

EXPRESSIVE READING MATERIAL FOR SPEECH AND DRAMA EXAMS

GRADES 4-5



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This document contains details of extracts for use in the Expressive Reading tasks for Grades 4-5 Speech and Drama exams.

The material in this document should be used alongside the 2023 syllabus requirements and guidance.

Grade 4

Task 4 Expressive Reading: The candidate gives a prepared reading of a set passage of prose.

Refer to pages 39-41 of the syllabus for detailed task guidance.

Choose a passage from the following list.

1. *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery

During this dialogue the child had remained silent, her eyes roving from one to the other, all the animation fading out of her face. Suddenly she seemed to grasp the full meaning of what had been said. Dropping her precious carpet-bag she sprang forward a step and clasped her hands.

"You don't want me!" she cried. "You don't want me because I'm not a boy! I might have expected it. Nobody ever did want me. I might have known it was all too beautiful to last. I might have known nobody really did want me. Oh, what shall I do? I'm going to burst into tears!"

Burst into tears she did. Sitting down on a chair by the table, flinging her arms out upon it, and burying her face in them, she proceeded to cry stormily. Marilla and Matthew looked at each other across the stove. Neither of them knew what to say or do. Finally Marilla stepped lamely into the breach.

"Well, well, there's no need to cry so about it."

"Yes, there IS need!" The child raised her head quickly, revealing a tear-stained face and trembling lips. "YOU would cry, too, if they didn't want you because you weren't a boy. Oh, this is the most TRAGICAL thing that ever happened to me!"

Something like a reluctant smile, rather rusty from long disuse, mellowed Marilla's grim expression.

"What's your name?"

The child hesitated for a moment.

"Will you please call me Cordelia?" she said eagerly.

"CALL you Cordelia? Is that your name?"

"No-o-o, it's not exactly my name, but I would love to be called Cordelia. It's such a perfectly elegant name."

2. *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri

At last the children reached the summit in front of the hut. When Aunt Deta saw the little party of climbers she cried out: "Heidi, what have you done? What a sight you are! Where are your dresses and your shawl? Are the new shoes gone that I just bought for you, and the new stockings that I made myself? Where are they all, Heidi?"

The child quietly pointed down and said "There."

The aunt followed the direction of her finger and spotted a little heap with a small red dot in the middle, which she recognized as the shawl.

"Unlucky child!" Deta said "What does all this mean? Why have you taken all your things off?"

"Because I do not need them," said the child, not seeming in the least sorry of her deed.

"How can you be so stupid, Heidi? Have you lost your senses?" the aunt went on, in a very angry tone. "Who do you think will go all the way down there to fetch those things up again? It is half-an-hour's walk. Please, Peter, run down and get them. Don't just stand and stare at me as if you were glued to the spot."

"I am late already," replied Peter, and stood without moving from the place where, with his hands in his trousers' pockets, he had witnessed the violent outbreak of Heidi's aunt.

"There you are, standing and staring, but that won't get you further," said Deta. "I'll give you this if you go down." With that she held a five-penny-piece under his eyes. That made Peter head off and in a great hurry he ran down the straightest path.

3. *The Enchanted Castle* by Edith Nesbit

None of the six human beings who saw that moon-rising were ever able to think about it as having anything to do with time. Only for one instant could that moon-ray have rested full on the centre of that stone. And yet there was time for many happenings.

From that height one could see far out over the quiet park and sleeping gardens, and through the grey green of them shapes moved, approaching.

The great beasts came first, strange forms that were when the world was new – gigantic lizards with wings, mammoths, strange vast birds, they crawled up the hill and ranged themselves outside the circle. Then, not from the garden but from very far away, came the stone gods of Egypt – bull-bodied, bird-winged, hawk-headed, cat-headed, all in stone, and all alive and alert; strange, grotesque figures from the towers of cathedrals – figures of angels with folded wings, figures of beasts with wings wide spread; sphinxes; and, last of all, the beautiful marble shapes of the gods and goddesses who had held their festival on the lake-island, and who had called the children to this meeting.

