

## Grade 9 English Worksheet

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### On a diary entry: "Blue Train to the Moon" do comprehension and language exercises

Read the diary entry.

School was desperate today. Just desperate! It dragged on and on like a sentence without any commas or full stops.

I feel so shattered. How can people expect me to answer questions and talk normally when this has happened? Surely they could notice I was different?

They all seemed just the same. Kate was in the front row biting her nails. Rod was picking at his pimples and Zac was acting the class fool as usual. Vusi and Linda were having one of their eternal arguments ... this time about male versus female rappers. I hate rap. It's my worst music.

Surely they could see that this me was not me at all? This Sylvie, sitting at the desk was not the same one who'd sat here on Friday. How could anyone not notice? Friends would surely notice something different. But who of them are really my friends?

It was a relief to get to the life-drawing class after the lunch break. At least I didn't have to pretend to pay attention. I hid behind my drawing board with my thoughts, even though Mr Evans kept snorting and complaining over my shoulder.

"SSSylvia, look at the way his hipsss line up with hissss shoulders!" Mr Evans makes a show of dragging out the S-sound. "You're not seeing the negative spacessss ... " Today I found him SO irritating.

"Yesss! Mr Evanssss!"

The model wasn't naked like a real artist's model. Usually someone from the class poses. Today it was James lounging on a raised platform ... James with his smug look as if all girls will fall for him. He's beginning to get a dark hairy shadow across his top lip. I can't bear it when that happens. Why can't he just shave it off? In any case, the charcoal kept breaking in my hands and the drawing ended up so smudged that I drew horns coming out of his head and then crunched up the paper and threw it at the bin.

from *Blue Train to the Moon* by Dianne Hofmeyr.

Answer the questions.

### Part A: Comprehension

- 1 What is the name of the person writing the diary? (1)
- 2 What is the name of the art teacher? (1)
- 3 What makes the writer question the loyalty of her friends? (2)
- 4 How does Sylvie make fun of the art teacher? (2)

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- 5 Why is the writer's drawing smudged? (1)
- 6 Out of whose head did the writer draw horns? (1)
- 7 What do you think has happened to the writer of this diary entry? Quote from the diary to support your answer. (4)
- (12)

### Part B: Language

- 8 Explain the simile in the first paragraph. (2)
- 9 How do you know that this piece is written using the first person? (5)
- 10 Do you think the style is formal or informal? Give reasons for your answer. (3)
- 11 Comment on the layout of the text. (2)
- (12)

### Part C: Vocabulary

The following words have more than one meaning. Use them in two different sentences giving two different meanings.

- 12 shattered (2)
- 13 picking (2)
- 14 act (2)
- 15 fall (2)
- (8)

### Part D: Punctuation

Explain the function of the punctuation mark in each of the following sentences:

- 16 Exclamation mark (1)  
Just desperate!
- 17 Question mark (1)

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How can people expect me to answer questions and talk normally when this has happened?

- 18 Ellipsis (1)  
Vusi and Linda were having one of their eternal arguments .... this time about male versus female rappers.
- 19 Commas (1)  
This Sylvie, sitting at the desk, was not the same one who'd sat here on Friday.
- 20 Apostrophe (1)  
This Sylvie, sitting at the desk, was not the same one who'd sat here on Friday.
- 21 Apostrophe (1)  
At least I didn't have to pretend to pay attention.
- 22 Quotation marks (1)  
"SSSylvia, look at the way his hipsss line up with hisss shoulders!"
- 23 Apostrophe (1)  
He's beginning to get a dark hairy shadow across his top lip.
- 24 Apostrophe (1)  
I can't bear it when that happens.
- (8)

### Part E: Diary entry

25. Write a diary entry for a day during your last holidays. Try to think of a day during which something of interest happened. However, you could also write about not having anything to do. Write about your own thoughts. Write approximately one page. Don't forget to start with a date. Use the first person. You can be informal. (10)

