Alleyn's

11+ ENGLISH
SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER 1

One hour 10 minutes.

Co-educational
excellence

READING PASSAGE

This passage is about a sled dog called Buck and his owner, John Thornton. Some men have issued a challenge that Buck cannot break the sled out of the ice and snow and get it moving on his own. John has accepted this challenge.

The team of ten dogs was unhitched, and Buck, with his own harness, was put into the sled. He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and the one hundred and fifty pounds that he weighed were so many pounds of grit and virility*. His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk. Down the neck and across the shoulders, his mane, in repose as it was, half bristled and seemed to lift with every movement, as though excess of vigour made each particular hair alive and active. The great breast and heavy fore legs were no more than in proportion with the rest of the body, where the muscles showed in tight rolls underneath the skin. Men felt these muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron, and the odds went down to two to one.

Thornton knelt down by Buck's side. He took his head in his two hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. 'As you love me, Buck. As you love me,' was what he whispered. Buck whined with suppressed eagerness.

The crowd was watching curiously. The affair was growing mysterious. It seemed like a conjuration. As Thornton got to his feet, Buck seized his mittened hand between his jaws, pressing in with his teeth and releasing slowly, half-reluctantly. It was the answer, in terms not of speech, but of love. Thornton stepped well back.

'Now, Buck,' he said. Buck tightened the traces*, then slacked them for a matter of several inches. It was the way he had learned.

'Gee!' Thornton's voice rang out, sharp in tense silence.

Buck swung to the right, ending the movement in a plunge that took up the slack and with a sudden jerk arrested his one hundred and fifty pounds. The load quivered, and from under the runners arose a crisp crackling.

'Haw!' Thornton commanded.

Buck duplicated the manoeuvre, this time to the left. The crackling turned into a snapping, the sled pivoting and the runners slipping and grating several inches to the side. The sled was broken out. Men were holding their breaths, intensely unconscious of the fact.

'Now, MUSH!'

Thornton's command cracked out like a pistol-shot. Buck threw himself forward, tightening the traces with a jarring lunge. His whole body was gathered compactly together in the tremendous effort, the muscles writhing and knotting like live things under the silky fur. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad, the claws scarring the hard-packed snow in parallel grooves. The sled swayed and trembled, half-started forward. One of his feet slipped, and one man groaned aloud. Then the sled lurched ahead in what appeared a rapid succession of jerks, though it never really came to a dead stop again...half an inch...an inch... two inches... The jerks perceptibly diminished, as the sled gained momentum, till it was moving steadily along.

Men gasped and began to breathe again, unaware that for a moment they had ceased to breathe. Thornton was running behind, encouraging Buck with short, cheery words. The distance had been measured off, and as he neared the pile of firewood which marked the end of the hundred yards, a cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Hats and mittens were flying in the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel*.

But Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck. Head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth. Those who hurried up heard him cursing Buck and he cursed long and fervently, and softly and lovingly.

'Gad, sir! Gad, sir!' spluttered the Skookum Bench king. 'I'll give a thousand for him, sir, a thousand, - twelve hundred sir.'

Thornton rose to his feet. His eyes were wet. The tears were streaming frankly down his cheeks. 'No, sir. You can get lost, sir.'

**virility: male strength or energy*
**traces: the straps/ ropes attached to a sled for pulling*
**babel: a confused noise made by a number of voices*

END OF PASSAGE

SECTION A: READING

You are advised to spend 30 minutes answering Section A. First, please read the passage carefully and then answer ALL the questions in this section.

1. What 2 feelings does Buck experience at the start of the challenge? [2 marks]

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2. List 4 different details that point to the impressive physical appearance of Buck in lines 1 – 11 of the passage**.** [4 marks]

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3. In your own words, list 6 different actions of Buck's to move the sled in lines 22-35. [6 marks]

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4. List 3 feelings that the spectators experience in lines 40 – 46. You should use details from these lines to explain each one. [6 marks]

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5. a) Write the definition of the words in **bold** below**.**

   b) Explain the effect of this whole phrase in the passage.

   'the **contagion** of excitement**'** (line 2) [2 marks]

   a) .....

   b) .....

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   'excess of **vigour '** (line 7 - 8) [2 marks]

   a) .....

   b) .....

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   'suppressed eagerness' (line15) [2 marks]

   a) .....

   b) .....

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   'like a **conjuration'** (line 17) [2 marks]

   a) .....

   b) .....

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'Thorton's command **cracked** out' (line 31) [2 marks]

a) .....

b) .....

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6. Look back over the whole passage. Using your own words, in <u>four sentences</u>, describe the character of Thornton and use details from the text to explain why you think this.

[8 marks]

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7. Look carefully at lines 20 – 39. How does the author make the passage exciting for the reader?

   You should write about :

   - words/phrases;
   - sentence lengths and sentence types;
   - the use of dialogue and the way in which the events are told.

   [9 marks]

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Please turn over

8. Reread the final lines 52 and 53. Consider each of Thornton's actions and his words. Explain why Thornton acts and speaks the way that he does here. You should answer using your own words as far as possible. [5 marks]

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END OF SECTION A

[Section A = 50 marks]

SECTION B: WRITING

You are advised to spend 30 minutes on section B.

You must take care to plan, check and correct your work.

Presentation and accuracy of spelling and punctuation will be assessed in the marking of this section.

Answer ONE of the following two questions:

Either:

1. Describe a visit to a very cold place. Try to make your writing as vivid and interesting as you can. [32 marks]

Or:

2. Describe an experience which was challenging. Try to make your writing as vivid and interesting as you can. [32 marks]

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END OF PAPER