DULWICH COLLEGE

Year 7
English
Specimen Entrance Examination

Time: 1 hour
plus ten minutes reading time

You have ten minutes in which to read the passage and questions. Do not write anything during this time. We suggest that you pay particular attention to the number of marks available for each question, and think about how you are going to make the best use of your time.

During the examination you should write your answers in ink, and you may write notes on the passage if you wish.

Graylake School 1717

Cold **gnawed** on him like a rat. Around him, the grey blankets of the other beds rose and fell like the swell of a bleak, dirty sea. Nathan had no idea what had woken him –he was still exhausted – and yet some upheaval had washed him up above the waterline of sleep. He was afraid, without knowing why.

A teacher's black gown hung from a peg on the wall. It had hung there, unclaimed, for as long as Nathan could remember, threadbare, almost **transparent** with age, like the ghost of a hanging man, swaying in the draughts. As many nightmares as moths had fluttered towards Nathan out of that black gown swinging, swinging from its hook.

He thought about his sister. This was the only time of day when it was acceptable to think about a sister. Once the day had got under way, there would be no excuse to mention her. For Nathan to mention Maud to one of the other boys would be like referring to his nursery wooden horse or teething ring. Secretly, Nathan thought it rather a betrayal of sisters, to pretend they did not exist. So he made a point of thinking about Maud, in the privacy of first light: mousy little Maud, keeping house, cooking and supervising meals, polishing spoons, and reading to her father.

With their mother dead, all such housewifely duties had settled on Maud like an inch of dust, obscuring the pictures Nathan carried in his mind. When he tried to remember how she looked, he had difficulties distinguishing her dress from the **drab** parlour curtains, her face from the white plates on the dresser. Mousy Maud. She never played with him now, in the vacations; her duties left her no time. She did not smile much, either.

Then came the **clanging** of the morning bell. The other boys began groaning and wriggling under their brown blankets, like moles who burrow away from noise. The beadle, who came to ensure that everyone obeyed the bell, was in fact startled to see Nathan already on his feet and dressing. Boys are not commonly so easy to wake.

The boys' boots were all out in the courtyard, lining the cloisters, as if they had set out early for breakfast without waiting for their owners. Bare feet paddled across the cobbles and squeezed into them; the leather was **rigid** with frost. Gibbering boys pulled their jackets over their convict-shaven heads, so that they looked as if they had no heads at all, clumping along to the refectory with boot-laces lashing loose, unwilling to spend time in the cold, tying them. Besides, most of the boys' fingers were numb.

1 According to paragraph one, what three feelings does Nathan have when he wakes up? (3)

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2 The phrase on line 2, '…like the swell of a bleak, dirty sea', is a simile. Write down three other similes (phrases which compare one thing with another), from the passage. (6)

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3 According to paragraphs one and two, what two things can Nathan see on waking up? (4)

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4 According to paragraph two, what is it about the teacher's gown which gives Nathan nightmares? You should find at least three things. (6)

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5 Why was early morning the only time of day when 'it was acceptable to think about a sister'? What other things are the boys unable to talk about? (4)

6 Maud is described as 'mousy'. What does the word 'mousy' suggest to you about her character and appearance? (4)

7 Write a paragraph to fit between paragraphs four and five. Using your imagination, add to and develop what the writer has already told us about Maud. You should write about her appearance, her personality and her actions. Remember that the story is set in the past. (15)

8 In your own words, how did the Beadle feel when he saw Nathan? Why did he feel this way? (4)

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9 Give two reasons why the boys' boot-laces remained untied. (4)

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10 Give the meanings of the following words as they are used in the passage: (10)

gnawed (line 1) _____

transparent (line 8) _____

drab (line 23) _____

clanging (line 27) _____

rigid (line 35) _____

11 Write paragraph seven of the story, in which Nathan and the other boys enter a classroom for the first lesson of the morning. You should use your imagination to describe what happens; you may develop ideas from the passage, but do not repeat phrases used by the writer. (15)

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