LATYMER UPPER SCHOOL
INDEPENDENT & CO-EDUCATIONAL

Entrance Examination

E N G L I S H

Reading Passage

SAMPLE

Read the passage that follows, then answer ALL the multiple choice questions in Sections A, B and C.

In this passage the writer Peter Ackroyd describes the Thames Estuary

It is a mysterious, and an ambiguous, place. Where does the river end and the sea begin? The estuary is the brackish zone, combining salt water and fresh water in equal or unequal quantities. It remains largely unknown and unvisited. The river has changed its nature. It is coming ever closer to the sea, which is always hostile to mankind. There is an area of the estuary, used for the dumping of London's waste,that is still known as the 'Black Deep'. The waters can be treacherous here, and the waves of the estuary have been known to reach a height of 7 feet. It is a deeper and darker river. Joseph Conrad believed that it appealed strongly 'to an adventurous imagination'.

The estuary is some 250 miles square and has a length of 30 miles, reaching from Gravesend to the Nore where the Thames becomes the North Sea. At that point of transition, its width is 10 miles. There are three principle approach channels, one of which is the Black Deep, and a score of subsidiary channels or 'swatchways' with names like 'the Warp' and 'the Wallet'. The light-ships that dip and swing in the tide are called *Mouse* and *Tongue* and *Girdler.* This is the poetry of the river. The sands and shoals are given names such as 'Shingles' and 'Shivering Sands', 'the Spell' and 'the Oven'. 'Sunk Sand' runs between the Black Deep and the Barrow Deep. But the names are in one sense deceptive. The 'sands' are part clay and part viscous mud.

The estuarial marshes beside the river are liminal areas; they are neither water nor dry land. They partake of two realities, and in that sense they are blessed. That is why the Thames estuary has always been considered a place of mystery and of enchantment. At times of low tide

the sands and shoals become islands, with the false promise of a haven. In the poems of the Anglo-Saxons, it is a landscape of nightmare. The ‘flats’ form a dull and monotonous expanse, low ground crossed by paths. The sky seems larger, and closer, here. The tide-washed mud-flats reflect the changing light. For many centuries this land was largely uninhabited and uninhabitable. As such it exerts a primitive and still menacing force, all the more eerie and lonely because of its proximity to the great city.

There is a sense of strangeness and melancholy here at dusk. Charles Dickens understood it very well, and in *Great Expectations* described how the ‘dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the lower leaden line beyond which the wind was rushing, was the sea’. Magwitch could hide here, making his secret way along the network of hidden planks that used to traverse the mud-flats and moving sands. This is all land that has been saved from the sea, and thus has an ambiguous status. Parts of its territory, in both the lower and upper reaches, have often been deemed to be wild and inhospitable. Strangers were not welcomed. Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, walking alone by the shores of the estuary, it is possible to feel great fear – fear of the solitude, fear of being abandoned, fear of what is alien represented by the river itself. It may be a fear of the primaeval Thames.

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E N G L I S H

PART 1: Multiple Choice

SAMPLE

Time allowed: 35 minutes

Instructions

- You have been given a passage to read on one sheet of paper, this question paper and a multiple choice answer sheet.
- First, read the passage through. You may use highlighters or pen to make notes on the passage.
- Then, answer the 25 multiple choice questions about the passage. You must choose one answer A, B, C, D or E for each question and write that letter in the box on the answer sheet.
- You will have 35 minutes to complete this section. At the end of the 35 minutes the teacher will collect in your answer papers.

PART 1: MULTIPLE CHOICE

Each question is worth 1 mark.

SECTION A

1) 'Downriver' is '**mysterious'** and **'ambiguous**' (line 1) because

a) no one knows exactly where the river is.
b) no one understands where it ends up.
c) no one can say where one thing becomes another.
d) no one dares enter the 'brackish' zone.
e) no one understands what exists there.

2) How can the 'estuary' combine 'salt water and fresh water in ***equal or unequal* quantities'** (line 3)?

a) It is near the end of the river so will contain both types of water.
b) It is a wide space and can therefore hold a great deal of water.
c) It is an estuary so will clearly contain both salt and fresh water.
d) It is a tidal area.
e) It is 'brackish' which indicates both water types.

3) By describing the estuary as '**unknown**' (line 4) the writer means

a) it is never visited.
b) no one has managed to locate it exactly.
c) it is unfrequented.
d) it is as yet undiscovered.
e) it is not on any map.

4) The writer says that the sea is '**always hostile to mankind'.**
(line 5). He means by this

a) that the sea is mostly choppy.
b) that the sea has been used as a dump and has become a health hazard.
c) that it is a dark and mysterious force.
d) that the sea seeks to frustrate human life when it can.
e) that the sea is an overpowering force.

5) By describing the river as '**deeper'** and '**darker'** (line 9) by this point on its journey, the writer means

a) that the river has a different character now.

b) that the river joins the 'Black Deep' and so darkens in colour and depth.

c) that the river is finally joining the sea and so becoming more like it in depth and colour.

d) that the river is now 7 feet deep and dirty.

e) that the river has become clouded by waste and much bigger as it reaches the sea.

