RADLEY COLLEGE

Entrance Scholarships

ENGLISH

March 2007
Time allowed – 2 hours

You should spend at least 15 minutes reading, thinking and making notes before writing.

Spend 1 hour and 10 minutes on Section A. Spend 35 minutes on Section B.

The paper consists of two questions each worth 40 marks.

You will be rewarded for the accuracy of your spelling, punctuation and grammar up to a maximum of 20 marks. Remember to illustrate your answers with quotations taken from the text.

Concise, clear well-written answers will gain the highest marks.

Section A: Comprehension

Read the following texts and answer the questions below.

Text A: from 'Set in Stone' by Linda Newbery

Samuel Godwin
Watercolours and Oil Paintings
Private View

The poster is almost obscured by the press of people entering the gallery. Wineglass in hand, I position myself to one side, a spectator at my own exhibition; as the guests file in, I assume a genial smile, and prepare to wear it for the duration of the evening.

Nowadays there are many such occasions, enough to make me droop at the prospect of yet another. How easily we tire of novelties, once their gloss has faded! Twenty years ago, I dreamed of this tedious social duty as the height of my aspiration. If I had thought then, at the start of my career, that people would flock to see my work – and not only to look, but to pay handsomely for it; that I should be feted, flattered, invited to dine, to comment, to make speeches; that I should be regarded as someone touched by the Muse, not quite in the run of common men – I should have thought it a wishful dream. But this has become the pattern of my life, no longer yearned for. My name, now, seems to stand apart from me. It is a valued signature, two words that command a price; its syllables are spoken by people who consider themselves connoisseurs.

'Ah, Mr Godwin!' The woman bearing down on me, social smile stretching her lipsticked mouth, scarf draped artfully around her neck and secured with a brooch, is of the wearisome type I often meet at such viewings. 'Let me have your attention, before you're quite besieged! I am so curious- do tell me…' Manicured fingers touch my sleeve; perfume mingles with cigarette smoke. 'The Wild Girl. She intrigues me so very much. Who is she, I wonder? Do tell.'

I avert my eyes from the archness of her gaze, and block my ears to her gush. Across the gallery, my Wild Girl stares at me from her ebony frame. Although her expression is seared into my mind, although my own hand made every brushstroke that defines her, I cannot look on her without feeling a fresh twist of pain. Her hair, of that rich, extraordinary shade I sued to amuse myself by defining – the colour of newly opened chestnuts in their cases, of beech leaves against snow, of polished pennies, of a kestrel's wing – tumbles over her shoulders. Her eyes, not quite green, not quite blue, hold mine in a blend of exultation and pleading. This is my reason for painting her: to hold this moment in suspension, to keep forever the possibilities it holds.

In the next instant it will be too late. Her plea will remain unanswered, and I will have failed.

My heart clenches.

I do this to her, my Wild Girl. I bring her to these fashionable galleries, I expose her to these scavengers with their ravenous eyes and their predatory cheque-books. Do they really see her? Twenty years ago she would have been as invisible as the rest of my work. Now, because she carries my name (but not her own), she is the object of speculation. Fickle fashion has decreed that my work is collectable. *The Wild Girl* is a desirable commodity.

But not for sale. No, never.

'Come, now, Mr Godwin! My inquisitor plucks at my sleeve and peers closely into my face. 'Please don't be coy! Is there a story here, I wonder? Such a beauty – she is someone you loved, maybe? She is a real girl – yes, surely.'

I catch the eye of the gallery owner. Knowing how I dislike being cornered, he threads his way towards us, summoning a waiter to refill our glasses. I see my chance to escape.

'She is herself,' I answer, sidling away. 'She is someone I met many years ago.'

Text B: ‘The Painter’ by John Ashbery

Sitting between the sea and the buildings
He enjoyed painting the sea’s portrait.
But just as children imagine a prayer
Is merely silence, he expected his subject
To rush up the sand, and, seizing a brush,
Plaster its own portrait on the canvas.

So there was never any paint on his canvas
Until the people who lived in the buildings
Put him to work: “Try using the brush
As a means to an end. Select, for a portrait,
Something less angry and large, and more subject
To a painter’s moods, or, perhaps, to a prayer.”

How could he explain to them his prayer
That nature, not art, might usurp the canvas?
He chose his wife for a new subject,
Making her vast, like ruined buildings,
As if, forgetting itself, the portrait
Had expressed itself without a brush.

Slightly encouraged, he dipped his brush
In the sea, murmuring a heartfelt prayer:
“My soul, when I paint this next portrait
Let it be you who wrecks the canvas.”
The news spread like wildfire through the buildings:
He had gone back to the sea for his subject.

Imagine a painter crucified by his subject!
Too exhausted even to lift his brush,
He provoked some artists leaning from the buildings
To malicious mirth: “We haven’t a prayer
Now, of putting ourselves on canvas,
Or getting the sea to sit for a portrait!”

