

ENGLISH EXAM: Part 2 – Sight Reading and Comprehension**Timing: Minimum 10 minutes, maximum 15 minutes****CANDIDATE BRIEF:**

The examiner will ask you to start reading this text aloud in your own time. You may NOT ask questions about the text.

The examiner will then ask you to explain particular words or phrases, especially those of an idiomatic or colloquial nature, and also ask two questions about the meaning of the text. You will keep the text in front of you.

TEXT:

Pantomime is often seen as something quaint, something utterly British, but its origins lie in warmer climes. It developed from the Italian street theatre of the *Commedia dell'arte* in the 16th Century, with comedic moments, stock characters and great physicality.

Small companies toured in Italy and France, setting up in market places and fairgrounds to tell stories involving lovers, magic, chases and acrobatics. From the late 1600s these characters appeared in English comic plays; taking centre stage was the acrobatic Harlequin who evolved into an impish magician.

Known as Harlequinades, these plays were an early form of pantomime, with Harlequin using his 'slapstick' to hit scenery, instigating set changes. In the late 1700s actor Joseph Grimaldi took the character to new heights and the sets became more elaborate.

By the Victorian era pantomime had become typical Christmas fare. This period saw the rise of the music hall and the demise of the traditional Harlequinade. The last London Harlequinade was staged at the Lyceum Theatre in 1939.

Pantomime has always had the capacity to adapt and move with the times, welcoming radio stars in the 1930s and 40s, to television and sports personalities today. Above all it has the capacity to offer a child its first magical encounter with live theatre.