is like to have disabled in their name.
  - that the immediate action towards disabled people is that they are in wheelchairs [Poorly expressed idea of resisting stereotype]
  - They are the different ones, not her.
  - They are not superior to disabled people.
- OR Refers to sharing disability label.
- so everyone has disabled in their name
  - that they are not in a wheelchair
  - They are not like her.
- 0 pt: Vague or incorrect.
- that she is better
  - She is making a point about other people not being disabled.
  - She is trying to be nice.
  - They are fortunate and non-disabled.
  - She wants non-disabled people to help out.
  - She doesn't want to say a word that sounds horrible.

### Q3 The last paragraph begins with, 'We belong in this world'.

#### Who are 'we'?

*Aspect:* Interpreting

*Descriptor:* Infer the meaning of a pronoun reference by recognising a main idea in a letter to the editor.

## Marking Guide

- 1 pt: Refers to disabled people.
- Disabled people
  - People in wheelchairs
- 0 pt: Vague or incorrect.
- Melissa and her friends
  - Students

## STAIRS

**Q4 Which one of the following quotations from the text suggests that the mother has experienced this feeling before?**

*Aspect:* Retrieving information

*Descriptor:* Recognise which quotation from a narrative passage best supports a given interpretation.

*Key:* C – It always does.

**Q5 Is the writing effective in convincing you of a presence in the house?**

**Explain your answer by referring to the passage.**

*Aspect:* Reflecting

*Descriptor:* Justify an opinion about how convincingly a mood is created in a narrative passage, drawing on evidence from the text.

### Marking Guide

- 1 pt: Selects YES or NO and refers to the passage to support opinion. May be a direct quotation, a paraphrase, a direct reference or an indirect reference. May identify with characters or explain an effect via the characters' actions.
- Yes: Nobody 'sees' the presence, but we can imagine it from the feelings of the characters.
  - Yes: because it has a good build up of a spooky atmosphere and it has a really good description of how scared the mum is.
  - Yes: The presence is unhappy. We can understand something about it.
  - Yes: The presence has been there before. It makes it more real.
  - Yes: You believe the mother. She seems to know what she's talking about.
  - Yes: The boy is so excited about the presence.
  - Yes: The mother tried to protect her son.
  - No: The author should have described it more so we could understand it.
  - No: It says, 'No nothing all. All imagination. There's nothing there.'
  - No: We don't know what it looks like.
  - No: If there was a presence in the house they would feel more frightened.
  - No: They are just imagining it.
- 0 pt: Selects either YES or NO with no reference to the passage or with a superficial or general reference to atmosphere or style.
- Yes. The presence is scary.
  - No. It's not scary at all.
  - Yes, it does because the writer has used a range of different description words making it easier for us to follow the story. [Wordy but empty]
  - Yes, because of the mother's actions. [Too vague]
  - No. There's no such thing as presences. [Expresses own belief.]

**Q6** 'On the stairs there was a clear, plain silence.'

**Why do you think the author chose to begin the passage this way?**

**Explain your answer by referring to the rest of the passage.**

*Aspect:* Reflecting

*Descriptors*

2 pt: Explain the specific effect of a narrative passage's opening sentence in relation to the passage as a whole.

1 pt: Explain the effect of the opening sentence of a narrative passage in general terms, relating to mood.

### **Marking Guide**

2 pt: Explain the effect of the opening sentence in relation to the passage as a whole by contrasting it with the the remaining text.

- The opening is different to the rest of the passage. This shows that the boy probably doesn't really understand what is happening. He understands it differently to his mother because she is an adult.
- The opening says everything is normal yet later it is very strange. The boy doesn't properly understand what is happening.
- There is something strange going on, it is too silent and later we know this is true.
- because it starts off normal and escalates for suspense
- The boy thinks everything is normal when really it is strange. [This minimal Code 2 response implicitly suggests that the boy did not properly understand what was happening.]

1 pt: Describes the author's intended effect of mystery/suspense/uncertainty without reference to the remaining text.

- to make the story seem scary
- It makes the reader involved in the story and makes us imagine a mysterious spooky place.
- The author chose to start the passage this way because the author wanted to catch the readers' attention. Since the words clear, plain and silence do not go too well with each other, it makes the readers think. [Does not connect the words with the rest of the passage.]
- to make the reader think that something is going to happen on these stairs [Equivalent of "creates suspense".]
- Stairs are usually busy places, people moving up and down all the time. For stairs to be clear and silent gives a sense of mystery.
- It makes it seem eerie.

- 0 pt: Gives a vague or insufficient answer.
- He wants it to sound good.
  - It's silent.
  - It makes it easier to understand.
  - The author knew that no one else was there aside from him and his mother.
  - It sets the scene and allows the story to develop.
  - to pull the reader in [vague]

## WORLD POPULATION

**Q7** According to the graph, which area is expected to have the smallest population in the year 2010?

*Aspect:* Interpreting

*Descriptor:* Locate and combine information from the text and a graph of world population growth.

*Key:* B – Australasia

**Q8** How many years did it take for the world's population to rise from three to four billion?

*Aspect:* Retrieving information

*Descriptor:* Locate information given in a graph of world population growth.

*Key:* C – 15

**Q9** According to the graph, in 2025 the predicted population for South Asia is about

*Aspect:* Retrieving information

*Descriptor:* Locate information given in a graph of world population growth.

*Key:* A – two billion.

## LUNCH PICTURES

**Q10** Why does Powell mention that he was an only child?

*Aspect:* Interpretation

*Descriptor:* Identify the purpose of a detail about the writer's childhood.

### Marking Guide

- 1pt: Refers to freedom to wander or need to entertain himself.
- He did not have any strict guidance and was able to explore.
  - There weren't any other siblings in the family so he could do what he liked.
  - He was lonely and had to entertain himself.
  - Because it made him wander the streets.

- 0 pt: Gives insufficient or vague answer.
- because he feels sorry for himself
  - because he saw New York over time
  - He had no-one to play with.

**Q11 Why did Powell begin the Lunch Pictures Project?**

**List two reasons.**

*Aspect:* Interpreting

*Descriptors:*

2 pt: Find two reasons that support a writer's actions.

1 pt: Find one reason that supports a writer's actions.

**Marking Guide**

- 2 pt: States that he was inspired by O'Hara's poetry to use his lunch time AND his full time job was taking time away from his photography Inspiration.
- He read O'Hara's poetry that was written in his lunch hour and this inspired him to take photos in his lunch hour.
  - O'Hara gave him the idea to use his lunch hour.
  - He was inspired by a book.
  - making time for photography
  - Being trapped in an office job meant he appreciated some salvation.
  - Work was eating into his photography time.
  - He could do something he liked during lunch.
  - He had no other time.
- 1 pt: Lists one of the above reasons.
- 0 pt: Focuses on general reasons for enjoying photography.
- He wanted to focus on the same area every day.
  - natural impulse
  - something to do
  - He enjoyed watching things change.

**Q12 How do the 'constraints' of the Lunch Hour project impact on Powell's work?**

*Aspect:* Interpreting

*Descriptor:* Identify the implied meaning of specified section of descriptive text in a magazine article.

*Key:* C – He is able to explore a single theme in great detail.