Scénario: Dress codes

**Task 3: Compréhension de l'écrit**

« I went to London with my mother the week before to buy the school clothes, and I remember how shocked I was when I saw the outfit I was expected to wear.

'I can't possibly go about in those' I cried. 'Nobody wears things like that!'

'Are you sure you haven't made a mistake?' my mother said to the shop assistant.

'If he's going to Repton, madam, he must wear these clothes,' the assistant said firmly.

And now this amazing fancy-dress was all laid out on my bed waiting to be put on. 'Put it on,' my mother said.

'Hurry up or you'll miss the train.'

'I'll look like a complete idiot,' I said. My mother went out of the room and left me to it. With immense reluctance I began to dress myself.

First there was a white shirt with a detachable white collar. This collar \*.This collar was unlike. any other collar I had seen.

It was as stiff as a piece of perspex. At the front, the stiff points of the collar were bent over to make a pair of wings,and the whole thing was so tall that the points oft he wings, as I discovered later, rubbed against the underneath of my chin. It was known as a butterfly collar.

To attach the butterfly collar to the shirt you needed a back stud and a front stud. I had never been through this rigmarole before. I must do this properly, I told myself.

Then I tried to attach the back of the collar to the back stud, but the collar was so stiff I couldn't get the stud through the slit. I decided to soften it with spit. I put the edge of the collar into my mouth and sucked the starch away. It worked. The stud went through the slit and the back of the collar was now attached to the back of the shirt.

Around the collar but underneath the butterfly wings, I tied a black tie, using an ordinary tie-knot.

Then came the trousers and the braces. The trousers were black with thin pinstriped grey lines running down

them. I buttoned the braces on to the trousers, six buttons in all, then I put on the trousers and adjusted the braces to the correct length by sliding two brass clips up and down. I put on a brand new pair of black shoes and laced them up.

Now for the waistcoat. This was also black and it had twelve buttons down the front and two little waistcoat

pockets on either side, one above the other.

All this was bad enough for a boy who had never before worn anything more elaborate than a pair of shorts and a blazer.

My sisters shrieked with laughter when I appeared. 'He can't go out in those!' they cried. 'He'll be arrested by the police!'

'Put your hat on,' my mother said, handing me a stiff wide-brimmed straw-hat with a blue and black band around it. I put it on and did my best to look dignified.

The sisters fell all over the room laughing.'

My mother got me out of the house before I lost my nerve completely and together we walked through the village to Bexley station. My mother was going to accompany me to London and see me on to the Derby train, but she had been told that on no account should she travel farther than that.

'Nobody's taking the slightest notice of you,'my mother said as we walked through Bexley High Street.

And curiously enough nobody was.

'I have learnt one thing about England,' my mother went on. 'It is a country where men love to wear uniforms and eccentric clothes. Two hundred years âgo their clothes were even more eccentric than they are today. You can consider yourself lucky you don't have to wear a wig on your head and ruffles on your sleeves.'

'I still feel an ass,' I said.

*Adapted from « Boy : Tales of Childhood» by Roald Dahl (1984)*