



ST. NICHOLAS COLLEGE
RABAT MIDDLE SCHOOL
HALF YEARLY EXAMINATIONS
FEBRUARY 2017

LEVEL
7-8

YEAR 7

ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION

SECTION B: Read the following text and then answer the questions on the main paper.

John Dafte

1 His name was John Dafte, or as the school register put it, Dafte John. No one made jokes about it.¹ He was a tall, hairy boy, with huge shoulders and long arms and a voice like a big drum. Junior boxing champion, captain of both the cricket and football teams – there wasn't a sport he didn't **excel** at. We called him, respectfully,
5 Prince Kong.

I admired him tremendously. He was a smiling, good-natured hero, with a strong sense of fair play. He had only to stroll out onto the playground for the bullies to crawl back into their holes.

10 'Pick on someone your own size,' he'd say. (It must have limited his choice: there was no one at school anywhere near his size. He dwarfed even the masters.) I thought him a true prince.

On the Monday morning after half term, he came to school with two black eyes, and a split and swollen nose, decorated with dark scabs like beetles.

We crowded round him sympathetically.

15 'Had an argument with a bulldozer, have you?'
'Your mum been beating you up?'

I was not as surprised as the others that he had lost a fight. I know that it's no use having the strength of ten, if you happen to pick a quarrel with eleven. It would be just like Prince Kong, I thought, to go charging in to save someone from a gang of toughs,
20 without stopping to count; what did puzzle me was that he should lie about it. I'd have expected him to smile and say, 'Can't win them all.' Something like that.

Instead he shouldered us roughly out of his way, his head down, his eyes furtive, muttering furiously, 'Walked into a door.'

25 We watched him limp into the school building, and followed at a safe distance, puzzled and a little dismayed.

He and I were in different forms, so I did not see him again until school was over. I was waiting for one of my friends when he came down the steps, caught sight of me and hesitated, staring at me out of his bruised eyes. For the first time I felt **nervous** of him, and smiled uneasily. He limped over and stood looking down at me. A long way
30 down.

'You're clever, aren't you?' he said. 'I mean, you come top all the time. Brainy. Good at working things out – you know, problems.'

I wriggled my shoulders and replied with regulation modesty, 'Oh, I don't know – just lucky, I guess.'

¹ 'Daft' means 'stupid'

35 'No. You're clever,' he repeated. I realised suddenly that he wanted me to be clever. His eyes, between their swollen, discoloured lids, were gazing at me pleadingly. If it had been anyone else but Prince Kong, I'd have thought he was frightened.

'Well...' I said – it wasn't the thing to boast, but I didn't want to let him down –

40 'sort of, I suppose.'

I thought he looked relieved but he did not say anything. The silence became embarrassing.

'Is there...? Can I...? I mean, if there's anything I can do, just ask,' I mumbled, uneasy beneath his strange, **gloomy** glare.

45 'Walking home with anybody?' he asked.

'No,' I lied. I could see Mark on the steps, watching us from a respectful distance. I knew *he* would understand. It was an honour to walk with Prince Kong.

'Can I come with you, then?' he asked. 'Only I got a problem, see?'

'Yes,' I said eagerly. 'Of course.' I didn't see. I couldn't imagine what problem it

50 could be. Not maths or Latin. Prince Kong never worried about his school work. Conscious of his own enormous power, he was content to stay at the bottom. Like a submarine, lying low.

'If you tell anybody, I'll skin you,' he said.

'I won't!'

55 'You'd better not.'

(Adapted from 'The Champions' by Vivien Alcock)