Not a word was spoken. Each stone shape came gladly and quietly into the circle of light and understanding.

The children had thought to ask many questions. And it had been promised that the questions should be answered. Yet now no one spoke a word, because all had come into the circle of the real magic where all things are understood without speech.

4. *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame

The afternoon sun was getting low as the Rat sculled gently homewards in a dreamy mood, murmuring poetry-things over to himself, and not paying much attention to Mole. But the Mole was very full of lunch, and self-satisfaction, and pride, and already quite at home in a boat (so he thought) and was getting a bit restless besides: and presently he said, "Ratty! Please, I want to row, now!"

The Rat shook his head with a smile. "Not yet, my young friend," he said; "wait till you've had a few lessons. It's not so easy as it looks."

The Mole was quiet for a minute or two. But he began to feel more and more jealous of Rat, sculling so strongly and so easily along, and his pride began to whisper that he could do it every bit as well. He jumped up and seized the sculls so suddenly that the Rat, who was gazing out over the water and saying more poetry-things to himself, was taken by surprise and fell backwards off his seat with his legs in the air for the second time, while the triumphant Mole took his place and grabbed the sculls with entire confidence.

"Stop it, you silly ass!" cried the Rat, from the bottom of the boat. "You can't do it! You'll have us over!"

The Mole flung his sculls back with a flourish, and made a great dig at the water. He missed the surface altogether, his legs flew up above his head, and he found himself lying on the top of Ratty. Greatly alarmed, he made a grab at the side of the boat, and the next moment – Sploosh!

5. *The Lost Prince* by Francis Hodgson Burnett

There are many dreary and dingy rows of ugly houses in certain parts of London, but there certainly could not be any row more ugly or dingier than Philibert Place. There were stories that it had once been more attractive, but that had been so long ago that no one remembered the time. It stood back in its gloomy, narrow strips of uncared-for, smoky gardens, whose broken iron railings were supposed to protect it from the surging traffic of a road which was always roaring with the rattle of buses, cabs, and vans, and the passing of people who were shabbily dressed and looked as if they were either going to hard work or coming from it, or hurrying to see if they could find some of it to do to keep themselves from going hungry.

The brick fronts of the houses were blackened with smoke, their windows were nearly all dirty and hung with dingy curtains, or had no curtains at all; the strips of ground, which had once been intended to grow flowers in, had been trodden down into bare earth in which even weeds had forgotten to grow. One of them was used as a stone-cutter's yard, and cheap monuments, crosses, and slates were set out for sale, bearing inscriptions beginning with "Sacred to the Memory of." Another had piles of old lumber in it, another exhibited second-hand furniture, chairs with unsteady legs, sofas with horsehair stuffing bulging out of holes in their covering, mirrors with blotches or cracks in them. And the insides of the houses were as gloomy as the outside. They were all exactly alike.

6. *The Confessions of Arsène Lupin* by Maurice Leblanc

It was dark.

The servants were closing the shutters of the castle. There was no light in the windows, as it was the duke's habit to go to bed straight after dinner.

Lupin passed the gate-keeper's lodge and, as he put his foot on the drawbridge, said:

"Leave the gate open. I am going for a breath of air; I shall be back soon."

He stopped, thinking that he heard a noise. But no, it was a rustling of the leaves. And yet a stone went rattling down the slopes, bounding against the rugged projections of the rock. But, strange to say, nothing seemed to disquiet him. The crisp sea-breeze came blowing over the plains of the headland; and he eagerly filled his lungs with it:

"What a thing it is to be alive!" he thought. "Still young, a member of the old nobility, a multi-millionaire: what more could a man want?"

At a short distance, he saw against the darkness the yet darker outline of the chapel, the ruins of which towered above the path. A few drops of rain began to fall; and he heard a clock strike nine. He quickened his pace. There was a short descent; then the path rose again. And suddenly, he stopped once more.

A hand had seized his.

He drew back, tried to release himself.

But some one stepped from the clump of trees and a voice said; "Ssh!... Not a word!..."

It was his wife!

