The Halifax Grammar Schools Admissions Test: English

The test lasts for 1 hour (60 minutes) minutes.

There are 2 sections to the English Test:

Section A: Reading

It is recommended that you spend 30 minutes on this section.

There are 20 marks available in Section A.

Read the material provided and answer the questions.

Section B: Writing

It is recommended that you spend 30 minutes on this section.

There are 20 marks available in Section B. 14 marks are for organisation and content; 6 marks are for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Choose from 2 options: a) or b).

Make sure you write your name and candidate number on each piece of paper that you use.

Practice Paper for English

This is a practice paper that has been put together as a guide for students and parents. It gives an idea of how the English examination may look, with questions that will be similar in style to the actual paper. The text and writing tasks will change each year, as may the focus in each reading question. An exemplar mark scheme has been included as a guide, however this may also be subject to change as necessary.

English Paper Section A Reading

Read the opening three pages of 'The Machine Gunners' by Robert Westall.

When Chas awakened, the air-raid shelter was silent. Grey winter light was creeping round the door-curtain. It could have been any time. His mother was gone, and the little brown attaché case with the insurance policies and bottle of brandy for emergencies. He could hear the milk-cart coming round the square. The all-clear must have gone.

He climbed out of the shelter scratching his head, and looked round carefully. Everything was just the same: same whistling milkman, same cart-horse. But there was too much milk on the cart and that was bad. Every extra bottle meant some family bombed-out during the night.

He trailed round to the kitchen door. His mother had the paraffin-heater on and bread frying. It smelt safe. There were two more panes of glass out of the window, and his father had blocked the gaps with cardboard from a Nestle's Milk box. The lettering on the cardboard was the right way up. Father was fussy about things like that.

Father was sitting by the heater with his pint mug of tea. He looked weary, but still neat in his warden's uniform, with his beret tucked under his shoulder-strap.

'You remember that lass in the greengrocer's?'

'The ginger-haired one?' said his mother, still bending over the stove.

'Aye. A direct hit. They found half of her in the front garden and the other half right across the house.'

'She didn't believe in going down the shelter. She was always frightened of being buried alive.' From the way his mother hunched her shoulders, Chas could tell she was trying not to cry.

Chas's father turned to him.

'Your rabbits are all right. Chinny had some glass in her straw, but I shifted it. But there's six panes out of the greenhouse. If it goes on this way, there'll be no chrysanthemums for Christmas.'

'It won't be the same without chrysants,' said his mother. Her lips were tight together, but shaking slightly. 'Here's your breakfast.'

Chas cheered up. Two whole slices of fried bread and a roll of pale pink sausage-meat. It tasted queer, not at all like sausage before the war. But he was starting to like the queerness. He ate silently, listening to his parents. If he shut up, they soon forgot he was there. You heard much more interesting things if you didn't butt in.

‘I thought we were a gonner last night, I really did. That dive bomber . . . I thought it was going to land on top of the shelter . . . Mrs Spalding had one of her turns.’ ‘It wasn’t a dive bomber,’ announced Father with authority. ‘It had two engines. He came down on the rooftops ’cos one of the RAF lads was after him. Right on his tail. You could see his guns firing. And he got him. Crashed on the old laundry at Chirton. Full bomb load. I felt the heat on me face a mile away.’ Mother’s face froze.

‘Nobody killed, love. That laundry’s been empty for years. Just as well – there’s not much left of it.’

Chas finished his last carefully-cut dice of fried bread and looked hopefully at his father.

‘Can I go and see it?’

‘Aye, you can go and look. But you won’t find nowt but bricks. Everything just went.’

Mother looked doubtful. ‘D’you think he should?’

‘Let him go, lass. There’s nowt left.’

‘No unexploded bombs?’

‘No, a quiet night really. Lots of our fighters up. That’s why you didn’t hear any guns.’

‘Can I borrow your old shopping-basket?’ said Chas.

‘I suppose so. But don’t lose it, and don’t bring any of your old rubbish back in the house. Take it straight down the greenhouse.’

‘What time’s school?’ said his father.

‘Half-past ten. The raid went on after midnight.’

War had its compensations.

Chas had the second-best collection of war souvenirs in Garmouth. It was all a matter of knowing where to look. Silly kids looked on the pavements or in the gutters; as if anything there wasn’t picked up straight away. The best places to look were where no one else would dream, like in the dry soil under privet hedges. You often found machine-gun bullets there, turned into little metal mushrooms as they hit the ground. Fools thought nothing could fall through a hedge.

