12+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

Sample Paper

SOLIHULL

2016

ENGLISH

12+ English Entrance Examination

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Section A

Read the passage below then answer the questions that follow. You are advised to spend **fifty** minutes on this section. It is worth **fifty marks**. Use quotations to support your answer when appropriate. The meaning of a word in *italics* is explained in the glossary at the end of the passage.

The passage is taken from Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations*. Pip, a poor orphan, is visiting the house of a distinguished old lady for the first time. He has been invited to play with a girl called Estella. However his experience turns out to be a disturbing one.

This was very uncomfortable, and I was half afraid. However, the only thing to be done being to knock at the door, I knocked, and was told from within to enter. I entered, therefore, and found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it. It was a dressing-room, as I supposed from the furniture, though much of it was of forms and uses then quite unknown to me. But prominent in it was a draped table with a *gilded looking-glass*, and that I made out at first sight to be a fine lady's dressing-table.

Whether I should have made out this object so soon, if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say. In an arm-chair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.

She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace, and silks – all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on – the other was on the table near her hand – her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those *trinkets,* and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the looking-glass.

It was not in the first few moments that I saw all these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. But, I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre. It was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly *waxwork* at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible *personage lying in state*. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a *vault* under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out if I could.

'Who is it?' said the lady at the table.
'Pip, ma'am.'
'Pip?'
'Mr Pumblechook's boy, ma'am. Come – to play.'
'Come nearer; let me look at you. Come close.'

It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.
'Look at me, ' said Miss Havisham. 'You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?'
I must state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer 'No.'
'Do you know what I touch here?' she said, laying her hands, one upon the other, on her left side.
'Yes, ma'am.' (It made me think of the young man.)
'What do I touch?'
'Your heart.'
'Broken!'

. . . . . .

It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a *shroud.*

So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress, looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then, of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but, I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust.

. . . . . .

Saving for the one weird smile at first, I should have felt almost sure that Miss Havisham's face could not smile. It had dropped into a watchful and brooding expression – most likely when all the things about her had become transfixed – and it looked as if nothing could ever lift it up again. Her chest had dropped, so that she stooped; and her voiced had dropped, so that she spoke low, and with a dead lull upon her; altogether, she had the appearance of having dropped, body and soul, within and without, under the weight of a crushing blow.

Glossary
gilded: covered with a thin layer of gold
looking-glass: mirror
trinkets: small piece of jewellery
waxwork: dummy figure
personage lying in state: a dead body being exhibited
vault: burial chamber
shroud: cloth wrap

1. Describe Pip's feelings prior to entering the house. (2)

2. What did Pip discover to his surprise? (3)

3. What was Miss Havisham wearing? What particular details suggest this? (7)

4. What clues are there in the third paragraph that all is not well with Miss Havisham? (6)

5. What effect does Miss Havisham have on Pip? (3)

6. What literary technique has been used in the following sentence:

   'I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes?'

   What effect has been created through this description? (3)

7. What is mysterious about the time on the watch and clock in the room? What might be the significance of this? (2)

8. Describe the nature of Miss Havisham's conversation with Pip. How is she presented? (3)

9. In your opinion, what do all the images of decay within the room symbolise? (2)

10. 'the long veil so like a shroud'. What technique has been used in this phrase? What effect is the writer trying to create? (3)

11. Explain the meaning of the following words, which have been used in the passage:

    Brooding transfixed withered admission lull prominent (6)

12. What 'crushing blow' do you think Miss Havisham might have suffered in her life, in order for her to be the way she is? (4)

13. Describe the mood and atmosphere within the room. Use quotations to support your answer. (6)

Please turn over

Section B

Choose **one** of the following tasks. **Write your answer on a clean sheet of paper. Make sure your candidate number is written on the top.** You will be rewarded for making your writing interesting. There are **forty marks** available for this section. You are advised to spend **forty** minutes on this section.

Either:

1. **Write about your first encounter with someone strange. They can be real or imagined**. Use powerful language to covey what is unusual about their physical appearance and their personality. Try to convey your feelings about meeting them.

Or:

2. **Write an essay about a particular hope or ambition you have, entitled 'Great Expectations'**. Use descriptive language to convey the details of this ambition and explain why it is so important to you.

Or:

3. **Write a description based upon the photograph below.** It is of the actress Martita Hunt, playing Miss Havisham in the 1946 film of *Great Expectations*.



Or:

4. **Write a description based upon the picture below**, taken from Tim Burton's film *The Corpse Bride*.



End