"What's the matter?" he asked.

She whispered,

"They are lying in wait for you... they are in there, in the ruins, with their guns..."

The following is a list of contemporary pieces that are also approved for use at this grade. The publications are widely available from retailers.

Book or Poem/Author	Publication details	Extract	Page
<i>Suncatcher</i> by Romesh Gunsekera	2019 Bloomsbury Publishing ISBN: 978-1526610416	<p>First line: That evening my parents had formed a coalition and when I came down for a bite, they pounced.</p> <p>Last line: 'I only meant...' It was not the right word; not to fling at a father whose need was a lifebuoy more than a son to keep him afloat.</p>	pp61-62
<i>Along for the Ride</i> by Sarah Dessen	2010 Penguin ISBN: 978-0141327488	<p>First line: I knew a lot of people whose parents had split up, and everyone seemed to handle it differently: complete surprise, crushing disappointment, total relief.</p> <p>Last line: I'd been a child, of course. But by the time I came along, my brother – the most colicky of babies, a hyperactive toddler, a “spirited” (read “impossible”) kid – had worn my parents out.</p>	pp7-8
<i>Mad Bad and Dangerous to Know</i> by Samira Ahmed	2020 Atom ISBN: 978-0349003559	<p>First line: I live in between spaces.</p> <p>Last line: Welcome to my life of constant code-switching. Witness my attempts to blend an occasional impulse for Bollywood melodramatics with my flair for complaining like a local. I shouldn't be cranky, summering in Paris.</p>	pp1-2

Grade 5

Task 4 Expressive Reading: The candidate gives a prepared reading of a set passage of prose or a poem.

Refer to pages 39-41 of the syllabus for detailed task guidance.

Choose a passage of prose or a poem from the following list.

1. *Lark Rise* by Flora Thompson

In response to their timid knock, the door was opened by a youngish woman. She was like no one Laura had ever seen. Very slight – she would have been called ‘scraggy’ in the hamlet – with a dead white face, dark, arched brows, and black hair brushed straight back from her forehead, and with all this black and whiteness set off by a little scarlet jacket that, when Laura described it to her mother later, was identified as a garibaldi. She seemed glad to see the children, though she looked doubtful when she heard their errand and saw Martha’s size.

“So you want a place?” she asked as she conducted them into a kitchen as large as a church and not unlike one with its stone paved floor and central pillar. Yes, she wanted a maid, and she thought Martha might do. How old was she? Twelve? And what could she do? Anything she was told? Well, that was right. It was not a hard place, for, although there were sixteen rooms, only three or four of them were in use. Could she get up at six without being called? There would be the kitchen range to light and the flues to be swept once a week, and the dining-room to be swept and dusted and the fire lighted before breakfast. She herself would be down in time to cook breakfast. No cooking was required, beyond preparing vegetables. After breakfast Martha would help her with the beds, turning out the rooms, paring the potatoes and so on; and after dinner there was plenty to do – washing up, cleaning knives and boots and polishing silver. And so she went on, mapping out Martha’s day, until at nine o’clock she would be free to go to bed, after placing hot water in her mistress’s bedroom.

2. *Far From The Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy

Gabriel had just reached the time of life at which “young” is ceasing to be the prefix of “man” in speaking of him. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.

Casually glancing over the hedge, he saw coming down the hill before him an ornamental spring waggon, painted yellow, drawn by two horses, a waggoner walking alongside bearing a whip. The waggon was laden with household goods and window plants, and on the top of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

“The tailboard of the waggon is gone, Miss,” said the waggoner.

“Then I heard it fall,” said the girl, in a soft, though not particularly low voice. “I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill.”

“I’ll run back.”

“Do,” she answered.

The sensible horses stood perfectly still, and the waggoner’s steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs facing up, backed by an oak bench, and arranged at the front by pots of flowers and cactuses, together with a caged canary bird – all probably from the windows of the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly-opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately watched the small birds around.

3. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

"And shall I see you again, Helen, when I die?"

"You will come to the same region of happiness: be received by the same mighty, universal Parent, no doubt, dear Jane."