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### Suggested Solutions

#### Part A: Comprehension

1	Sylvie	(1)
2	Mr Evans	(1)
3	They don't notice that she is different, that something has happened to her that has changed her.	(2)
4	She copies his speech, the way he exaggerates the "s" sound.	(2)
5	The charcoal kept breaking in her hands.	(1)
6	James	(1)
7	Accept learners' own ideas. They must relate in some way to the text. Something very big has happened to the writer. It is something that makes her feel "desperate" and "shattered". She can't behave "normally". In fact, the thing that has happened to her is so big that she thinks it's changed her appearance and behaviour, because she wonders why people don't notice that she's "different". She doesn't behave like herself, saying "this me is not me at all". The thing that happened to her probably took place over the weekend, because she refers back to Friday. She is very distracted by what has happened to her and is pretending to pay attention.	(4)
		(12)

#### Part B: Language

8	School is compared with a sentence without any punctuation.	(2)
9	The writer speaks about "I", "me" and "my". She refers to other people as "they" and "them". She gives her own thoughts and feelings. The piece is written from her point of view. It is as if the reader is inside her head. The diary entry includes personal opinions. She says things about people that she thinks but would not <b>say</b> to them herself. It gives her private thoughts.	(5)
10	The style of writing is informal. Pronouns and verbs are contracted, for example it's, who'd, you're etc. It is full of questions which make one think the writer is speaking. Spoken language is generally informal. Words such as "desperate", "shattered" are used as they would be colloquially.	(3)
11	It begins with the date. The first paragraph is left-aligned. The following paragraphs are indented. Capitalisation is used for emphasis in "SO".	(2)
		(12)

#### Part C: Vocabulary

	The following sentences are examples. Accept different sentences from learners	
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	that illustrate the different meanings of the words.	
12	At the end of the day I was absolutely exhausted and I felt shattered. The glass shattered into several pieces as it hit the tile floor.	(2)
13	He was picking up pieces of paper from the floor. The teacher will be picking learners to be part of the debating team.	(2)
14	I will act in a play at the end of the term. You must act now and go and talk to the teacher about your results.	(2)
15	If you don't watch out, you'll fall down the stairs. Most people fall in and out of love several times during their lives.	(2)
		(8)

### Part D: Punctuation

	Explain the function of the punctuation mark in each of the following sentences:	
16	The exclamation mark indicates exasperation, irritation, anxiety.	(1)
17	The question mark shows that a question is being asked. The writer is not sure about this and therefore puts in a question mark.	(1)
18	The ellipsis indicates that words or thoughts have been left out. In this case it suggests other arguments they have had.	(1)
19	The commas enclose a subordinate clause describing Sylvie. The sentence could be written without these words, as in: This Syvie was not the same one who'd sat here on Friday.	(1)
20	The apostrophe indicates that letters have been left out and that two words have been joined, in this case <b>who'd</b> replaces <b>who had</b> .	(1)
21	The apostrophe indicates that letters have been left out and that two words have been joined; in this case <b>didn't</b> replaces <b>did not</b> .	(1)
22	"SSSylvia, look at the way his hipsss line up with hisss shulders!"	(1)
23	The apostrophe indicates that letters have been left out and that two words have been joined, in this case <b>he's</b> replaces <b>he is</b> .	(1)
24	The apostrophe indicates that letters have been left out; in this case <b>can't</b> replaces <b>cannot</b> .	(1)
		(8)

