

Read the extract below, then answer the questions that follow. Alex Rider is a 14-year-old spy who works for “MI6”, the British government’s secret intelligence (“spy”) agency.

5

10



ABBOTSHOLME

AN EDUCATION FOR LIFE

# English

15

Year 7 Entrance/Scholarship Assessment

Practice Paper

**Read the extract below, then answer the questions that follow. Alex Rider is a 14-year-old spy who works for “MI6”, the British government’s secret intelligence (“spy”) agency.**

*From “Alex Rider: Crocodile Tears”*

*By Anthony Horowitz*

### **Chapter One: “Reflections in a Mirror”**

20 Alex Rider took one last glance in the mirror, then stopped and looked a second time. It was strange, but he wondered if he recognized the boy who was looking back. There were the thin lips, the slightly chiselled nose and chin, the fair hair hanging in two strands over the dark brown eyes. He raised a hand and, obediently, his reflection did the same. But there was something different about this other Alex Rider. It just wasn’t quite him.

25 Of course, the clothes he was wearing didn’t help. In a few minutes he would be leaving for a New Year’s Eve party being held at a castle on the banks of Loch Arkaig in the Highlands of Scotland – and the invitation had been clear. Dress: black tie. Reluctantly Alex had gone out and rented the entire outfit: dinner jacket, black trousers and a white shirt with a stick-up collar that was too tight and dug into his neck. The one thing he had refused to put on was the pair of polished leather shoes that the shop assistant had insisted would  
30 make the outfit complete. Black trainers would have to do. What did it all make him look like, he wondered, as he straightened the bow tie for the tenth time. A young James Bond. He hated the comparison but he couldn’t avoid it.

It wasn’t just the clothes. As Alex continued his examination, he had to admit that so much had happened in the last year, he’d almost lost track of who – and what – he was.  
35 Standing in front of the mirror, it was as if he had just stepped down off the merry-go-round that his life had become. He might be still but the world around him was spinning.

Just two months ago he had been in Australia – not on holiday, not visiting relatives, but, incredibly, working for the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, disguised as an Afghan  
40 refugee. He had been sent to infiltrate the people-smuggling gang known as the snakehead, but his mission had taken him much further than that, setting him against Major Winston Yu and the potential devastation of a huge bomb buried deep inside a fault line in the earth’s crust. It had also brought him face to face with his godfather, the man he had known only as Ash. Thinking about him now, Alex saw something spark in his eyes. Was it anger? Grief?  
45 Alex had never known his parents and he’d thought Ash would somehow be able to explain where he’d come from, to make sense of his past. But his godfather had done nothing of the sort and their meeting had led instead to betrayal and death.

And that was really it, wasn’t it? That was what the boy in the mirror was trying to tell him. He was still only fourteen years old but this last year – a year whose end they were  
50 about to celebrate – had almost destroyed him. If he closed his eyes, he could still feel Major Yu’s walking stick smashing into the side of his head, the crushing weight of the water under the Bora Falls, the punishment he had taken in the Thai boxing ring in Bangkok. And those were just the most recent in a string of injuries. How many times had he been

punched, kicked, beaten, knocked out? And shot. His wounds might have healed but he would still be reminded of them every time he undressed. The scar left by the .22 bullet  
55 fired into his chest by a sniper on a rooftop in Liverpool Street would always be with him. And the memory of pain. They say that never leaves you either.

Had it changed him? Of course it had. Nobody could survive all this and stay the same. And yet...

“Alex! Stop admiring yourself in the mirror and get downstairs!”

60 It was Sabina. Alex turned and saw her standing in the doorway, wearing a silver dress with lots of glitter around the neckline. Her dark hair – she had grown it long – was tied back. Unusually for her, she was wearing make-up: pale blue eyeshadow and glossy pink lipstick.

“Dad’s waiting. We’re about to leave.”

65 “I’ll be one minute.”

Alex twisted the bow tie again, wondering what he had to do to stop the damn thing going crooked. He looked ridiculous. Nobody under the age of fifty should have to dress like this. But at least he’d been able to resist Sabina’s suggestion that he should go to the party dressed in a kilt. She’d been teasing him about it since Christmas.

**Reading 45 minutes**

**Now answer the following questions based on the extract. Write your answers on A4 paper. Write your name clearly at the top.**

70

1. *Based purely on details you can gather from the text*, write a few lines of description of Alex Rider. You can use a mixture of words from the story and your own. **4 marks**
2. According to the text, what do they say “never leaves you”? **1 mark**
3. What was unusual about Sabina? **1 mark**
4. What does the narrator mean by, “he wondered if he recognized the boy who was looking back”? (Line 2) **4 marks**
5. At what time of year is the story set? Give evidence for your answer. **2 marks**
6. Where had the “huge bomb” been planted? **1 mark**
7. *Using mainly your own words*, what had happened to Alex in the last year? **4 marks**
8. Giving evidence from the whole text explain how you think Alex feels at this point in his life and how you know this. **8 marks**

**Total for reading section 25 marks**

**Writing: 30 minutes.**

Start this answer on a separate piece of paper. Write your name at the top.

9. **Imagine you are Alex. Describe your arrival and entrance into the New Year’s party. Write about 1 page.**

As well as making the writing as enjoyable to read as you can, you must also write in full sentences and paragraphs. Accurate spelling and punctuation will also gain you marks.

**15 marks for content and organisation  
10 marks for accurate writing**