Others declared it a self-portrait.
Finally all indications of a subject
Began to fade, leaving the canvas
Perfectly white. He put down the brush.
At once a howl, that was also a prayer,
Arose from the overcrowded buildings.

They tossed him, the portrait, from the tallest of the buildings;
And the sea devoured the canvas and the brush
As though his subject had decided to remain a prayer.

Section A: Comprehension Questions

Look at Text A:

1. Read the first two paragraphs of Text A. What impression do you get of the narrator here? How does Newbery create this impression? (4 marks)

2. Select two metaphors which interest you from Text A and explain why you have chosen them. (4 marks)

3. This extract opens a novel. Do you consider it an effective opening? (7 marks)

Now look at Text B:

4. Read the opening stanza of Text B.
   Explain why 'there was never any paint on his canvas' (l.7) (3 marks)

5. Select two verbs from the poem that interest you and explain what they contribute to the poem. (6 marks)

6. There are three instances of direct speech in this poem.
   What effect do they create? (4 marks)

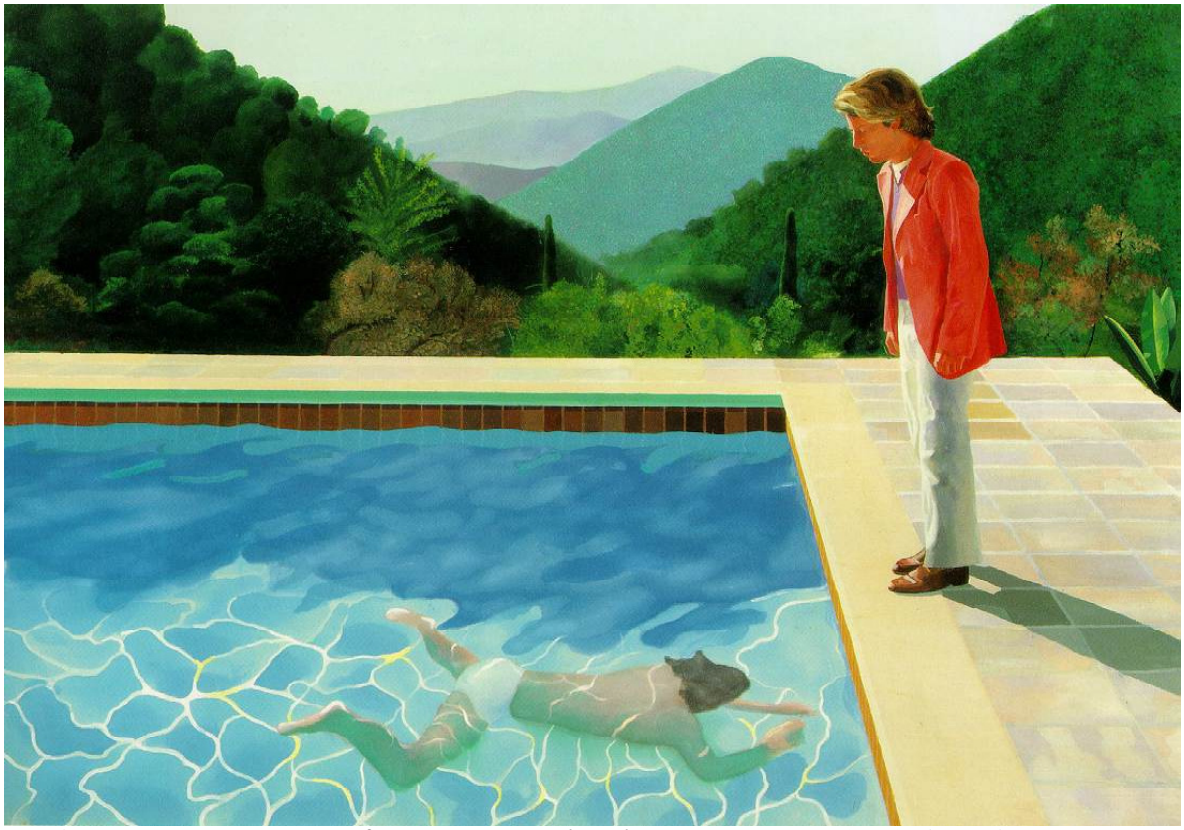
Now look at both texts:

7. Looking at both of these texts, explain how the writers use structure to convey meaning. (4 marks)

8. Compare and contrast the two texts in any way which interests you, explaining which of the texts you prefer. (8 marks)

Section B: Creative Writing

Use ONE of the pictures on the back of the exam paper as the starting point for a piece of descriptive writing, the opening of a story, or a poem.
(40 marks)



David Hockney, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, 1971, Acrylic on canvas, 214 x 304.8 cm (84 x 120 in); Collection David



Geffen Uccello, *Battle of San Romano (Niccolò da Tolentino Leads the Florentine Troops),* 1430s or 1450s, Egg tempera on poplar, 181.6 x 320 cm, National Gallery, London