### Part E: Diary entry

25. Use the assessment checklist in the Appendix of Assessment Tools to assess the diary entries.

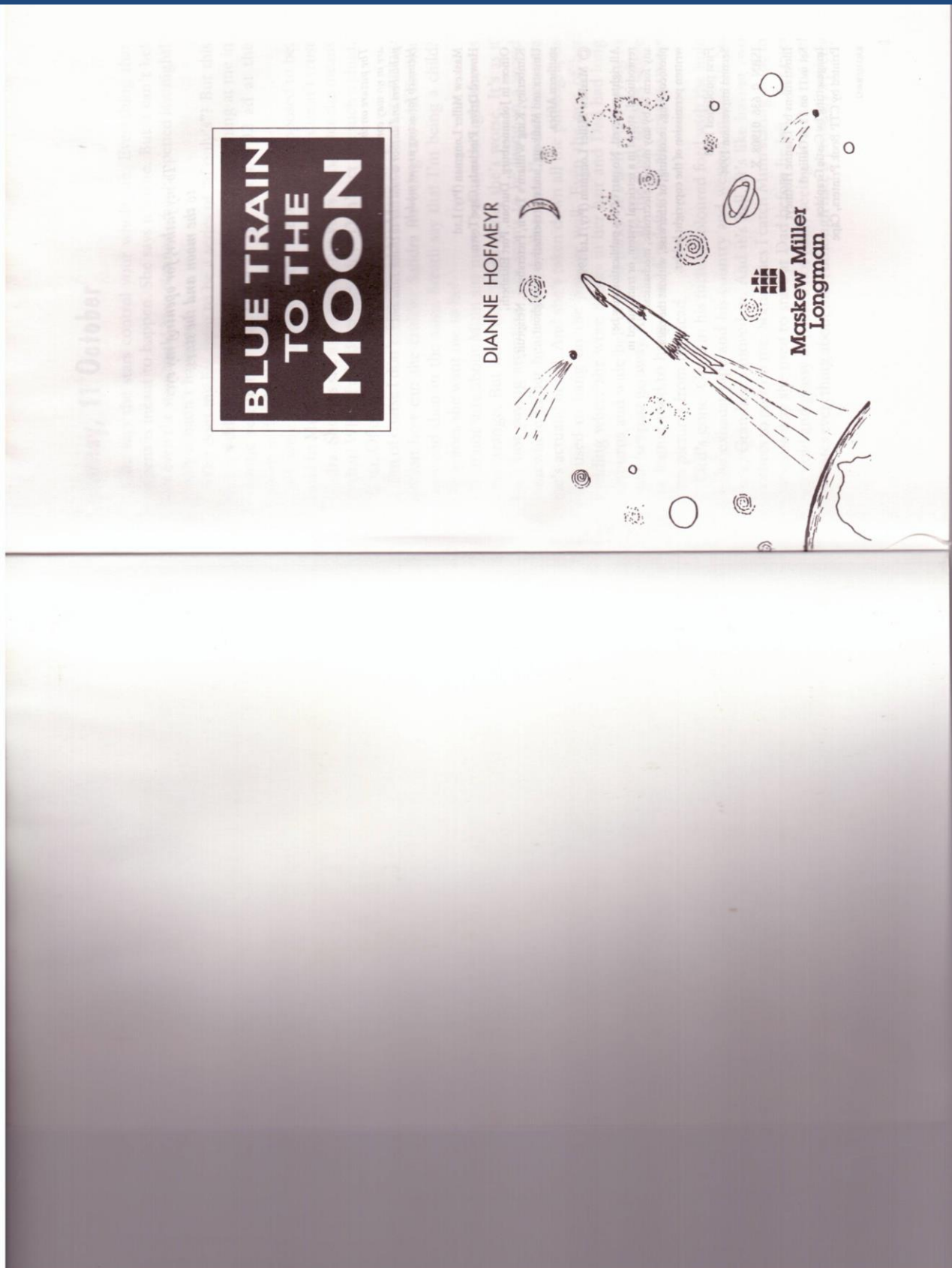
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### Assessment checklist: Diary entry

	<b>The diary entry:</b>	<b>Possible marks</b>	<b>Learner's marks</b>
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• has a date</li></ul>	(1)	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• is written in the first person</li></ul>	(2)	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• gives personal opinions</li></ul>	(3)	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describes a day during the holidays</li></ul>	(5)	
		(10)	

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### Sunday, 11 October

Sandra says the stars control your whole life. Everything that happens is meant to happen. She says it's true. But it can't be! Not even the stars could have planned what happened last night! If only it hadn't happened ...

Why does my life seem to be a series of "if only's"? But this time it's different from all the others. It keeps flashing at me in gigantic red letters like those in the Radio 702 ad at the station ... if only, if only, IF ONLY!!!

