CATERHAM SCHOOL

ENGLISH SAMPLE QUESTIONS

13+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
(For Entry into Year 9)

1 Hour 15 Minutes

Caterham School 13+ Entrance Exam in English – Syllabus and Information

The 13+ Entrance Examination in English is 1 hour and 15 minutes long.

Section A is a comprehension, based on a passage from a short story or novel written pre- or early 20th century. Unusual words which are fundamental to the students' understanding of the passage will be in a glossary. Students should spend about 45 minutes on this section. 25 marks are available.

Section B is a writing task. It may be a story, a description or a non-fiction response. Students should spend about 30 minutes on this section, with particular time planning and crafting their work to showcase their ideas and writing ability. There is space to plan their responses but the plan gains no marks. 20 marks are available for content; 5 marks for accuracy (SPaG).

The intention of the examination is to check the competence of reading and writing skills such as the following:

Reading:

- Demonstrate a good understanding of a range of challenging texts (fiction and non-fiction) including pre- or early 20th century;
- Understand how various parts of speech and words can be used in a variety of different syntaxes and contexts;
- Identify writers' techniques (both rhetorical, descriptive and figurative – such as extended metaphor, personification) and consider the effect of their usage;
- Retrieve information and supporting quotation;
- Use inference to reach judgements about complex or subtle ideas in a passage;
- Make evaluative judgements about a whole passage and support comment with quotation, which is then developed (possibly using PEE) in an extended piece of writing;
- When evaluating a text, consider both the language and structural choices of the writer;
- Explain a writer's choices when asked to examine a specific sentence or phrase and comment in detail on words and phrases;
- Define unusual and unfamiliar words in context;
- Find supporting evidence for an assertion such as a character trait, an atmosphere, an effect (e.g., tension) and go on to evaluate the impact or success;
- Summarise complex and subtle meaning in a passage in own words;
- Observe structural choices such as where punctuation has been used, short and long sentences and how a piece of writing develops.

Writing:

- Write with a clear structure – e.g., fiction texts with a clear opening, development and closure, or possibly ending on a well-crafted cliff-hanger
- Use a range of punctuation with accuracy, including colons, semi-colons, dashes and parenthesis;
- Control of a range of sentence types, including complex sentences and perhaps fragments deliberately used;
- Use paragraphs which aid meaning and begin to add drama or enhance the piece;
- Use appropriate connectives for the task (discursive, temporal, comparative);
- Use appropriate and effective vocabulary which is often adventurous and shows a developing sophistication of expression;
- Deploy appropriate tools for the task: e.g., figurative language and imagery for a creative task;
- Write in an extended, developed and detailed way;
- Use ideas which have merit and originality – developing flair;
- Follow a task closely and include relevant content.

Section A: Comprehension

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

This extract is taken from the opening chapter of 'White Fang', written in 1906 by Jack London. In this section, two men are travelling through a forest in the Northwest Territories of Canada, an area known for its sub-arctic climate and harsh conditions.

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side of the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of the frost, and they seemed to lean toward each other, black and **ominous**, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.

But there was life, abroad[1] in the land and defiant. Down the frozen waterway **toiled** a string of wolfish dogs. Their bristly fur was rimed[2] with frost. Their breath froze in the air as it left their mouths, spouting forth in spumes of vapour that settled upon the hair of their bodies and formed into crystals of frost. Leather harness was on the dogs, and leather traces attached them to a sled which dragged along behind. On the sled[3], securely lashed, was a long and narrow oblong box. There were other things on the sled - blankets, an axe, and a coffeepot and frying-pan; but **prominent**, occupying most of the space, was the long and narrow oblong box.

In advance of the dogs, on wide snowshoes, toiled a man. At the rear of the sled toiled a second man. On the sled, in the box, lay a third man whose toil was over - a man whom the Wild had conquered and beaten down until he would never move nor struggle again. It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offence to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. It freezes the water to prevent it running to the sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till they are frozen to their mighty hearts; and most ferociously and terribly, the Wild crushes into submission man, who is the most restless of all.

But at front and rear, toiled the two men who were not yet dead. Their bodies were covered with fur and soft-tanned leather. Eyelashes and cheeks and lips were so coated with the crystals from their frozen breath that their faces were not **discernible**. This gave them the seeming of ghostly masques[4], undertakers in a spectral world at the funeral of some ghost. But under it all they were men, bent on **colossal** adventure, pitting[5] themselves against the might of a world as remote and alien as the abyss of space.

They travelled on without speech, saving their breath for the work of their bodies. On every side was the silence, pressing upon them with a tangible presence.

An hour went by, and a second hour. The pale light of the short sunless day was beginning to fade, when a faint far cry arose on the still air. It soared upward with a swift rush, till it reached its topmost note, where it persisted, palpitant[6] and tense, and then slowly died away. It might have been a lost soul wailing, had it not been invested with a certain fierceness and hungry eagerness. The front man turned his head until his eyes met the eyes of the man behind. And then, across the narrow oblong box, each nodded to the other.

A second cry arose, piercing the silence with needle-like shrillness. Both men located the sound. It was to the rear, somewhere in the snow expanse they had just **traversed**. A third and answering cry arose, also to the rear and to the left of the second cry.

"They're after us, Bill," said the man at the front.

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[1] abroad: out and about

[2] rimed: coated with a thin layer of ice

[3] sled: sledge/sleigh

[4] masques: disguises/masks

[5] pitting: placing in competition/conflict with

[6] palpitant: trembling

Section A: Comprehension

Questions

1. What time of day is it?

_____

1 mark

2. Identify an example of personification in the first paragraph (lines 1 – 5). Copy it out below and explain the effect of this phrase.

_____

_____

_____

_____

2 marks

3. Look again at lines 1 – 5. Can you explain, in your own words, why there is no feeling of **'sadness'** in the Wild?

_____

_____

1 mark

4. What is in the '**long and narrow oblong box**'?

_____

1 mark

5. Look again at lines 16 – 19. In your own words, give three ways in which the Wild seeks to '**destroy movement**' or prevent life.

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 marks

6. Re-read this phrase in lines 22 – 23: **'This gave them the seeming of ghostly masques, undertakers in a spectral world at the funeral of some ghost.'** Why do you think the writer has compared the men to ghosts?

2 marks

7. Look again at lines 23 – 27. Select **one** word in this section which tells us that the forest is a strange and unknown place.

1 mark

8. Look again at lines 26 – 27. Why do the men not speak? Explain in your own words.

1 mark

9. Explain the meaning of the following words, in the context of the passage.

   a) ominous

   b) toiled

   c) prominent

d) discernible

e) colossal

f) traversed

6 marks

10. What do you think is following the men?

1 mark

11. In the extract as a whole, how does the writer create a feeling that the men are in danger? You should support your points with quotations and try to comment on the writer's choices.

6 marks

Total [25 marks]

Section B: Writing Task

Write a description or short story entitled:

The Journey

- You should describe a journey which is difficult in some way.
- This could be a factual account or it could be imagined.
- You need to establish setting and atmosphere, and you must try to create tension and excitement for the reader.
- Beware of introducing too many characters or including too much dialogue.
- Up to 20 marks are available for the content of your work: this means the ideas, narrative and creativity.
- Up to 5 marks are available for the accuracy and written style of your work (SPaG).

Total [25 marks]

You may wish to plan your ideas below.