****

Register Number:

Date: / /2019

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE - 27**

**II SEMESTER BA/BSc/BSW/BCom**

**SEMESTER EXAMINATION : APRIL 2019**

**GE 214 – GENERAL ENGLISH**

**Time: 2 ½ Hours Max. Marks: 70**

**This paper consists of TWELVE printed sides**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **This booklet contains THREE THEMES over 12 printed sides**
2. **You are allowed to use a dictionary**
3. **Stick to the word limit**
4. **You may answer ANY ONE THEME**
5. **Answer all sections under the theme you have chosen. Do not choose sections at random from different themes.**
6. **Please indicate your stream (CS1, CS2, CS3) clearly on your answer booklet.**

**Theme 1**

**I.Read the following *Guardian* article by Kay Holmes titled ‘Saying goodbye to your child’s primary school? You’re going to miss it’ published on 23rd July 2018.**

The little girl who once hugged me at the gates has moved on, and the change to secondary school has come as a shock

 ‘Most parents of year 6 children, as I know from recent experience, won’t be braced for how different their lives as parents is are about to become.”. My first day in the school playground was terrifying. Everyone else seemed to know each other. Chatting, laughing clusters of comfortable, relaxed people [made connections and bonded](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/may/26/scared-of-the-school-gate-the-hive). I decided – out of sheer defensiveness – that was not for me. I would instead enter and leave the playground untouched by human contact. No chatting, no laughing, and definitely no PTA meetings or [arranging the summer fair](https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/jul/12/school-fairs-parent-teacher-associations).

The parent-teacher association​ was all the cliches: middle class, do-gooding, ravenous for women’s free time

That lasted about a week. My daughter became close friends with two girls and I followed suit with their mothers. As my child’s friendship circle expanded, so did mine. I began to bake cakes for events and tried to control my competitiveness. I lugged innumerable huge folding tables from dark corners and pinched my fingers setting them up. I ventured into the dank horror of the disco room at parties where sugar-enraged under-10s sweated out manic interpretations of [Lush Life](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD4HCZe-tew) and [Uptown Funk](https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/may/01/mark-ronson-uptown-funk-gains-five-new-writers).

 My friend Liz and I cornered the tombola market. It involved a certain amount of maths to work out the ticket-stubs--to-prizes ratio, and a certain amount of sitting on the floor chatting while sticking prize numbers on to re-gifted condiment sets and bottles of wine.

Many afternoons standing behind a trestle table in a playground selling baked goods were enlivened by the spectacular rudeness of our customers. So keen was I to prove my lack of professionalism that I met rudeness with sarcasm and once yelled after a man – who was passive-aggressively chuntering about “very expensive cakes” – that “they aren’t expensive at all sir, and this is for your children!”

And against my will I was drawn into the PTA.

The parent-teacher association was all the cliches you can throw at it – middle class, do-gooding, prescriptive and ravenous for women’s free time. But it raised some money, staged some joyful communal events, and tried to include everyone.

And there’s the rub. This was the month of summer fairs and of farewells. Most parents of year 6 children are now facing the last day of primary school, but they will also be throwing their thoughts and worries forward. What they won’t be, as I know from recent experience, is in any way braced for [how different their lives as parents are about to become](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/sep/04/starting-secondary-school-survival-guide-parents).

The little girl who used to hold hands with me all the way to school and hug me fiercely in the playground is now a year 7 who salutes me cordially some distance from the train she takes with her friends to a school in a different part of the city. After wandering fairly freely through her primary school on PTA business, I couldn’t enter her secondary school if I wanted to because there’s a guard at the gate. He’s very nice, but holding a Victoria sponge and mumbling about raffle tickets is going to butter no parsnips with him.

Misanthropic me should be pleased not to be rubbing shoulders with other parents at drop-off. And – full disclosure – it is a relief. But it’s a shock to discover how suddenly school becomes none of your business. For children, it’s the first stage of preparation for the adult world.

The separation is natural and right and has to happen. So I hope those parents paused to enjoy the dreaded summer cake sale – and revelled in the arguments over whether or not to have a bouncy castle, or buying versus renting a popcorn machine.

Things will change fast: you’re one summer away from a different world that even a diehard curmudgeon can acknowledge is a bittersweet experience.

