St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

# Entrance Assessment 2018

## Year 9 English:

## Time allowed: 1 hour

Name: ……

# Section A

**Spend 30 minutes on this section.**
**Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow**

Alfred, a young British soldier finds himself alone in the trenches of France during World War One…

Alfred felt something move. It came out of the mud in the dark behind his back where he sat cold and drowsily slumped against the trench wall. Something small and warmly alive pushed itself between the wooden slats and his battledress jacket. It touched for an instant the small exposed area of his pale dirty skin just where his jacket and vest were folded and rucked up together. He could feel something struggling and pushing to get past him. He shot up in revulsion – he knew just what it was: a filthy…

'Rat!' he shouted to no one in particular.

He saw it there, pushing through and twisting its head, saw the wet greasy fur and its mean red eyes. He kicked at it and missed. The rat scuttled out from the tiny gap between the slat supports and ran across the mud. Normally Alfred would have let it go. Rats were, after all, commonplace but something, whether pent-up anger… hate… loss… pain… boredom, whichever it was made him give chase after it.

The creature appeared sluggish, as if it were weighed down with overeating. It had most likely been feeding on what was caught, left behind, in the lines and coils of barbed wire which stretched for miles beyond the trench. The terrible sad debris of dead soldiers. The remains that were left behind after a 6am push.

Before it was light, after the heavy artillery bombardments and the whistles and the bright spray of the flares and the shouting and the **Very lights**, the men streamed over, filtered through the narrow gaps in the wire. Whole portions of them however were miraculously left behind – bits of men hooked up and hanging there for all to see, like the display in an awful butcher's shop window; or if there were enough shreds and rags of uniform still attached to the limbs, then it was more like the washing on the line flapping on a Monday morning at home. Alfred had grown almost used to such sights.

Almost used to seeing the remains of men he had sometimes known and shared fag time and mugs of tea with.

Almost used to them being suddenly torn apart and scattered around here and there or falling like rain into the mud.

Almost used to them being thrown up in the air along with the astonishingly loud shellbursts. Used to seeing the remains chucked around among the living like so much discarded offal. Used to seeing legs, hands, heads and sometimes faces stare up at him blankly from the grey mud. Used to seeing his pals' insides suddenly all spilled out from between their buttons, or

poking through the rips and gaps in their uniforms. Used to seeing their innards fully exposed in the cold light of the outside where they didn't belong at all. Where they were never meant to be seen. He knew it was wrong to be even remotely used to such sights, or to any of it, even for a second, let alone for ever…..

The rat zigzagged through the mud down the service trench, passed a wooden sign. It hesitated at the base of a trench ladder, and Alfred finally smashed it down into the mud. He felt its tiny backbone crack under his boot and he had a moment of fleeting sympathy for it; just another dirty dead thing, another of God's creatures that had given up the ghost in the mud like so many others, and no one there to grieve its loss but him. He twisted his boot on the rat, pushing its bloated little body further into the mire.

**Very lights** – brilliant white flares used at night to show the approaching enemy

1. Read again the first part of the passage from **lines 1 to 6**. List four things about Alfred from this part of the passage.

**(4 marks)**

2. Look in detail at this extract from **lines 8 to 16** of the Source:

> He saw it there, pushing through and twisting its head, saw the wet greasy fur and its mean red eyes. He kicked at it and missed. The rat scuttled out from the tiny gap between the slat supports and ran across the mud. Normally Alfred would have let it go. Rats were, after all, commonplace but something, whether pent-up anger… hate… loss… pain… boredom, whichever it was made him give chase after it. The creature appeared sluggish, as if it were weighed down with overeating. It had most likely been feeding on what was caught, left behind, in the lines and coils of barbed wire which stretched for miles beyond the trench. The terrible sad debris of dead soldiers. The remains that were left behind after a 6am push.

How does the writer use language here to describe the rat? You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

**(6 marks)**

3. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the passage from **line 17 to the end**.

   A student said: 'This part of the text where Alfred remembers the battle shows the horror of war and the dreadful effect it has on him.'

   To what extent do you agree?

   In your response, you could:

   • consider your own impressions of what Alfred remembers and its effect on him
   • evaluate how the writer shows the horror and dreadful effect war has on Alfred
   • support your response with references to the text.

   **(15 marks)**

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## Section B

**Spend 30 minutes on this section**

Describe a place that has had a long-lasting effect on you.

Remember to plan your account and to use interesting language to engage your reader.

**(25 marks)**