



MINISTERIO  
DE  
EDUCACIÓN  
& BRITISH  
COUNCIL  
BILINGUAL  
PROJECT

YEAR 6 READING TEST 1

Name:

An extract from 'The Phoenix and the Carpet' by Edith Nesbit.

You are going to read an extract from 'The Phoenix and the Carpet,' by Edith Nesbit. - *Four children, Anthea, Cyril, Jane and Robert, were sitting together by the fire in the old house where they lived. The children had found a large, mysterious egg inside a recently delivered, rolled-up carpet. Before they could decide what to do with it, Robert accidentally dropped the egg into the fire. It didn't break, it just kept on getting hotter and hotter.....*

The egg became red-hot, and inside it something was moving. Next moment there was a soft cracking sound; the egg burst in two, and out of it came a flame-coloured bird. It rested a moment among the flames, and as it rested there the four children could see it growing bigger and bigger under their eyes. Every mouth was a-gape, every eye a-goggle.

5 The bird rose in its nest of fire, stretched its wings, and flew out into the room. It flew round and round, and round again, and where it passed the air was warm. Then it perched on the fender. The children looked at each other. Then Cyril put out a hand towards the bird. It put its head on one side and looked up at him, as you may have seen a parrot do when it is just going to speak, so that the children were hardly astonished at all when it said, 'Be  
10 careful; I am not nearly cool yet.'

They were not astonished, but they were very, very much interested. They looked at the bird, and it was certainly worth looking at. Its feathers were like gold. It was about as large as a bantam, only its beak was not at all bantam-shaped. 'I believe I know what it is,' said Robert. 'I've seen a picture.'

15 He hurried away. A hasty dash and scramble among the papers on father's study table yielded, as the sum-books say, 'the desired result'. But when he came back into the room holding out a paper, and crying, 'I say, look here,' the others all said 'Hush!' and he hushed obediently and instantly, for the bird was speaking.

'Which of you,' it was saying, 'put the egg into the fire?'  
20 'He did,' said three voices, and three fingers pointed at Robert. The bird bowed; at least it was more like that than anything else. 'I am your grateful debtor,' it said with a high-bred air.

The children were all choking with wonder and curiosity—all except Robert. He held the paper in his hand, and he KNEW. He said so. He said—  
25 'I know who you are.' And he opened and displayed a printed paper, at the head of which was a little picture of a bird sitting in a nest of flames.

'You are the Phoenix,' said Robert; and the bird was quite pleased. 'My fame has lived then for two thousand years,' it said. 'Allow me to look at my portrait.' It looked at the page which Robert, kneeling down, spread out in the fender, and said—  
30 'It's not a flattering likeness... And what are these characters?' it asked, pointing to the printed part.

'Oh, that's all dullish; it's not much about YOU, you know,' said Cyril, with unconscious politeness; 'but you're in lots of books.'  
'With portraits?' asked the Phoenix.  
35 'Well, no,' said Cyril; 'in fact, I don't think I ever saw any portrait of you but that one, but I can read you something about yourself, if you like.'  
The Phoenix nodded, and Cyril went off and fetched Volume X of the old Encyclopedia, and on page 246 he found the following:—

'Phoenix—in ornithology, a fabulous bird of antiquity.'  
40 'Antiquity is quite correct,' said the Phoenix, 'but fabulous—well, do I look it?'

Every one shook its head. Cyril went on—  
'The ancients speak of this bird as single, or the only one of its kind.' 'That's right enough,' said the Phoenix.

'They describe it as about the size of an eagle.'

45 'Eagles are of different sizes,' said the Phoenix; 'it's not at all a good description.'

All the children were kneeling on the **hearthrug**, to be as near the Phoenix as possible. 'You'll boil your brains,' it said. 'Look out, I'm nearly cool now;' and with a whirr of golden wings it fluttered from the fender to the table. It was so nearly cool that there was only a very faint smell of burning when it had settled itself on the table-cloth.

