

# H1 English | Short Story Sample Answer

## ‘Write a short story in which mistaken identity is central to the plot’ (2016 LC HL)

It was an awful day by all accounts. The rain had been bucketing down since dawn and had worked as a natural alarm as it violently slapped against the window. The howling wind amplified as it crept its way under the aperture under the door. Days like this made her almost thankful that she'd spent her last cent on the twelve-year-old banger parked out front. She grabbed her laptop and her keys and made the impetuous sprint to the car, cursing as she landed her left foot in a puddle. She got to the car and scrambled for the keys, dropping them dangerously close to the rapidly filling storm drain. This frenzy of motions was familiar by now, muscle memory, and she hopped into the car making her way across town to the job of her dreams.

She arrived at the office block twenty minutes later, still soaking from her morning routine. She gazed up at the glass-paned, twelve-story building, but it was a different gaze to the first time she set eyes upon it. This was the largest marketing agency in the entire state. She'd always had an affinity for business and an innate enterprising spirit. This naively led her to believe that she could climb the ranks quickly if she made a good impression as an intern. She was evidently incorrect, and the despondency of the situation had grown larger by the day over the past six months as she realized less than half a dozen people knew her name here. It was the same rigmarole each day of photocopying and printing each day from 9am to 11.30am followed by a 30-minute break. After a morning of completely embarrassing herself at the printer she was ready to go home. She rambled down the pedestrian street to the usual coffee shop and took solace in the fact that the rain was clearing off. She was lost in her own self-pitying thoughts, considering herself a new life to start over when she heard a 'click' followed by another. She turned around to investigate and was met by a barrage of clicks and flashes. Two cameramen were shouting somebody's name at her, but she didn't recognise it. Passersby turned their heads in her direction, and she tried to mask the obvious perplexity in her eyes with an awkward smile. One of the cameramen immediately responded, "there it is, there's the smile we want". They were steadily moving forward with each click and she found

herself retreating into the coffee shop. The photographers stopped and walked away, like vampires needing permission to cross the threshold. She ordered her usual Americano and chocolate croissant but as she took out her wallet, the cashier just smiled and said, “on the house, you’re good publicity”, and threw his eyes in the direction of the door. She glimpsed over her shoulder, half afraid to look, and saw a growing crowd scrambling for seats, all staring in her direction, but saying nothing as if cautious they might startle her like a deer.

The following morning, she stumbled out of bed, frantically got dressed, almost hit her head, grabbed her laptop, dropped her keys and made her way to work. On arriving she took the elevator and got off on the third floor as per usual. She ambled into her office cubicle and set up her laptop. One of the few co-workers who knew her by name had sent her an e-mail with the caption ‘moving up in the world’. It was linked to the photographed events of yesterday with an article glorifying the “down to earth” nature of this celebrity. She googled the name attached to this mystery celebrity and found that she made a point of being introverted. No social media, no PR stunts. It was hard to even say what she was famous for. Then she heard a whisper. “That’s her”. It was followed by footsteps and a throat clearing. It was the boss, all the way down from the twelfth floor.

“There’s a lot of talk about you around the office”, he said, “and I wanted to personally make the point that it is an absolute honour to have you here with us”. Before she could even respond, he stated with an alarming level of sincerity, “I’m confident that you will become a prominent figure at this firm”. He then strolled away with his entourage.

The 11.30 break came around quicker than it ever had before, and she was still gleaming about her earlier encounter. She sauntered to the coffee shop and her face lit up when she heard the ‘click-click’ from behind. She strolled into the shop and collected her Americano and chocolate croissant free of charge, then made the day of a teenage girl when she held the door for her on her way out.

That evening she sat with her laptop screen illuminating her face in the middle of the living room. She went from article to article finding everything she could on her doppelganger. She was constantly brought back to reality by the stark realisation that her recent fortune was not really hers. But then she found it. The address of her look-a-like, accompanied with the perfect information she needed; she lived alone. She wrote the address down and calmly picked up the keys. She walked to the old banger parked out front and didn’t fumble the keys, not even once. She was going to move up in the world.