Again I questioned, but this time only in thought. "Where is that region? Does it exist?" And I clasped my arms closer round Helen; she seemed dearer to me than ever; I felt as if I could not let her go; I lay with my face hidden on her neck. Presently she said, in the sweetest tone –

"How comfortable I am! That last fit of coughing has tired me a little; I feel as if I could sleep: but don't leave me, Jane; I like to have you near me."

"I'll stay with you, *dear* Helen: no one shall take me away."

"Are you warm, darling?"

"Yes."

"Good-night, Jane."

"Good-night, Helen."

She kissed me, and I her, and we both soon slumbered.

When I awoke it was day: an unusual movement roused me; I looked up; I was in somebody's arms; the nurse held me; she was carrying me through the passage back to the dormitory. I was not reprimanded for leaving my bed; people had something else to think about; no explanation was afforded then to my many questions; but a day or two afterwards I learned that Miss Temple, on returning to her own room at dawn, had found me laid in the little crib; my face against Helen Burns's shoulder, my arms round her neck. I was asleep, and Helen was – dead.

Her grave is in Brocklebridge churchyard: for fifteen years after her death it was only covered by a grassy mound; but now a grey marble tablet marks the spot, inscribed with her name, and the word "Resurgam."

4. *The School Boy* by William Blake

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the sky-lark sings with me.
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! Then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring?

O! father and mother, if buds are nipped
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are stripped
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

5. *Love and Friendship* by Emily Brontë

Love is like the wild rose-briar,
Friendship like the holly-tree –
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in the spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air;
Yet wait till winter comes again
And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now
And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
That when December blights thy brow
He may still leave thy garland green.

6. Excerpt from *Address to A Child During A Boisterous Winter Evening* by Dorothy Wordsworth

What way does the wind come? What way does he go?
He rides over the water, and over the snow,
Through wood, and through vale; and o'er rocky height,
Which the goat cannot climb, takes his sounding flight;
He tosses about in every bare tree,
As, if you look up, you plainly may see;
But how he will come, and whither he goes,
There's never a scholar in England knows.

He will suddenly stop in a cunning nook,
And ring a sharp 'larum; but, if you should look,
There's nothing to see but a cushion of snow,
Round as a pillow, and whiter than milk,
And softer than if it were covered with silk.
Sometimes he'll hide in the cave of a rock,
Then whistle as shrill as the buzzard cock;
– Yet seek him, and what shall you find in the place?
Nothing but silence and empty space;
Save, in a corner, a heap of dry leaves,
That he's left, for a bed, to beggars or thieves!

As soon as 'tis daylight tomorrow, with me
You shall go to the orchard, and then you will see
That he has been there, and made a great rout,
And cracked the branches, and strewn them about;
Heaven grant that he spare but that one upright twig
That looked up at the sky so proud and big
All last summer, as well you know,
Studded with apples, a beautiful show!

The following is a list of contemporary pieces that are also approved for use at this grade. The publications are widely available from retailers.

Book or Poem/Author	Publication details	Extract	Page
<i>The Giver</i> by Lois Lowry	2008 Harper Collins ISBN: 978-0007263516	<p>First line: Jonas grinned, remembering the morning that Asher had dashed into the classroom, late as usual, arriving breathlessly in the middle of the chanting of the morning anthem.</p> <p>Last line: He had waited a long time for this special December. Now that it was almost upon him, he wasn't frightened, but he was... eager, he decided.</p>	pp14-15
<i>Lords and Ladies</i> by Terry Pratchett	1992 Victor Gollancz ISBN: 978-0552167529	<p>First line: 'Elves? Everyone knows elves don't exist anymore. Not proper elves. I mean, there's a few folk who say they're elves –'</p> <p>Last line: For a very obvious reason. Granny Weatherwax smiled.</p>	pp240-241
<i>So Much Happiness</i> by Naomi Shihab Nye	From <i>Words Under the Words: Selected Poems</i> 1995 Eighth Mountain Press ISBN: 978-0933377295	Whole poem	p88