DULWICH COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1619

Year 9 Entrance and Scholarship Examination
ENGLISH

Specimen Paper [new]

1 hour and 25 minutes

Instructions:

- Spend 10 minutes reading the passage carefully before you start writing.
- Spend 60 minutes on Section A and 15 minutes on Section B.

SECTION A: PROSE COMPREHENSION [60 marks]

This passage is set in 1941, in the aftermath of an air-raid during the Second World War.

MISS ANSTRUTHER'S LETTERS

Miss Anstruther, whose life had been cut in two on the night of 10 May, so that she now felt herself a ghost, without attachments or habitation, neither of which she any longer desired, sat alone in the bed-sitting-room she had taken, a small room, littered with the broken, useless objects she had salvaged from the ruin round the corner. It was one of the many burnt-out ruins of that wild night when explosives and incendiaries had rained on London and the water had run short: it was now a gaunt and roofless tomb, a pile of rubble and smashed beams. Miss Anstruther had for the first few days climbed up to what had been her flat, swarming up broken girders, searching and scrabbling, but not finding what she sought, only here a pot, there a pan. Her marmalade for May had been there; the demolition men did not care for marmalade. She did not know what else went into those bulging dungaree pockets, and did not really care, for she knew it would not be the thing she sought, for which even demolition men would have no use; the flames, had taken them like a ravaging mouse or an idiot child. They were not among the massed debris on the basement floor either, where piles of soaked and blackened fragments had fallen through four floors to lie in indistinguishable anonymity together.

The basement tenant, who spent her days there, bravely sorting and burrowing among the chaotic mass that had invaded her home from the dwellings of her co-tenants above, said, "Is it one you wrote?" "I don't think so," said Miss Anstruther. "I don't think I can have...." She did not really know what she might not have written, in that burnt-out past when she had sat and written this and that, looking out on green gardens. "I hope you had no precious manuscripts," said the kind tenant. "Yes," said Miss Anstruther. "Oh yes. They're gone. They don't matter."

Miss Anstruther went on digging till twilight came. She was grimed from head to foot; her only clothes were ruined; she stood knee-deep in drifts of burnt rubbish that had been carpets, beds, curtains, furniture, pictures, and books; the smoke that smouldered up from them made her cry and cough. What she looked for was not there; it was no more. She had not rescued it while she could, she had forgotten it, and now it was ashes. All but one torn, burnt corner of note-paper, which she picked up out of a battered saucepan belonging to the basement tenant. It was niggled over with close small writing, the only words left of the thousands of words in that hand that she looked for, the o's and a's open at the top. It had been written twenty-one years ago, and it said, "Leave it at that. I know now that you don't care twopence; if you did you would" .... The words, each time she looked at them, seemed to darken and obliterate a little more of the twenty years that had followed them, the years of the letters and all they had had together. She put it in her note-case and went on looking till dark; then she went back to her bed-sitting-

room, which she filled each night with dirt and sorrow and a few blackened cups. She knew at last that it was no use to look any more, so she went to bed and lay open-eyed through the short summer nights. She hoped each night that there would be another raid. But it seemed that the Luftwaffe[1] had, for the moment, done; each day broke, and, like a revenant[2], Miss Anstruther still haunted her ruins.

Each night, as Miss Anstruther lay awake in her strange, unhomely room, she lived again the blazing night that had cut her life in two. A wild, blazing hell of a night. Crashes shook Mortimer House, which was tall and slim and Edwardian, and swayed like a reed in the wind to near bombing. After a series of three close-at-hand screams and crashes, the fourth exploded, a giant earthquake, against Mortimer House, and sent its whole front crashing down. Miss Anstruther, dazed and bruised from the hurtle of plaster flung at her head, and choked with dust, hurried down the stairs, which were still there. The little caretaker was tugging at his large wife, who was struck unconscious and jammed to the knees in bricks.

"Everyone out of the building!" shouted the police. "Everyone out!"

Miss Anstruther asked why. The police said there were to be no bloody whys, the gas pipe's burst and the whole thing may go up in a bonfire before you can turn.