As he walked, Chas’s eyes were everywhere. At the corner of Marston Road, the pavement was burnt into a white patch a yard across. Incendiary bomb! The tailfin would be somewhere near – they normally bounced off hard when the bomb hit.

Answer all questions in this section. You are advised to spend about 30 minutes on this section.

1. Read the passage. Find evidence that tells you what happened during the night. List four things that you find out about.

a)

b)

c)

d)

(4 marks)

2. Look in detail at each example – a, b, c, d – from the source. How does the writer use language to build up atmosphere or display the feelings of the characters?

a) grey winter light was creeping round the door curtain

b) her lips were tight together, but shaking slightly

c) “Full bomb load. I felt the heat on me face a mile away.” Mother’s face froze.

d) “What time’s school?” said his father. “Half past ten. The raid went on after midnight.”
War had its compensations.

(8 marks)

3. You now need to think about the whole of the source and how the writer structures the text to engage the reader in this opening chapter.

Think about the order in which each of these events happens in the text. Put 1 next to the first event which happens, then 2 etc.

a. He sees the milk cart and thinks about the families who get bombed out.	b. He wakes up in the air raid shelter.
c. He hears about the plane and asks if he can go and see it.	d. His father tells his mother about the direct hit.

(4 marks)

b) How does the writer use the structure of the text to engage the reader ? (select four examples where the structure makes you want to read it and explain what the writer is doing and why it engages the reader).

(4 marks)

Section B Writing

Choose one question. You are advised to spend about 30 minutes on this section.

Either:

a) Write a newspaper report about a disaster. (You can use the events of the text in the reading section and write about an air raid if you wish.)

OR

b) Write a diary entry about finding something exciting on the way to school.

(20 marks)

There are 14 marks for organisation/content and 6 for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Mark Scheme

Section A Reading

1

Any four of these :

There was an air raid.

An RAF plane hit another plane.

The plane crashed into the old laundry at Cherton.

Nobody was killed in the laundry.

Families may have been displaced / bombed out.

A girl was killed during a direct hit.

Six glass panes were knocked out of the greenhouse.

Any other reasonable answer.

2.

a) grey winter light was creeping round the door curtain

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	• Clear understanding of language • Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language	Comments might include: Personification – sense of timid/reluctant morning "creeping" Lifeless colour – "grey" Season – associations of "winter" with dreary, lifeless. "curtains" – shutting out the reality of the world outside.
1	• Shows some understanding of language • Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language	Some comment on effects colour, time of year or verb.
0	• No comment on language	It was winter.

c) her lips were tight together, but shaking slightly

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	• Clear understanding of language • Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language	Adjective – "tight" – suggesting suppressed emotion / disturbed by what she has heard. "Shaking slightly" – trying not to cry / to control herself. Adverb – "slightly" – shows she can't help showing some emotion about the death of the girl.
1	• Shows some understanding of language • Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language	Shows some understanding of language used to show mother is upset by the news about the death of the girl.
0	• No comment on language	The mother is shaking.

c) “Full bomb load. I felt the heat on me face a mile away.”
Mother’s face froze.

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	• Clear understanding of language • Analyses the effects of writer’s choice of language	Incomplete/minor sentence represents speech. Shows they all understand what a full bomb load means. “heat on me face a mile away” – use of dialect plus exaggeration or story-telling to emphasise the scale of the explosion. Metaphor – “froze” – shows mother’s shock at the news. Contrast between “froze” and the “heat” of the bomb highlights her shock.
1	• Shows some understanding of language • Attempts to comment on the writer’s choice of language	Some comment on dialect and spoken language features or imagery.
0	• No comment on language	Mother was cold.

d) “What time’s school?” said his father.
“Half past ten. The raid went on after midnight.”
War had its compensations.

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	• Clear understanding of language • Analyses the effects of writer’s choice of language	Disruption of everyday life due to bomb – “half past ten”. Contrast between young perspective – war having “compensations”. Short sentence - ends the passage with general observation to create gentle humour.
1	• Shows some understanding of language • Attempts to comment on the writer’s choice of language	Awareness that the boy can start school late and sees war has some benefits. Use of humour.
0	• No comment on language	School starts late.

3.

a) 1 mark each for getting in the right order

3 b)

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
4	• Judicious selection of examples – at least three features discussed. • Analyse the effect of structural features	Sets the scene – time of day, season, mood, and world mid war. Starts with him alone – to help us engage with the narrator. Interweaving of war and daily life – impact of war on daily life. Contrast between adult perspective (death, destruction) and child perspective (excitement – food, plane) Conclusion of passage – either looking forward to going to see plane or use of humour to end section.
3	• Selects two structural features. • Clearly explains the effects of them.	
2	• Identifies a structural feature • Explains a structural feature	
1	• Identifies a structural feature	
0	• No comment on structure	The writer has organised this to make it interesting.