**I.A Read the above passage and answer ANY FIVE of the following questions in about 150 words. (5 x 10 =50)**

1. “Chatting, laughing clusters of comfortable, relaxed people [made connections and bonded](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/may/26/scared-of-the-school-gate-the-hive). I decided – out of sheer defensiveness – that was not for me”.

Read the passage clearly and find out who said the above lines and in what context? Using the dictionary find out the meaning of the word defensiveness, is it good to be defensive in the given context?

2. “The Parent-Teacher Association​ was all the clichés” What does the term cliché mean? What kind of clichés is the narrator referring to with regard to Parent – Teacher Associations?

3.The passage ends with a little piece of advice from the narrator to all parents. What are your thoughts on that piece of advice?

4. Do you believe that there were certain school experiences that prepared you for the outside world? Explain using instances from your personal experience.

5. If for a moment you were given the chance to be the narrator in this passage. Would you like to be cynical and sckeptical like the narrator was in certain situations or would you respond differently? Read the passage thoroughly to get a sense of the narrator’s traits and then answer this question.

6. The narrator refers to the horrors of being at an under-10-year old (underage) disco party. Why did the narrator describe the party using such language?

**II.Read the poem “First Day At School’ by Roger McGough**

A millionbillionwillion miles from home  
Waiting for the bell to go. (To go where?)  
Why are they all so big, other children?  
So noisy? So much at home they  
Must have been born in uniform  
Lived all their lives in playgrounds  
Spent the years inventing games  
That don't let me in. Games  
That are rough, that swallow you up.  
  
And the railings.  
All around, the railings.  
Are they to keep out wolves and monsters?  
Things that carry off and eat children?  
Things you don't take sweets from?  
Perhaps they're to stop us getting out  
Running away from the lessins. Lessin.  
What does a lessin look like?  
Sounds small and slimy.  
They keep them in the glassrooms.  
Whole rooms made out of glass. Imagine.  
  
I wish I could remember my name  
Mummy said it would come in useful.  
Like wellies. When there's puddles.  
Yellowwellies. I wish she was here.  
I think my name is sewn on somewhere  
Perhaps the teacher will read it for me.  
Tea-cher. The one who makes the tea.

**II. A. Answer the following questions in about 150 words.**

**(2 x 10=20)**

**8.** How does the poem bring out specific aspects of a child going to school for the very first time? Answer using suitable examples from the poem.

**9**. There is a reference to the child trying to remember a proper noun that would stick with him/her for good. This proper noun gives the child an identity. Does the poem adequately describe this? How does this resonate with your childhood memories?

**Theme – 2**

**I. Read the following passage by Sanjeev Bhaskar: ‘*My father’s Indian Summers’* published online by The Guardian on the 24th of February 2015.**

As a boy, the actor regularly visited Shimla, where his dad once lived. Filming Channel 4’s glossy colonial drama has brought the memories flooding back.

**I** first visited Shimla when I was seven years old and there was something immediately familiar and strangely comforting about the place. On the face of it, this modest little “hill station” acting as a prelude to the Himalayas was still in bustling, tropical India but its slanted roofs and alpine vistas were more reminiscent of a European town. Perhaps it was the names of local landmarks: Mall Road, the Gaiety Theatre, Cart Road, the iconic cream-coloured Christ Church and the deliciously named Scandal Point. Or maybe it was just because it was the first place in India that I had to wear a woolly hat and scarf.

In the late 19th century, the British developed this small town into first a sanatorium for heat-malaised men of the Raj and then the summer capital, from where the “Jewel in the Crown” was marshalled and then, in the 20th century, dismantled. It was also where my teenage father arrived, having survived the horrors of partition in 1947. While waiting for his first job, he volunteered as a dispatch clerk for Bennett and Colman, still, today, the publishers of the Times of India.

His memories of this period are vivid. His morning run would be to the top of Mount Jakhu, where a temple still stands, surrounded by wily and opportunistic monkeys. (My dad came home once to find a monkey in his bedroom with a pair of pants on its head.) He recalled with sparkling alacrity trekking with mates to hot springs through leopard-infested jungles, braving local stories of voodoo witches preying on young men; of seeing the Kendals perform Shakespeare at the Gaiety and of staring through the windows of the Cecil Hotel (where discussions about the creation of independent India and a newly formed Pakistan were held) and wondering what type of person stayed at such a luxurious place.

