Independent Schools Examinations Board

COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION AT 11+

ENGLISH

PAPER 1

Practice Paper 2009–2010

Please read this information before the examination starts.

- You have 5 minutes' reading and planning time.
- After that you may start writing your answers when you are ready to do so. You have 40 minutes for writing.
- Answer in full sentences.
- Use your best handwriting and take care with spelling and punctuation.

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Read the passage below and answer the questions which follow it.

Young Harry and his mother, who live in London, are staying in the North of England. One hot Sunday they walk to buy eggs from a neighbouring farm. Harry asks for a drink of water and the farmer's wife (who has bristly hairs on her face) says she can give them tea.

The tea when it came was very ample.

But rather dry.

Plate after plate the bristle woman brought. Different kinds of pale, heavy cake lay on these. All the things looked rather old though they were definitely home-made. They had been built, like the bristle woman herself, to last.

The butter was marg*.

A giant pot of tea arrived.

Harry asked again for a glass of water. Or orange.

'Milk,' said the bristle woman and brought milk and went away again.

Harry – who was always good – said in a minute, 'I can't drink it.'

'Oh Harry!' said his mother.

'It tastes of meat.'

'Don't be silly. Let me try.'

It tasted of meat.

'She's had it in a fridge near meat. Crowding it up. She's mean. I want water. And it's horrible marg* on the bread.'

'Oh Harry.'

'I can't eat the bread. The marg* tastes of meat, too.'

'Shall I ask for some jam?'

Harry's mother went to the door and coughed. Immediately in the opposite door across the passage stood the woman.

'Oh – do you think we might have a little – jam?'

'Jam?' said the woman. 'Well – jam. I'll have to go to my store cupboard.'

'Oh please – ' But it was too late.

In time she arrived with delicious home-made blackcurrant. '*That's* better,' said appalling Harry – who was always good – and dug deep down in it and got a fair dollop on the table cloth and several smears about the hair and mouth. He met the bristle lady's glare with his clear eyes. In time, once more, she went away.

'We'd better go,' said his mother, looking through the tight-shut window at the stand-still day. 'Long walk home. And with eggs it will be slow.'

The woman appeared with the tray of eggs and handed it to Harry. 'Oh thank you so very much and the jam was *lovely*,' said his mother very courteously. 'How much do we owe you?'

'Oh, I can't take pay on a Sunday,' said the woman. 'You must come and bring the money tomorrow. We're Chapel people here. I can only *give* you the eggs today. You must pay tomorrow.'

'Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't understand. Of course we'll come tomorrow when we return the tray. And do tell me how much we should bring. And how much we owe you for the tea.'

'For the *tea*?' The woman's eyes pierced into Harry's mother's muddly, kind face. 'For the *tea*? I don't take any money for teas. I'm a long way from needing to serve *teas*. The tea was a kindness.'

Harry's mother's mouth fell open in shame (Oh the jam! She had *asked* for the jam. And it had been an *invited* tea!).

Harry stretched up a hand to hold hers as they stood once more outside the front door.

'By the by,' said the woman, 'didn't I see the lad had left his milk? Would you not like him to come back and finish the milk? Waste is a sin.'

So Harry – who was always good – let go of his mother's hand and put his own on the tray of eggs. Then he took his other hand off the handle of the tray of eggs. Then he turned

the tray of eggs over and watched them drop to the ground. Thirty-six big, fresh farm eggs. They splatted with thirty-six splats on to the white scrubbed stones. Every one of them broke and ran except for perhaps three or four and these Harry chased as they rolled and he jumped on them. Then he jumped and stamped with his feet on all the eggs until his sandals were slidy and slimy and juicy yellow and left great sticky messes down the path.

**marg = margarine*

1. Describe the food (lines 1–6) in your own words. (2)

2. Is Harry being unreasonable about the milk, the bread and the marg? What would you have done in his position? (2)

3. '. . . the *tight-shut* window at the *stand-still* day' (line 29). Suggest why the author has selected these adjectives. (2)

4. The author says Harry's mother has a 'muddly, kind face' (line 39). What do these words tell us about her character? You should refer closely to the passage in your answer. (3)

5. We are told three times that Harry 'was always good'. Why does the author repeat this, do you think? (3)

6. Why does Harry stretch up to hold his mother's hand (line 44)? (3)

7. Is Harry frightened of the bristle woman? Quote words or short phrases as evidence for your answer. (5)

8. Why does Harry break the eggs? Would *you* have broken them? Write as fully as you can. (5)

The passage is from *The Hollow Land* by Jane Gardam, published by Walker Books.

(Total marks: 25)