STOCKPORT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

SENIOR SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATION - JANUARY 2017

ENGLISH COMPREHENSION and ESSAY

TIME: Comprehension: 35 minutes
Essay: 40 minutes

SECTION A: Comprehension

The following passage is an extract from 'Boy' by Roald Dahl. Roald describes an incident from his childhood when he and his friends take revenge on a nasty old woman. Read the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow on the sheet provided. Your Essay will be on a related subject; you will be given a choice of titles in the next examination session.

The sweet shop in Llandaff in the year 1923 was the very centre of our lives. To us, it was what a bar is to a drunk, or a church is to a Bishop. Without it, there would have been very little to live for. But it had one terrible drawback, this sweet-shop. The woman who owned it was a horror. We hated her and we had good reason for doing so.

Her name was Mrs Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry. She never smiled. She never welcomed us when we went in, and the only times she spoke were when she said things like, 'I'm watchin' you so keep yer thievin' fingers off them chocolates!' Or 'I don't want you in 'ere just to look around! Either you *forks* out or you *gets* out!

But by far the most loathsome thing about Mrs Pratchett was the filth that clung around her. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us most. They were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long. And do not forget, please, that it was these very hands and fingers that she plunged into the sweet jars. The mere sight of her grimy right hand with its black fingernails digging an ounce of Chocolate Fudge out of a jar would have caused a starving tramp to go running from the shop. But not us. Sweets were our lifeblood. We would have put up with far worse than that to get them.

So you can well understand that we had it in for Mrs Pratchett in a big way, but we didn't quite know what to do about it. Many schemes were put forward but none of them was any good. None of them, that is, until suddenly, one memorable afternoon, we found the dead mouse.

My four friends and I had come across a loose floor-board at the back of the classroom, and when we prise it up with the blade of a pocket-knife, we discovered a big hollow space underneath. This, we decided, would be our secret hiding place for sweets and other small treasures such as conkers and monkey-nuts and birds' eggs. Every afternoon, when the last lesson was over, the five of us would wait until the classroom had emptied, then we would lift up the floor-board and examine our secret hoard.

One day, when we lifted it up, we found a dead mouse lying among our treasures. It was an exciting discovery.
'It stinks!' someone shouted.
'Hold on a tick,' I said. 'Don't throw it away.'

They all looked at me

When writing about oneself, one must strive to be truthful. Truth is more important than modesty. I must tell you, therefore, that it was I and I alone who had the idea for the great and daring Mouse Plot. We all have our moments of brilliance and glory, and this was mine.

'Why don't we,' I said, 'slip it into one of Mrs Pratchett's jars of sweets? Then when she puts her dirty hand in to grab a handful, she'll grab a stinky dead mouse instead.'

The other four stared at me in wonder. Then, as the sheer genius of the plot started to sink in, they all started grinning. They slapped me on the back. They cheered me and danced around the classroom. 'We'll do it today!' they cried. 'We'll do it on the way home! *You* had the idea,' they said to me, 'so *you* can be the one to put the mouse in the jar. Make sure you put it into a jar which is used often.'

'I'm putting it in Gobstoppers,' I said. 'The Gobstopper jar is never behind the counter.'

We were strutting a little as we entered the shop. We were the victors now and Mrs Pratchett was the victim. She stood behind the counter, and her small, malignant pig-eyes watched us suspiciously as we came forward.

When I saw Mrs Pratchett turn her head away for a couple of seconds to fish a Sherbert Sucker out of the box, I lifted the heavy glass lid of the Gobstopper jar and dropped the mouse in. Then I replaced the lid as silently as possible. My heart was thumping like mad and my hands had gone all sweaty.

'I don't want the lot of you troopin' in 'ere if only one of you is buyin',' she screamed at us. 'Now beat it! Go on, get out!'

'Well done you!' my friends cried. 'What a super show!'

I felt like a hero. I was a hero. It was marvellous to be so popular.

End of passage.

ENGLISH COMPREHENSION ANSWER SHEET

CANDIDATE No. 475

1. Why do the boys go to Mrs Pratchett's shop? (1 mark)

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2. Why do the boys hate Mrs Pratchett so much? Give three reasons. (3 marks)

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3. List two of the 'treasures' that the boys have stored under the floor. (2 marks)

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4. Describe the Mouse Plot carefully and in detail. (4 marks)

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5. Why did he choose the Gobstopper jar? (2 marks)

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6. Why are the boys 'strutting' as they enter the shop (line 53)? (2 marks)

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7. Describe Roald Dahl's feelings in the following section: 'Then I replaced the lid as silently as possible. My heart was thumping like mad and my hands had gone all sweaty.' (2 marks)

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8. Why do you think the boys did not buy a Gobstopper whilst they were in the shop? (1 mark)

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9. Is the young Roald Dahl proud of what he did? How do you know? (3 marks)

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TOTAL: 20 marks

End of Section A: Comprehension.
Section B: Essay will follow in the next session.
BREAK!

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Section B: ENGLISH ESSAY

TIME: 40 minutes

Write an essay of at least **ONE** side of paper on **ONE** of the titles below.

BEGIN by writing your name and number at the top of your sheet.

We are looking for the following in your writing:

- Careful, accurate spelling.
- A wide vocabulary effectively employed.
- Careful punctuation of sentences and, especially, speech if you use it.
- Sentences which make sense.
- Paragraphs which move from topic to topic.
- Neat handwriting.

DO NOT RUSH TO START; spend at least five minutes thinking and planning what you are going to write. You may use the comprehension passage to help you think of ideas but you should not copy information.

ESSAY TITLES

EITHER

a) In vivid detail, describe an exciting or thrilling experience and explain why you felt like this.

OR

b) Write a story or a description in which a secret hiding place plays an important part.

OR

c) The writer Roald Dahl feels like a hero when he is a small boy. Write about someone you consider to be a real hero. It could be someone you know, a historical figure, or a famous person.

End of Essay Paper