 It was also where he got to know an Englishman for the first time. Frederick Austin (or possibly Austin Frederick) worked for the newspaper and was bereft at having to leave India. My dad remembers him as a gentleman with old school manners, literary with a developed sense of fair play: a “typical Englishman” as he put it. Austin invited my father to visit him if he ever came to England.

My journeys to Shimla, as I grew up, were always from Delhi. A long bus journey to Kalka in the plains, and then the fabulous narrow gauge railway, through a hundred tunnels and countless bridges, amid awesome sights and scenery. It still feels timelessly romantic.

It’s difficult for me now to separate my warm feelings for Shimla as a tourist destination from my paternal connections to it. I know those early days couldn’t have been easy for my father. His family had lost everything and arrived in India as refugees from Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. They had moved from comfort and familiarity to poverty and disarray within the space of a fortnight (the notice given to those who lived close to either side of the newly drawn, arguably arbitrary border). Many, like my father, were pushed into areas with which they had no real connection or history. It’s no wonder that so many of these uprooted souls chose to uproot themselves again by emigrating to Britain

My father’s view of Britain and the British was partly formed by what he experienced in Shimla. As a young man needing to provide for a widowed mother, he had to take any job he could. Fate decreed it was to be in this unpretentious hill town and it turned out to be, literally, a breath of fresh air. My father persisted with those views of the virtuous English gentleman long after he arrived in Britain in 1956. Indeed he constantly imparted them to me as I grew up. It is an ideal that I still aspire to, desperately cling to and look for in my fellow Brits.

I’ve been back to Shimla a few times. Some years ago, for a BBC documentary, I explored my father’s past and the intrigues of the British and the run up to partition. Many of the sites marking colonialism still stand in India today, representing an impressive ability to accept one’s history by absorbing it, rather than defacing and rewriting it. As is logically the case, not all Indians were saints and not all the British were sinners. There is a unique complexity to the relationship between India and Britain. Master and servant at one time, certainly, but there was a bond that made it more than acceptable for people like my parents to choose to dwell in the land of their former oppressors.

More recently, I had the surreal and wonderful experience of appearing in [Indian Summers](https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/indian-summers), the Channel 4 series set in Shimla in the 1930s – the last of the Raj’s heydays, perhaps. The weirdest part was filming it in Malaysia, owing to the paucity of appropriate buildings and infrastructure in Shimla itself. It didn’t feel like the Shimla I knew until I watched the first episode back and spotted the Christ Church at the top of the Mall. Suddenly, all those warm connections came flooding back. But so did a couple of questions.

Whatever happened to Mr Frederick/Austin? My Dad made contact with him in the early 60s. He was still lost without India and, like a character from Indian Summers, yearned to return to Shimla and to an Indian woman he had fallen in love with and left 20 years earlier. He was also keen for my father to meet his daughter Rita, who worked for the UN in Geneva. The trail stops there on that mini-drama. And 60 years after he wondered what kind of a person could stay at the Cecil hotel, it turned out the answer was: his son.

**I.A Answer the following questions in about 150 words each. ( 7 x 10 =70 )**

1. 10. Sanjeev Bhaskar talks about uprooted souls in the above passage? What causes their uprooting and how does it change the way these people narrate their histories?
2. 11. Does the history of a place change the way you view a place. With reference to the passage, comment on the above statement giving suitable reasons for your answer.
3. 12.” Many of the sites marking colonialism still stand in India today, representing an impressive ability to accept one’s history by absorbing it, rather than defacing and rewriting it” Do you agree with this statement? Explain
4. 13.What kind of person was Fredrick Austen? What was his connection to India? What are your views on this British personality?
5. 14. Mr. Bhaskar describes Shimla as being timelessly romantic. Do you think this description is apt? Give reasons for your answer.
6. 15. The narrator says that his views of the British were formed by how his father described them. What were his father’s views on the British? How did this influence the narrator’s understanding of the British?
7. 16. What is the most well described feature in the above passage? Do these features resonate with some of your memories to a given place? Answer using suitable examples

