ST PAUL'S
GIRLS' SCHOOL

First Year Entrance Examination

English

READING PASSAGE

One hour and fifteen minutes
(including the 10 minutes reading time)

Read the passage inside and the short introduction to it very carefully. The numbers on the left of the passage are line numbers.

You should spend 10 minutes reading before you go on to answer the questions in the booklet. You may not write anything during this time. You will be told when the 10 minutes are up.

The action in this passage takes place over 100 years ago, in the early 1900s. Ursula Brangwen is seventeen years old and is going to work for the first time as a teacher.

She was walking down a small, mean, wet street, empty of people. The school squatted low within its railed, asphalt yard, that shone black with rain. The building was grimy, and horrible, dry plants were shadowily looking through the windows.

She entered the arched doorway of the porch. The whole place seemed to have a threatening expression, imitating the church's architecture, for the purpose of domineering, like a gesture of vulgar authority. She saw that one pair of feet had paddled across the flagstone floor of the porch. The place was silent, deserted, like an empty prison waiting the return of tramping feet.

Ursula went forward to the teachers' room that burrowed in a gloomy hole. She knocked timidly.

"Come in!" called a surprised man's voice, as from a prison cell. She entered the dark little room that never got any sun. The gas was lighted naked and raw. At the table a thin man in shirt-sleeves was rubbing a paper on a jelly tray.[1] He looked up at Ursula with his narrow, sharp face, said "Good morning," then turned away again, and stripped the paper off the tray, glancing at the violet-coloured writing transferred, before he dropped the curled sheet aside among a heap.

Ursula watched him fascinated. In the gaslight and gloom and the narrowness of the room, all seemed unreal.

"Isn't it a nasty morning?" she said.

"Yes," he said. "It's not much of weather."

But in here it seemed that neither morning nor weather really existed. This place was timeless. He spoke in an occupied voice, like an echo.

Ursula did not know what to say. She took off her waterproof.

"Am I early?" she asked.

The man looked first at a little clock, then at her. His eyes seemed to be sharpened to needle-points of vision.

"Twenty-five past," he said. "You're the second to come. I'm first this morning."

Ursula sat down gingerly on the edge of a chair, and watched his thin red hands rubbing away on the white surface of the paper, then pausing, pulling up a corner of the sheet, peering, and rubbing away again. There was a great heap of curled white-and-scribbled sheets on the table.

"Must you do so many?" asked Ursula.

Again the man glanced up sharply. He was about thirty or thirty-three

---

[1] Jelly tray = the jelly tray was a very basic way of copying printed sheets. The man is printing off copies of a worksheet for the sixty-two pupils in his class. Nowadays, the jelly tray has been replaced by the photocopier.

years old, thin, greenish, with a long nose and a sharp face. His eyes were blue, and sharp as points of steel, rather beautiful, the girl thought.

"Sixty-three," he answered.

"So many!" she said, gently. Then she remembered.

"But they're not all for your class, are they?" she added.

"Why aren't they?" he replied, a fierceness in his voice.

Ursula was rather frightened by his mechanical ignoring of her, and his directness of statement. It was something new to her. She had never been treated like this before, as if she did not count, as if she were addressing a machine.

"It is too many," she said sympathetically.

"You'll get about the same," he said.

That was all she received. She sat rather blank, not knowing how to feel. Still she liked him. He seemed so cross. There was a queer, sharp, keen-edge feeling about him that attracted her and frightened her at the same time. It was so cold, and against his nature.

The door opened, and a short, neutral-tinted young woman of about twenty-eight appeared.

"Oh, Ursula!" the newcomer exclaimed. "You are here early! My word, I'll warrant you don't keep it up. That's Mr. Williamson's peg. This is yours. Standard Five[2] teacher always has this. Aren't you going to take your hat off?"

Miss Violet Harby removed Ursula's waterproof from the peg on which it was hung, to one a little farther down the row. She had already snatched the pins from her own stuff hat, and jammed them through her coat. She turned to Ursula, as she pushed up her frizzed, flat, dun-coloured hair.

"Isn't it a beastly morning," she exclaimed, "beastly! And if there's one thing I hate above another it's a wet Monday morning;—pack of kids trailing in anyhow-nohow, and no holding 'em——"

She had taken a black pinafore from a newspaper package, and was tying it round her waist.

"You've brought an apron, haven't you?" she said jerkily, glancing at Ursula. "Oh—you'll want one. You've no idea what a sight you'll look before half-past four, what with chalk and ink and kids' dirty feet.—Well, I can send a boy down to mamma's for one."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Ursula.

"Oh, yes—I can send easily," cried Miss Harby.

Ursula's heart sank. Everybody seemed so cocksure and so bossy. How was she going to get on with such jolty, jerky, bossy people?

---

[2] Standard Five = the name of Ursula's class. It is roughly equivalent to modern-day Year 7.

ST PAUL'S
GIRLS' SCHOOL

Name: _____ Group: _____

First Year Entrance Examination

English

QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOKLET

One hour and fifteen minutes
(including the 10 minutes reading time)

- Keep looking back at the passage as you answer the questions
- Take care to do exactly what the question asks you to do
- There are no marks awarded for individual questions – your paper will be assessed as a whole
- Use the space provided for your answers as a guide as to how much we would like you to write
- Write your answers in full sentences
- There are 9 questions. You are advised to attempt all questions

1. The passage describes a school over one hundred years ago. How is Ursula's school different from your own school? Describe any THREE features that are different

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

2. Re-read the description of the school building in lines 1 ('The school squatted low …) to 10 ('… tramping feet'). How does the writer's choice of words in these lines suggest Ursula's feelings as she approaches and enters the school?

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

3. The word ‘domineering’ comes from the Latin word ‘dominus’ which means ‘lord’. What do you think that the writer means when he describes the building as ‘domineering’ (line 7)?

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

4. Re-read the description of the teachers’ room in lines 11 (‘Ursula went forward…’’) to 21 (‘…all seemed unreal’). Choose a phrase from these lines that you think describes the teachers’ room particularly well and explain why you chose it.

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

5. Look at the description of the man in lines 37 (‘Again the man glanced up sharply’) to 53 (‘…against his nature’). Do you find it surprising that Ursula likes the man? Give reasons for your answer.

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……..

6. What type of activity or exercise do you think might be printed on the sheets that the man is copying for his pupils using the jelly tray (lines 16-19)?

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

……

7. What do you think that the writer means when he describes Miss Harby as ‘neutral-tinted’ (line 54)?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Do you think that Miss Harby would be a good teacher? Give reasons for your answer, using details from the passage.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. Imagine that you are one of Ursula's pupils. Write a description of how she behaved in your very first lesson and what happened.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....