

STIMULUS READING PASSAGE

Read the following passage about a young person's first day at a new school. Then answer question 1.

Mystery Club

by Maurissa Guibord

As the school bus rumbled toward home, Marisa thought about the reasons she didn't want to go to Penmark School. First of all, she'd had to leave all her friends in California to come to Maine. Second, her family needed to move two weeks after the school year started so that Mom could start her new job at the medical center. And third? Well, Marisa couldn't think of a third, but she figured those two were enough for her first day.

Marisa stared out at the fields rolling by. She sighed and reached into her backpack. At least she had a good mystery to read. But she hadn't even read a whole sentence from her book before a voice next to her made her jump.

"Hey, I've read that one. It's great."

Marisa turned to see a girl in a fuzzy purple sweater. "I'm Shelly," said the girl, and she grinned so hard her gums showed.

Marisa felt herself smiling back. "I'm Marisa," she said. "We have the same homeroom, right?"

Shelly nodded. Then she pointed to the book Marisa held. "I have to tell you—," she began.

"No!" Marisa covered her ears with her hands. "Don't tell me how it ends!"

Shelly laughed. "I was just going to say that I have the next one in that series. You could borrow it."

"Oh," said Marisa. "Thanks."

"Besides," said Shelly, "you never give away the ending of a mystery. That's one of the first rules of Mystery Club."

Marisa wasn't sure that she had heard right. "Mystery Club?" Shelly leaned across the aisle. "There's a bunch of us from school who like reading mysteries, solving puzzles, decoding messages, that kind of thing."

"Could I join?" Marisa asked.

"Sure," said Shelly. "But to become a member you have to solve a mystery."

Marisa sat up straight in her seat. "I could try."

"OK," said Shelly. "I'll talk to the others."



Shelly didn't waste time. The next day at school Marisa found a note on purple paper tucked into her history book:

Girls' bathroom: Find the message in the mirror.

This must be my mystery—to find a hidden message, thought Marisa. That shouldn't be so hard.

In the girls' bathroom, Marisa looked at the mirror over the sink. It looked like a plain old mirror with a stainless-steel frame. There wasn't any note stuck to it.

Well, what did I expect? Marisa thought. *A big sign written in red crayon?* This was a mystery, after all.

She read the note again. *Find the message in the mirror*. Marisa tried to remember any mirrors she had read about in mystery stories. Sometimes there was something behind a mirror. She tried lifting it away from the wall, but it was fastened tight and didn't budge.

Maybe the message was reflected in the mirror somehow. Marisa peered into the mirror from every angle. She could see the bathroom stalls, the white-speckled tile floor, and the fluorescent lights on the ceiling. But no message.

She looked again at the note and held both sides up to the mirror. Nothing.

Think mystery, she told herself. What about invisible ink? Marisa had heard of using lemon juice to write a message on paper, then heating up the paper to make it show.

What could you use on a mirror? Marisa couldn't think of a thing. Marisa leaned her forehead against the mirror and sighed.

Her breath made a little cloud on the mirror, and on it Marisa could see streaks and smudges where people had touched the glass. She hadn't noticed those before. Then she realized why she hadn't. Because they'd been invisible!

Excitedly, Marisa breathed again on the mirror, then again, trying different spots. Finally she clouded up the mirror in one corner. An *M*, then a *C* appeared. Mystery Club!

Someone had simply written with a finger on the mirror! It took a few breaths to uncover the message:

**M.C.
Library
3:00**

"Hi, Marisa," said Shelly with her big grin as Marisa arrived exactly at 3:00 on the library steps. "Welcome to Mystery Club. The others are inside."

Marisa smiled. She thought of two reasons why she liked Penmark School. Shelly—and now Mystery Club. There were probably more, but those were enough for today.

GO ON 

PASSAGE-BASED ESSAY QUESTION

E04.E.1.1

1. When Shelly tells Marisa about the Mystery Club she is immediately interested and asks, "Could I join?" In order to join Marisa first has to solve a mystery. Write an essay explaining the importance of solving the mystery to both Marisa and the members of the Mystery Club. Use evidence from the passage to support your explanation.