**Theme 3**

**I. Read extracts from an online Guardian article titled ‘We’re never going to bed’: Children Rewrite House Rules’ by Decca Aitkenhead, [Sarfraz Manzoor](https://www.theguardian.com/profile/sarfrazmanzoor) and Clover Stroud *.***

*Sweets for breakfast, pillow fights on demand, and no tidying up... what happened when three families let the kids call the shots for a week.*

*‘The house has the airless discombobulation of a student house in the 90s, the day after a big night out on ecstasy’: Decca Aitkenhead*

Three hours in, I feel weightless, almost giddy. I’m lying on the sofa with my boys, eating chocolate, watching the telly, and it is no exaggeration to say that I am having the time of my life. For the first time in eight and a half years, I am not in charge. This exotic sensation of relaxation is completely unfamiliar – and yet stirs a distant memory of who I used to be.

The kids-in-charge experiment began at 1pm, and I can’t believe how well it’s going. In truth I’d been dreading it, braced for carnage, but so far it has been nothing but fun. At 1.01pm the boys had raced to the bakery and spent £10 on cakes, before charging on up the road for lunch in McDonald’s. I’m enjoying the absence of washing-up, and curious to see what they will eat next.

Jake proposes a trip to the corner shop for provisions. I float along the pavement beside him, laughing at his jokes; his mood is unrecognizably effervescent, fizzing with wit, and I tell him he’s on cracking form. He halts and turns to me, his expression suddenly earnest.

“But don’t you see? This is the *real* me. *Your* rules make me go,” and he shrinks, hunching his shoulders and drawing his wrists together as if cuffed. “But *our* rules have unleashed the real me,” and he skips off into the shop.

Jake and Joe’s rules

* Decca isn’t allowed to say no
* No baths
* Hourly food fight
* Unlimited screens
* No bedtime
* Decca has to play Laser Tag when we want
* Unlimited sweets and crisps and chocolates and fizzy drinks
* Decca has to disco dance when we want
* Email Donald Trump every 10 hours to insult him
* We are allowed to get games on Decca’s phone
* Allowed to swear
* Unlimited water fights
* Worst table manners
* No vegetables
* Allowed to jump on Decca’s bed, to play on a Wii and to pee on the toilet seat

I stare after him, stunned. What if he is right? What have I been thinking all these years, grimly policing bedtimes and broccoli and pee on the toilet seat? By other parents’ standards I have always considered myself relatively permissive; I’ve neither the time nor energy to be a helicopter/tiger mum. But now, as the tension of everyday parenting melts away, I’m beginning to see the grinding joylessness of family life under my rules.

In the shop, I watch Jake’s brain struggle to adjust to the heady concept of limitlessness. He dances up the aisles, dazed by possibilities, turning out of habit to seek permission as he reaches for a sack of crisps. Seeing my smiley shrug, he grabs a chocolate bar next – then, like a prisoner acclimatizing to freedom, two great handfuls. The only point at which I intervene is when he asks the shopkeeper for “two cans of Stella Art… Art… Artoize”.

We come home with £52-worth of fizzy drinks, sweets, crisps and cookies, which the boys lay out across the kitchen table like a gaudy tablecloth spun from confectionery. Our fruit bowls and jars of lentils and seeds on the shelves now look as if they have been Photoshopped in from somebody else’s house. The kitchen resembles a reality TV set housing two ludicrously incompatible families.

While the sugar-rush kicks in, an almighty pillow fight breaks out, and it begins to feel a bit like The Lord Of The Flies. Jake sets up an old Wii donated by a family friend. Ordinarily, the boys are allowed 15 minutes a day of TV after school, movies on the weekends, and no other screens, unless a) at other people’s houses, b) on long-haul flights, or c) on holidays where a luggage allowance can’t accommodate a fortnight’s worth of Lego/books/lightsabers, etc. My iPad will occasionally be deployed in an emergency situation, but that’s the extent of the boys’ access to technology.