50 'It's only a very little scorched,' said the Phoenix, apologetically; 'it will come out in the wash. Please go on reading.'

The children gathered round the table.

'The size of an eagle,' Cyril went on, 'its head finely crested with a beautiful **plumage**, its neck covered with feathers of a gold colour, and the rest of its body purple; only the tail  
55 white, and the eyes sparkling like stars. They say that it lives about five hundred years in the wilderness, and when advanced in age it builds itself a pile of sweet wood and aromatic gums, fires it with the wafting of its wings, and thus burns itself; and that from its ashes arises a worm, which in time grows up to be a Phoenix. Hence the Phoenicians gave—'

'Never mind what they gave,' said the Phoenix, ruffling its golden feathers. 'They never  
60 gave much, anyway; they always were people who gave nothing for nothing. That book ought to be destroyed. It's most inaccurate. The rest of my body was never purple, and as for my—tail—well, I simply ask you, IS it white?'  
It turned round and gravely presented its golden tail to the children. 'No, it's not,' said everybody.

65 'No, and it never was,' said the Phoenix. 'And that about the worm is just a vulgar insult. The Phoenix has an egg, like all respectable birds. It makes a pile—that part's all right—and it lays its egg, and it burns itself; and it goes to sleep and wakes up in its egg, and comes out and goes on living again, and so on for ever and ever. I can't tell you how weary I got of it—such a restless existence; no **repose**.'

70 'But how did your egg get HERE?' asked Anthea.

'Ah, that's my life-secret,' said the Phoenix. 'I couldn't tell it to any one who wasn't really sympathetic. I've always been a misunderstood bird.'

### Glossary (Words that are underlined in the text)

<b>a-gape:</b> open mouthed	<b>a-goggle:</b> staring	<b>antiquity:</b> olden times
<b>aromatic gums:</b> pleasant liquids found in some kinds of wood	<b>ashes:</b> remains of a fire	
<b>bantam:</b> a small chicken	<b>debtor:</b> someone who owes something	
<b>dullish:</b> boring	<b>fender:</b> a low metal guard before an open fireplace	
<b>flattering likeness:</b> a picture that makes one look good		
<b>fluttered:</b> flew quickly	<b>a hasty dash:</b> a quick run	<b>ornithology:</b> the study of birds
<b>ought to:</b> should	<b>portrait:</b> picture of a person or animal	
<b>scorched:</b> burnt	<b>scramble:</b> an untidy search	<b>wafting:</b> moving the air gently
<b>worm:</b> tiny, thin, soft, snake-like, boneless creature; often found living in damp earth.		

# Read the text again.

Answer the following questions: (4 marks)

1. What kind of text do you think this is? Underline the correct answer.

a biography    a letter    a film script    a report    a story

2. Who is the author?

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3. Where were the children sitting?

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**Reading comprehension: Write numbers in the boxes to place the following events in the order in which they appear in the story. (6 marks)**

The Phoenix burnt the table cloth.

The Phoenix flew around the room.

Robert went to his father's study to find a a paper.

Robert showed the Phoenix a picture of itself.

The Phoenix wanted to know who had put the egg into the fire.

The Phoenix moved its head as a parrot would.

**Reading Comprehension:**

**Multiple choice – choose the correct answer and circle the letter. (4 marks)**

1. The bird was quite pleased when:

- a. It found a picture of itself in an old encyclopedia.
- b. Cyril read it a description of itself from an old encyclopedia.
- c. Cyril said that it was the size of an eagle.
- d. Robert identified it correctly.

2. The Phoenix was offended by.....
  - a. ...Anthea's question about how it got there.
  - b. ...Anthea's observation that it was the same size as a chicken.
  - c. ....the description of its birth in the encyclopedia.
  - d. ...the children trying to get as close as possible to it.
  
3. The description of the Phoenix in the encyclopedia was poor because:
  - a. The Phoenix really had a white tail.
  - b. The Phoenix really had a golden tail.
  - c. Much of its body used to be purple.
  - d. It was like an eagle.
  