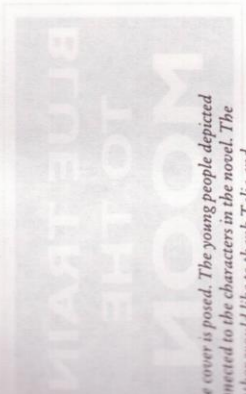
We were at a party, Sandra and I. We weren't supposed to be. I said to Mum we were going to the movies. Mum doesn't trust Sandra. She says she's too old for her years. Whatever she means by that! When I asked her, she said, "Don't act like such a child, Sylvia. Of course you know!"

But of course I don't. How should I? Mum can be so confusing. I mean how can she criticise Sandra for being too old for her years and then in the same breath say that I'm being a child? What does she want me to be?

I'm not sure about Mum any more. I always thought she was a bit strange. But now that Dad's gone, she's worse. It's as if she's not paying attention. She seems to be living in a world somewhere in her head. When I talk to her I'm not even sure she's actually heard. And she's taken down all the photographs that used to hang on the passage wall. Even the one of her wedding where she wore daisies in her hair and Dad had long sideburns and wide bell-bottom pants. It's as if she's trying to make her past go away. All that's left are the dusty squares where the frames used to hang ... and I'm left to fill the empty spaces with pictures from my head.

Dad's gone. Gone in his fuchsia-coloured ford with the hole in the exhaust pipe and his country and western music. In his place, Grandma's moved in. And it's hell. It's like having two mothers to pick on me. Sometimes I catch Mum staring at me in the same way she used to stare at Dad before he left ... her eyes just cold and glassy as if she's not really seeing. It makes me feel she hates everything about me! Although hate is probably a pretty

*To my father, for opening my eyes to the moon and the stars.*



*The picture on the cover is posed. The young people depicted are in no way connected to the characters in the novel. The publishers and author would like to thank Talia and Heinrich for acting as our models.*

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## Grade 9 English Worksheet

### Monday, 12 Oct.

School was desperate today. Just desperate! It dragged on and on like a sentence without any commas or full stops.

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They all seemed just the same. Kate was in the front row biting her nails. Rod was picking at his pimples and Zac was acting the class fool as usual. Vusi and Linda were having one of their eternal arguments ... this time about male versus female rappers. I hate rap. It's my worst music.

Surely they could see that this me was not me at all? This Sylvic, sitting at the desk, was not the same one who'd sat here on Friday. How could anyone not notice? Friends would surely notice something different. But who of them are really my friends?

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"Yesss! Mr Evansss!" The model wasn't naked like a real artist's model. Usually someone from the class poses. Today it was James lounging on a raised platform ... James with his smug look as if all girls will fall for him. He's beginning to get a dark hairy shadow across his top lip. I can't bear it when that happens. Why can't he just shave it off? In any case, the charcoal kept breaking in my hands and the drawing ended up so smudged that I drew horns coming out of his head and then crunched up the paper and threw it at the bin.

I think she's tired of the whole world ... tired of living here in this flat in Yeoville with all of us ... tired of selling chemicals to put in toilets. She hates her job. Grandma says they're lavatories, not toilets. But then I would too. I mean not the lavatory and toilet business ... but hate my job! How can anyone enjoy selling things to take the smell out of airport and school toilets?

She hates Dad too. And hates the woman Dad's gone roaring off to live with in Durban. And hates Grandma for all sorts of silly reasons ... like not giving her orthodontic treatment when she was a child. She says her bite is all wrong now and it's too expensive to fix. Come to think of it, she's got a permanent expression of a pain in the jaw.

I don't know why I'm going on like this. I wanted to write about last night and I've spent all this time writing about Mum and my life here in this flat.

Maybe it's because I'm so confused. Last night was wrong. I don't really want to write about it. It scares me. I want to be finished with it. I want to blot it out of my life forever. The wrongness of it all shrivels my stomach. Just like when you bite a peach and discover there's a worm in it.

I don't want to think. I don't want to write. I don't want the eyes of anyone on me. Least of all the eyes of anyone in this flat. The sick shrivelling feeling is too strong.

There's music drifting up from the Andreuccis' flat downstairs. It's calm and soothing music. But tonight it doesn't make me feel calm and soothed.

I'm confused. Confused. CONFUSED.