Having grown up in the 70s without a television, I consider these rules quite generous – but then, the appeal of electronic devices has always been lost on me. Jake and Joe are hoping to use this opportunity to convert me to their charms – and so, at the age of 47, I play my first video game. It is called Bomberman Land. They’re so thrilled to see their mum operate a console, I almost want to enjoy it. Instead, I’m not enchanted, and very quickly bored. They get me to play Lego Batman next, but it makes me feel seasick. Puzzled by my failure to share their enthusiasm, they invite their eight-year-old friend John round. When Joe shrieks at him, “We’re never going to bed!” it strikes me that I might need some company, too.

I rustle up some friends, Chinese delivery and wine, and we have the loveliest evening, joyously uninterrupted by the tedium of bedtime rituals. No teeth will be brushed, no toys tidied away. The kids don’t even need to be fed. They work their way through their provisions like locusts, until the house is littered in a confetti of wrappers.

By 1.30am, I cannot keep my eyes open, and go to bed with three boys hunched beside me, playing Lego Harry Potter on the Wii. When I awake at 4.50am, I think I must be dreaming. Last New Year’s Eve, Jake stayed up until 3am – but that was at a party, and even then Joe folded by midnight. I would have said it wasn’t physically possible for them to last any longer. But beside me in the bed are three small boys, wide awake, eyes glued to the video game.

At 7.30am, I find them asleep, fully dressed, surrounded by cookie crumbs and crumpled Fanta cans. Shortly after 8am, Joe appears downstairs. I ask how he feels. “Good. I nearly just vomited. But yeah, good.”

He takes a can of Coke from the fridge, pours himself a bowl full of condensed sweetened milk, and eats it with a spoon. When it’s all gone, he moves on to the Nutella. To watch one’s child shovel spoonfuls from the jar into his mouth and do nothing is a kind of out-of-body experience – like observing a car crash involving your children and simply driving on by. It feels horrifying but oddly liberating. When Jake shambles downstairs – bumping off the walls, all coordination shot – the first words from his mouth are: “Can I have your phone?”

And that is how the day proceeds. After John’s dad collects him, Jake and Joe summon a revolving cast of school friends who arrive with eyes like saucers, scarcely able to believe the scenes they find in our house. The curtains remain closed, my phone and laptop are commandeered, and the various devices absorb their unbroken attention. Nobody washes, or dresses, or even says much.

By afternoon, I realize what the atmosphere in the house reminds me of: it has the airless discombobulation of a student house in the 90s, the day after a big night out on ecstasy; time has been suspended, sleep forgotten, brain cells impaired. On the plus side, for the first time in about four years I’m left in peace to read not one but two Saturday papers cover to cover. If the boys are in thrall to their new freedom, a bit of me is too. I don’t have to cook, or chivvy, or entertain; I don’t have to do anything.

By the evening, I feel rancid and sick. My stomach is in shock, reeling from all the sugar; all I want to do is go to bed. Jake and Joe, on the other hand, are having the time of their lives. “Brilliant!” they exclaim whenever I ask how they’re feeling. “This is the. Best. Weekend. EVER!”

“So, what do you want to do today?”

They wake up with 11 hours left of their rules before we revert to mine. So far we haven’t even left the house. “Trampolining? Go-karting? Anything you want.” These activities are not typical features of our family weekends, but exist only in the prized category of annual birthday treats. “You’re in charge,” I remind them. “What shall we do?” Jake considers his options. “I think I’d just like to stay in and play on devices.” And this is what they do again, all day. All their funny and entertaining rules are forgotten; they don’t want me to do a chicken dance, or pillow fight; they forget all about emailing Donald Trump. They don’t even want KFC or Burger King, but send me back to the shop for another £20-worth of chemically coloured sugar.

By now, pancakes are looking like a pretty nutritious food group to me, so while the boys stare at more screens I make some. As I line breakfast trays with colourful napkins, arrange toppings into pretty glass ramekins and serve the boys on the sofa, it dawns on me that I never, ever do this. I tell my kids I love them all the time – but when do I show it? I’m always too busy processing them through the interminable drill of teeth, shoes, PE kit, coats, to think to stop and make a fuss of them. I’d never noticed how often I say no to my kids until they banned it, but now I think about it I can’t remember the last time I said yes when they asked me to play.

