WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

THE CHALLENGE 2018

ENGLISH

Wednesday 2 May 2018

You have TWO HOURS for this paper.

- *Answer ALL THREE sections: A, B and C*
- *You should spend about 30 minutes on Section A*
- *You should spend about 45 minutes on Sections B & C.*
- *Answer in full sentences and, where necessary, in paragraphs.*

- **Please write in black or blue ink.**

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SECTION A

1. **In your own words, explain the meanings and the wisdom of these well-known phrases from Shakespeare:**

a) ‘Neither a borrower nor a lender be.’ [2]

b) ‘Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.’ [2]

c) ‘We know what we are, but know not what we may be.’ [2]

d) ‘This above all: to thine own self be true.Thou canst not then be false to any man’ [2]

e) ‘The wish is father to the thought.’ [2]

Read the following passage carefully and answer the question:

Explain how the writer, a Russian visiting New York in the 1920s, uses interesting descriptive language to communicate his feelings about the city.

This is a city. This is New York. Twenty-storeyed houses, dark soundless skyscrapers, stand on the shore. Square, lacking in any desire to be beautiful, the bulky, ponderous buildings tower, gloomily and drearily. A haughty pride in its height, and its ugliness is felt in each house. There are no flowers at the windows and no children to be seen…

From this distance the city seems like a vast jaw, with uneven black teeth. It breathes clouds of black smoke into the sky and puffs like a glutton suffering from his obesity.

Entering the city is like getting into a stomach of stone and iron, a stomach that has swallowed several million people and is grinding and digesting them.

The street is a slippery, greedy throat, in the depths of which float dark bits fo the city’s food – living people. Everywhere – overhead, underfoot, alongside, there is a clang of iron, exulting in its victory. Awakened to life and animated by the power of Gold, it casts its web about man, strangles him, sucks his blood and brain, devours his muscles and nerves, and grows and grows, resting upon voiceless stone, and spreading the links of its chain every more widely.

Locomotives like enormous worms wiggle along, dragging cars behind them; the horns of automobiles quack like fat ducks, electric wires hum drearily, the stifling air throbs with the thousands of strident sounds it has absorbed as a sponge absorbs moisture. Pressing down upon this grimy city, soiled with smoke of factories, it hangs motionless among the high, soot-covered walls.

[10]

SECTION B

The following poem was written by Wilfred Owen who was killed in action exactly one week before the armistice ending the First World War in November 1918. Instead of describing the fury of battle, the poem gives us a different insight into the horror of life in the trenches.

Read the poem carefully and then answer the questions:

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us . . .
Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent . . .
Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient . . .
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow . . .
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces—
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
—Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed,—
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
But nothing happens.

1. Give two reasons why the conditions described in the poem are bad. [2]

2. Explore and explain how Wilfred Owen uses language to describe the wind in lines 1 and 6-7. [4]

3. Re-read lines 13-14. How and with what effects does Owen use personification and metaphor in these lines? [4]

4. Re-read lines 16-22. Explore and explain the ways in which Owen describes the snow. [6]

5. Re-read lines 22-30.
   a) The location suddenly changes to 'grassier ditches'. Explain what you think might be happening. [2]

   b) In what ways is the description of the soldiers' homes disturbing? Refer to details in your explanation. [4]

6. Re-read lines 31-35. In this stanza Wilfred Owen suggests why the soldiers are 'not loath' to be on the battlefield. 'Not loath' means that they are not reluctant or unwilling. Looking closely at the stanza, explain clearly why they are 'not loath', in your own words. [4]

7. Explain the effect of the shorter lines at the end of each stanza. [4]

SECTION C

The following passage is taken from a novel by Daniel Defoe, first published in 1719. The speaker has been shipwrecked on a desert island, where, for a number of years, he believes he lives alone. Then, one day, he finds a footprint in the sand…

Read the passage carefully and then answer the questions:

It happen'd one day about noon going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surpriz'd with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an apparition; I listen'd, I look'd round me, I could hear nothing, nor see any thing; I went up to a rising ground to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one, I could see no other impression but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the very print of a foot, toes, heel, and every part of a foot; how it came thither I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confus'd and out of my self, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrify'd to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man; nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes affrighted imagination represented things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way.

When I came to my castle, for so I think I call'd it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued; whether I went over by the ladder as first contriv'd, or went in at the hole in the rock which I call'd a door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next morning, for never frighted hare fled to cover, or fox to earth, with more terror of mind than I to this retreat.

1. **How does Defoe use language and structure to present the speaker's feelings when he discovers the footprint?** [10]

2. **Write a paragraph (about 200-250 words) to complete ONE of the following creative writing tasks.**

   You will gain marks for fluent, imaginative and precise expression of ideas and for the accuracy of your writing.

   a) Continue the story above. You may use modern English and spelling.

   or

   b) Write the description of a moment when you found something which surprised and frightened you.

[20]

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