4. To prepare to be born again the Phoenix must first lay an egg and then.....
  - a. ...it goes on living for ever and ever.
  - b. ...goes to sleep in its egg.
  - c. ...goes to sleep and wake up in its egg.
  - d. ...turns into a worm.

**Focusing on the language – vocabulary:**

Five words in the text are in ***bold italic print like this*** but are not in the glossary. Match each of these words to one of the following definitions: (5 marks)

- \_\_\_\_\_ : a state of peace; resting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ : good manners; behaving respectfully towards others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ : wonderful; astounding; found in fables or stories.
- \_\_\_\_\_ : the layer of feathers covering the body of a bird.
- \_\_\_\_\_ : a small carpet placed in front of a fireplace.

**Adjectives** are descriptive words added to nouns. Here is an example in which the adjective is underlined:.....The pupil walked into the cold classroom.

**Read these sentences and underline the adjectives.** Some sentences have more than one adjective. (2 marks)

1. The Phoenix was old and didn't like its restless existence.
2. The portrait of the Phoenix showed a little bird resting among flames and wasn't a flattering likeness.

**Write two adjectives which the Phoenix used to describe how it was feeling.** (2 marks)

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Verbs tell us about what is being done, or about the state of someone or something. Here is an example in which the verb is underlined.....The pupil walked into the cold classroom.

Read these sentences and underline the verbs. Some sentences have more than one verb. (2 marks)

1. The egg became red-hot, and inside it something was moving.
2. 'Be careful, I am not nearly cool yet.'

Read lines 5 to 10. In this part of the text find four verbs which explain what the Phoenix did or how it moved. Write them in the boxes below. (2 marks)


The sentence on line 34 is: 'With portraits? asked the Phoenix. Which one of the following words is the best synonym for asked? Circle your answer. (1 mark)

said

complained

inquired

Focusing on the writer's craft – Answer the questions below: (5 marks)

1. After saying that its portrait was not a flattering likeness (*line 30*), the Phoenix asked, 'And what are these characters?' and it pointed to the printed part. **What does this show you about the Phoenix?**

2. The bird said (*line 66*), 'The Phoenix has an egg, like all respectable birds.' **What did it think of birds which didn't have eggs?**

3. Use the author's description and your own imagination to draw the Phoenix.



## Reading Comprehension

Write down who or what the [bracketed] words in the sentences or phrases below refer to. (4 marks)

Example: [*It*] rested a moment among the flames,....(lines 2/3) *It* = a flame-coloured bird.

1. [They] were not astonished, but they were very, very much interested. (line 11)

2. 'Oh, that's all dullish; it's not much about [YOU], you know,' said Cyril,..... (line 32)

3. The bird bowed; at least it was more like [that] than anything else. (line 21)

4. 'They never gave much, anyway; [they] always were people who gave nothing for nothing.' (lines 59, 60)

### True or False? (5 marks)

1. The Phoenix was mostly purple. \_\_\_\_\_

2. When the Phoenix read the paper which Robert had found, it felt insulted. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Anthea spoke four times. \_\_\_\_\_

4. The Phoenix expressed its gratitude to Robert. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Phoenix was enthusiastic about being reborn. (lines 65-73) \_\_\_\_\_

### Answer the questions below. (6 marks)

1. When feathers are ruffled it means they move as if affected by wind. Why do you think the Phoenix ruffled its own feathers? (line 59)

2. What is another way of writing this sentence? - '*It's most inaccurate*' (line 61)

3. Most birds make a nest to lay their eggs in. Where did the Phoenix lay its egg?

4. Edith Nesbit's text doesn't mention Jane by name. How do we know there were four children in the room?

5. When the children were choking with wonder and curiosity Robert wasn't. Why not?

6. Which sentence gives the reader an idea of the minimum age the Phoenix could be?

**The test is finished. Check that you have answered all the questions.**