The epiphany of the weekend is my neglect of frivolity, and we revert to my rules with a new resolve to make family life more fun. But if the boys had hoped their rules might relax mine on video games and sweets, the plan has badly backfired.

The verdict

Jake Wilkinson, eight - When our mum told us that we were going to get to set our own rules, we wanted to start straight away. We were looking forward to doing it so much, and it was so exciting. We did the easy ones first, like unlimited screens and sweets, stay up all night; but then we thought of some whackier ones. When our friend John came round for a sleepover, it was more like the longest playdate in the world, because there was no sleep. I learned that no rules is the best thing ever, and I wish it was like that every day. If we did it again, I wouldn’t change a single rule.

Joe Wilkinson, six - My favourite thing was Mum spending so much money on lots of sweets. On Saturday morning, I felt like I was going to vomit, but I didn’t, so I carried on eating them. Setting our own rules was fun, but it was quite unhealthy for us. By the end of the weekend my tummy stuck out about a metre. I think if we were in charge all the time, we might get ill. But I’d love to do it again.

‘I had hoped there might be a hint of gratitude that we were indulging her every whim. No chance’: Sarfraz Manzoor

On the first day of kids’ rules, it was snowing and school was closed. My wife, Bridget, was at work, our one-year old son Ezra was with his childminder, and I was at home with our six-year-old daughter, Laila, who was busy wolfing down a bowl of Coco Pops. When we first told Laila that we were going to consent to her every demand, she started with the food: “I want Coco Pops for breakfast and chips with peas and fish fingers for dinner every day. And I want to eat my pudding before dinner – because pudding is the best part.” No more granola; no more boring old vegetables and grains. Then she got into the swing of things: no more arguments, no phone at dinner time, no set bedtime.

Ordinarily, on a day off, Laila would have asked me to read her a book, or she would have drawn pictures or played with her toys. Not today. “I want to watch Ben & Holly’s Magic Kingdom”.

Laila’s rules

* Watch more TV
* Have Mummy and Daddy both read to me at bedtime
* No arguing
* Daddy not to look at his phone at dinnertime
* Breakfast of Coco Pops
* Dinner of fish fingers, chips and peas
* Bedtime when I want
* Daddy singing songs from Matilda at bedtime
* No tidying up

Bridget grew up in a family that did not own a television until she was 16, and Laila watches less television than many of her friends – about half an hour every other Saturday. And now here she was, still in her pyjamas, watching what turned out to be two hours of television, the equivalent of eight weeks’ worth in her ordinary life. Bridget and I have been together for 10 years and my guess is that we don’t argue any more than other married couples, but we also don’t argue any less. Yet one of Laila’s rules was no more arguing. It didn’t take long after Bridget had returned from work for the first argument to begin brewing, but we had to stop ourselves. We focused on frying Laila’s dinner.When her food was ready, Laila refused to sit down on her chair: she wanted to eat lying flat on the floor. We couldn’t argue with her – or with each other – so we sat there growing silently annoyed.

On the first night, Laila asked that Bridget and I put her to bed together – taking it in turns to read a book to her. That was lovely – our little girl snuggled up between us as we read Moon in Summer Madness. During her bath time she had asked Bridget to join her in the tub. It was touching how many of her rules were aimed at spending more time with us. I wondered if this was a reaction to the fact that since her brother, Ezra, had been born, the amount of attention we could devote exclusively to her had inevitably been reduced.

I had always thought that the greatest gift I could give my daughter was to make her aware of the music of [Bruce Springsteen](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/27/biography.features) – I had sung his songs to her at bedtime since she was born – so I was a little hurt when she demanded a change the moment she was in charge.

“I want something from Matilda,” she said. I dutifully looked up the lyrics to When I Grow Up – which, while lacking the narrative drama of Springsteen’s The River, was not half bad.

We felt like terrible parents to be allowing it, but each time we suggested anything sensible, she would start screaming

On the second day, Laila continued with her diet of Coco Pops, chips and television, but decided she didn’t just want us to both read to her: she also wanted to sleep in the same bed as Bridget. I was exiled to the sofa bed.

I had hoped, perhaps naively, that there might be the tiniest hint of gratitude for the fact that Bridget and I were indulging her every whim. No chance. That night, neither Bridget nor Laila slept well and the following day the combination of sugar, sleep deprivation and freedom pushed her over the edge.