Section B Writing

Content and Organisation

Level 4 11-14 marks Content is **convincing** and **crafted;** Organisation is **structured**, **developed, complex** and **varied**	Upper Level 4 13-14 marks Content • Communication is **convincing** and compelling throughout • Tone style and register **assuredly matched** to purpose, form and audience; manipulative, subtle and increasingly abstract • **Extensive** and **ambitious vocabulary** with sustained crafting of linguistic devices Organisation • Highly **structured** and **developed** writing, incorporating a range of integrated and complex ideas • Fluently **linked paragraphs** with seamlessly integrated discourse markers • Varied and inventive use of structural features
	Lower Level 4 11-12 marks Content • Communication is **convincing** • Tone, style and register **consistently match** purpose, form and audience • **Extensive vocabulary** with evidence of conscious crafting of linguistic devices Organisation • **Structured** and **developed** writing with a range of engaging complex ideas • Consistently **coherent use of paragraphs** with integrated discourse markers • Varied and effective structural features

Level 3 7-10 marks Content is **clear** and **chosen for effect** Organisation is **engaging connected**	Upper Level 3 9-10 marks Content • Communication is consistently **clear and effective** • Tone, style and register **matched** to purpose, form and audience • Increasingly **sophisticated vocabulary** and phrasing , chosen for effect with a range of appropriate linguistic devices Organisation • Writing is engaging with a range of **detailed connected** ideas • **Coherent paragraphs** with integrated discourse markers • Effective use of structural features
	Lower Level 3 7-8 marks Content • Communication is **clear** • Tone, style and register **generally matched** to purpose, form and audience • **Vocabulary clearly chosen for effect** and successful use of linguistic devices Organisation • Writing is engaging with a range of **connected** ideas • Usually **coherent paragraphs** with range of discourse markers • Usually effective use of structural features

Level 2 3-6 marks Writing is **controlled** Organisation is **linked/relevant** and **paragraphed**	Upper Level 2 5-6 marks Content • Communication is **mostly successful** • Sustained attempt to match purpose, form and audience; some **control** of register • **Conscious** use of vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices Organisation • Increasing variety of **linked** and **relevant** ideas • Some use of **paragraphs** and some use of discourse markers • Some use of structural features
	Lower Level 2 3-4marks Content • Communicates with **some success** • **Attempts to match** purpose, form and audience; attempts to control register • **Begins to vary vocabulary** with some use of linguistic devices Organisation • **Some linked** and relevant ideas • **Attempt to write in paragraphs** with some discourse markers, not always appropriate • **Attempts** to use structural features

Level 1 1-2 marks Content is **simple**; Organisation is **simple** and **limited**	Higher Level 1 2 marks Content • **Simple** success in communication of ideas • **Simple awareness** of purpose, form and audience; limited control of register • **Simple vocabulary**; simple linguistic devices Organisation • **One or two relevant ideas**, simply linked • **Random paragraph** structure • Evidence of simple structural features
	Lower Level 1 1mark Content • Communicates **some meaning** • **Occasional sense** of purpose, form and/or audience • **Simple** vocabulary Organisation • **One or two unlinked ideas** • No paragraphs • Limited or no evidence of structural features
No marks	Candidates will not have offered any meaningful writing to assess Nothing to reward

Technical Accuracy

Level 4 5-6 marks	Sentence demarcation is consistently secure and consistently accurate • Wide range of punctuation is used with a high level of accuracy • Uses a full range of appropriate sentence forms for effect • Uses Standard English consistently and appropriately with secure control of complex grammatical structures • High level of accuracy in spelling, including ambitious vocabulary • Extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary
Level 3 3-4 marks	• Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate • Range of punctuation is used, mostly with success • Uses a variety of sentence forms for effect • Mostly uses Standard English appropriately with mostly controlled grammatical structures • Generally accurate spelling, including complex and irregular words • Increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary
Level 2 2 marks	• Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and sometimes accurate • Some control of a range of punctuation • Attempts a variety of sentence forms • Some use of Standard English with some control of agreement • Some accurate spelling of more complex words
Level 1 1 mark	Occasional use of sentence demarcation • Some evidence of conscious punctuation • Simple range of sentence forms • Occasional use of Standard English with limited control of agreement • Accurate basic spelling • Simple use of vocabulary
Level 0 No marks	Candidates' spelling, punctuation etc. is sufficiently poor to prevent understanding or meaning.