A bonfire! Miss Anstruther thought, if that's so I must go up and save some things. She rushed up the stairs, while the rescue men were in Mrs Cavendish's flat. Inside her own blasted and twisted door, her flat lay waiting for death. She caught up a suitcase, and furiously piled books into it: Herodotus[3], *Mathematical Magick*, some of the twenty volumes of *Purchas his Pilgrimes*[4], *Curiosities of Literature*, the six volumes of Boswell[5], then, as the suitcase would not shut, she turned out Boswell and substituted a china cow, a tiny walnut shell with tiny Mexicans behind glass, and a box with a mechanical bird that jumped out and sang. She loped downstairs, placed her salvage on the piled wreckage at what had been the street door, and started up the stairs again. As she reached the first floor, there was a burst and a hissing, a huge *pst-pst*, and a rush of flame leaped over Mortimer House as the burst gas caught and sprang to heaven, another fiery rose bursting into bloom to join the pandemonic red garden of night. Two rescue men, carrying Mrs Cavendish downstairs, met Miss Anstruther and pushed her back.

It was at this moment that Miss Anstruther remembered the thing she wanted most, the thing she had forgotten while she gathered up things she wanted less. She pushed again into the inferno, but again she was dragged back. "No one to go in there," said the police, for all human life was by now extricated.

Adapted from the short story, "Miss Anstruther's Letters" (1942), by Rose Macaulay

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[1] Luftwaffe. The German aerial warfare division during the Second World War.
[2] Revenant. A visible ghost which returns from the grave to terrorise the living.
[3] Herodotus. An ancient Greek historian who lived during the fifth century BC.
[4] *Purchas his Pilgrimes*. A collection of religious (Anglican) travel stories published in 1613.
[5] Boswell. A rare six-volume set of a biography by James Boswell, published in 1897.

1. Look again at the opening paragraph.

(a) In your own words, explain what the first sentence suggests about Miss Anstruther's situation. Make three separate points. (3 marks)

(b) Miss Anstruther's former home is likened to a "gaunt and roofless tomb" (line 7). Explain the effects of this description, paying close attention to "gaunt" and "tomb". (3 marks)

(c) Explain what is implied about the demolition men (lines 10-13). Make two separate points. (2 marks)

(d) In your own words, explain why the flames are likened to the actions of a "ravaging mouse or an idiot child" (line 14). (3 marks)

2. Look again at the third paragraph, lines 24-42.

(a) Why do we find the words written on the fragment of note-paper ironic (lines 33-34)? Make two separate points. (2 marks)

(b) Explain why Miss Anstruther hoped for "another raid" (lines 40-41). (2 marks)

(c) What does paragraph three (lines 24-42) reveal of Miss Anstruther's changing emotions? Discuss, and quote, three sentences or phrases to support your thoughts on her different emotions. (10 marks)

3. Look again at lines 43-54.

Referring closely to the passage, discuss how the writer creates tension at this point in the story. Make three separate points. (6 marks)

4. Look again at lines 55-68.

(a) What is suggested about Miss Anstruther by the books she chooses to save? Make two separate points. (4 marks)

(b) Discuss two ways in which the writer creates a contrast between the other saved objects (lines 61-62) and the world outside the flat.
(4 marks)

5. Explain the meaning, in your own words, of these quotations. (6 marks)

(a) "indistinguishable anonymity" (line 16)

(b) "her flat lay waiting for death" (line 57)

(c) "all human life was by now extricated" (line 72)

6. In lines 21-22, Miss Anstruther links her past to "... looking out on green gardens". Explain what this, and other references to her letters, suggests about her past. (5 marks)

7. Write a continuation of the story, using the opening provided below.

Imagine that Miss Anstruther writes a new letter to her lost husband in order to replace those that have been destroyed by fire. This will be an act of courage. In her letter, she describes:

- her feelings about the events of recent days;
- her memories and/or hopes for the future.

Remember to take into account what we know of Miss Anstruther's character and circumstances. (10 marks)

Dawn came, dim and ashy, in a pall of smoke. Mortimer House still burned, for no one had put it out. Miss Anstruther sat in the alien room, holding the fountain pen she had cherished for more than twenty years, and started to write.

~~*Dear Charles*~~ *My dearest Charlie,*

SECTION B: DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH [15 marks]

Spend 15 minutes on this section.

Instructions:

- Write a detailed, descriptive paragraph in which you express yourself vividly.
- Choose one of the following topics.
- You may make preparatory notes below.
- Write your paragraph on the next page.

(i) THE BOATHOUSE

OR

(ii) A MEDIEVAL CASTLE

Notes:

Write your paragraph in the space below:

END OF EXAMINATION