6) The river '**appeals'** (line 9) '**to an adventurous imagination**' (Line 10) because

a) it is a romantic gateway to the sea for smugglers and explorers.

b) it is an ingenious way inland for raiders.

c) it is easy to write well about.

d) it awakens your longing for travel adventures.

e) it makes you speculate.

7) For the writer, '**The poetry of the river**' (line 17) is

a) the shape of the river in its bed.

b) the collection of names associated with it.

c) the beauty of the river.

d) the atmosphere people sense near the river.

e) the sound of the water.

8) The writer says that the names '**Shivering Sands'** (lines 18-19) and **'Sunk Sand'** (line 19) are '**deceptive'** (line 20) because

a) they are unhelpful labels for underwater areas of the estuary.

b) they sound as if they come from a story.

c) they all use sibilance and onomatopoeia which is a trick.

d) they are not in fact just sand.

e) they are not really shivering or sunk.

9) The '**islands'** of '**sands'** and '**shoals'** (line 26) offer '**false promise of a haven**' (line 26) because

a) they are not liminal.

b) they are polluted by London's waste.

c) they are not fixed in just one place.

d) they are an illusion.

e) they are only accessible some of the time.

10) The Anglo-Saxons might have considered it a '**landscape of nightmare**' (line 27) because

a) it was ruined by waste materials.

b) it was the place from where Viking invasion might have come.

c) it is a forbidding place.

d) they were largely ignorant and believed in nightmares.

e) they associated it with primitive tribes.

11) What does the writer mean when he claims that the land here '**exerts a primitive and still menacing force'**? (lines 31-32)

a) He means that it has an overwhelming atmosphere.

b) He means that you can sense that it is a dangerous part of the river.

c) He means that it is a place where frightening things happen.

d) He means that because London is so close by you are at increased risk.

e) He means that it is all too easy to see the past here.

12) Dickens writes about the '**lower leaden line**' (line 38) which is

a) the horizon.

b) the sea.

c) the Black Deep.

d) the Sunk Sand sandbank.

e) the point where the Thames officially ends.

13) Dickens able to imagine one of his criminal characters, Magwitch (line 39) hiding here because

a) the dense undergrowth would have provided Magwitch with plenty of cover.

b) Dickens liked writing about London which is nearby.

c) the sand-dunes would have allowed Magwitch to stay out of sight.

d) Magwitch could move about here unseen.

e) strangers are not welcome anywhere else.

14) At this point in the passage a '**fear of what is alien**' (line 47) means

a) a fear of strangers on the marsh.

b) a fear of difference.

c) a fear of people coming from the sea.

d) a fear of ghosts.

e) a fear of being unable to return home.

15) You might be frightened of '**the primaeval Thames**' (line 48) because

a) it is ancient.

b) it is tidal here beyond the Thames barrier.

c) it may contain bones.

d) it is very deep and silty.

e) it has frightening names associated with it.

SECTION B

Answer these questions about the meaning of words or phrases as they are used in this extract.

16) What is the closest definition to the word '**ambiguous'**? (line 1)

a) certain

b) strange

c) deserted

d) equivocal

e) different

17) What is the closest definition to the word '**brackish'**? (line 2)

a) briny
b) rocky
c) mixed
d) dirty
e) acrid

18) What is the closest definition to the word '**treacherous'**? (line 7)

a) reliable
b) perilous
c) untrustworthy
d) unexpected
e) inconstant

19) What is the closest definition to the word '**liminal'**? (line 22)

a) outlying
b) calcified
c) transitional
d) established
e) watery

20) What is the closest definition to the word '**monotonous'**? (line 28)

a) unvarying
b) colourless
c) silent
d) lonely
e) unending

SECTION C

Answer the following questions about these words and phrases.

21) Which of these lines includes a metaphor?

a) It exerts a primitive and still menacing force (lines 31-32)
b) The estuary is the brackish zone (line 2)
c) The waters can be treacherous here (line 7)
d) The estuarial marshes beside the river are liminal areas (line 22)
e) This is the poetry of the river (line 17)

22) Which of these words is an adjective?

a) changed (line 4)
b) feeding (line 37)
c) viscous (line 21)
d) status (line 42)
e) mud-flats (line 40)

23) Which of these words is an adverb?

a) here (line 7)
b) moving (line 41)
c) brackish (line 2)
d) mystery (line 25)
e) monotonous (line 28)

24) What types of words are these: ***Estuary*** (line 2) ***Water*** (line 3) ***River*** (line 1) ***Mud*** (line 21) ***Land*** (line 23)?

a) Nouns
b) Articles
c) Determiners
d) Pronouns
e) Adjectives

25) What word could be used to describe ‘but’ in this extract: “‘**Sunk Sand’ runs between the Black Deep and the Barrow Deep. But the names are in one sense deceptive**”? (lines 19-20)

a) Adverb

b) Conjunction

c) Antecedent

d) Pronoun

e) Adjunct

This is the end of Part 1. Please go back and check your answers.

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E N G L I S H

Part 2: Expressive Writing

SAMPLE

Time allowed: 45 minutes

Instructions

- *This part is worth 25 marks.*
- *Complete the writing task that follows.*
- *You should write about 1 ½ - 2 sides.*
- *Take care with your spelling, punctuation and grammar.*
- *Try to use some interesting and ambitious vocabulary.*

Your train stops in a tunnel between stations. Describe what you see and how you feel.