She woke up grumpy and hungry. The Coco Pops may have been delicious but they weren’t filling her up. The hunger mutated to irritability. She refused to put on her coat or wellington boots to go out on to the snowy streets, and insisted on walking outside barefoot in tights and a summer dress.

We felt like terrible parents to be allowing it, but each time we suggested anything that seemed like sensible advice, she would start screaming, calling us stupid and telling us to shut up. She screamed on the street and howled and writhed on the London underground as commuters tried to avert their eyes. She screamed her demands to watch her favourite programme in a way that was both terrifying and heart-breaking: “I want Ben & Holly NOW and when I say now I mean NOW!” she shouted. I felt grateful that the man who lived in the flat below us is in his 80s and hard of hearing.

We tried to remind her of all the toys and books and crayons and games she had. Laila looked at them and said two words I don’t recall her ever saying: “I’m bored.”

We have always tried to offer a united front in the face of challenges, but Bridget and I had very different ideas about how to deal with Laila’s behaviour. I had been raised in a family where I would not have dared to raise my voice to my dad – he was never physical but he exerted such authority that to talk back to him, even in my 20s, was unthinkable.

Bridget’s parents encouraged her to show emotion – and as a teenager she threatened to throw a chair at her mother. And so, in the face of Laila’s meltdown, Bridget and I found ourselves arguing about the best course of action, which of course prompted Laila to point out: “You’re not allowed to argue in front of me.”

Bridget stormed out of the room, accidentally stepping on a beloved furry rabbit ears headband, which broke, prompting more wails from Laila. Ordinarily, the ears would have not been on the floor because they would have been tidied away, but the Laila rules stipulated that she did not have to do any tidying.

“Laila, I don’t like what you’re turning into,” Bridget said plaintively.

“I want Ben & Holly!” screamed Laila, and deliberately tipped a glass of water on to the carpet.

“That’s it,” said Bridget, “we are abandoning this bloody experiment!”

Laila was beside herself. I wondered whether we had ended the experiment or whether the experiment had ended us.

A few days later, I was putting Laila to bed and she was being her old self – funny, clever and loving. This transformation back to something close to her old self was, for me, an indication of the dangers in giving children what they want, rather than what they need. That said, being made aware of just how important Laila found spending time with us has led me to try to be more present for her when I am with her – and not to keep using my phone in front of her.

The following morning, Laila was digging into a bowl of granola. “I’m wondering how the other families are doing with the children being the boss? I’m guessing it’s going bad.”

“Why do you say that?” I asked.

Laila looked up at me.

“Because it went bad for us,” she replied.

The verdict

Laila Manzoor, six

I came up with the rules by thinking about what my favourite things were and I tried to make them into a list. I also didn’t want Mummy and Daddy to argue because it is a bit annoying because it’s a bit noisy. I liked them both putting me to bed because it was nice to hear both their different voices. It was nice to be between them in bed because I could curl up with both of them. I think grownups should set the rules because it is more healthy. If I just ate chips and Coco Pops I think I might vomit a hundred times a day.

**I.A Answer ANY SEVEN of the following questions in 150 words.**

**( 7 x 10 =70 )**

1. Has there ever been a time when your parents let go of a couple of rules to let you be yourself? Explain with instances from your personal experience.
2. Do you think it is important to have house rules or do you think that rules hinder creativity and freedom? Justify your position using suitable examples.
3. After reading the above passage, can you identify a few rules the children made that were reasonable according to you? Give reasons for your answer.
4. ‘Having grown up in the 70s without a television, I consider these rules quite generous – but then, the appeal of electronic devices has always been lost on me.’ Have your parents ever told you about the house rules of their growing up years? How are they different from yours?
5. After reading responses of the parents of two different families do you think this experiment taught them something important in the process? Respond by referring to the above passage.
6. Reflect on the responses of the children after the experiment? What did they learn in the process? Do you agree with their responses?
7. Can you identify the different parenting styles in the above passage. How are they alike or different from the way your parents parent you?
8. They say experience is the best teacher, have you ever broken rules just for the experience of doing so and landed yourself in trouble or otherwise. Answer using suitable examples.