DULWICH COLLEGE
FOUNDED 1619

# Year 9 Entrance and Scholarship Examination English

# Specimen Paper A

**Time allowed for this paper is 90 minutes.**

**There is 5 minutes' reading time at the start of the examination.**

**You should spend 55 minutes on Section A and 30 minutes on Section B.**

## SECTION A: Prose Comprehension [60 marks]

The first-person narrator (who is unnamed in the story) is visiting a friend he has known since childhood named Fanshawe, at Fanshawe's request. Fanshawe disappeared some years before and has asked the narrator to his house so that Fanshawe can give him a notebook which will explain why Fanshawe disappeared for so many years and why he has decided to kill himself.

[Adapted from *The Locked Room* by Paul Auster]

There was a rusted metal clapper in the door, a half-sphere with a handle in the centre, and when I twisted the handle, it made the sound of someone retching – a muffled, gagging sound that did not carry far. I waited, but nothing happened. I twisted the bell again, but no one came. Then, testing the door with my hand, I saw that it wasn't locked – pushed it open, paused, and went in. The front hall was empty. To my right was the staircase, with its mahogany banister and bare wooden steps: to my left were closed double doors, blocking off what was no doubt the parlour; straight ahead there was another door, also closed, that probably led to the kitchen. I hesitated for a moment, decided on the stairs, and was about to go up when I heard something from behind the double doors – a faint tapping, followed by a voice I couldn't understand. I turned from the staircase and looked at the door, listening for the voice again. Nothing happened.

A long silence. Then, almost in a whisper, the voice spoke again. 'In here,' it said.

I went to the doors and pressed my ear against the crack between them. 'Is that you, Fanshawe?'

'Don't use that name,' the voice said, more distinctly this time. 'I won't allow you to use that name.' The mouth of the person inside was lined up directly with my ear. Only the door was between us, and we were so close that I felt as if the words were being poured into my head. It was like listening to a man's heart beating in his chest, like searching a body for a pulse. He stopped talking, and I could feel his breath slithering through the crack.

'Let me in,' I said. 'Open the door and let me in.'

'I couldn't do that,' the voice answered. 'We'll have to talk like this.'

I grabbed hold of the door knob and shook the door in frustration. 'Open up,' I said. 'Open up, or I'll break the door down.'

'No,' said the voice. 'The door stays closed. I'm standing here with a gun, and it's pointed right at you. If you come through the door, I'll shoot.'

'I don't believe you.'

'Listen to this,' he said, and then I heard him turn away from the door. A second later a gun went off, followed by the sound of plaster falling to the floor. I tried to peer through the crack in the mean time, hoping to catch a glimpse of the room, but the space was too narrow. I could see no more than a thread of light, a single grey filament. Then the mouth returned, and I could no longer even see that.

'Forgive me. I didn't want it to begin like this.'

'Just remember,' I said, 'I'm only here because you asked me to come.'

'Please stay,' the voice said. 'You're the first person I've spoken to in two years.'

'Do you ever think that you're out of your mind?'

'I know it looks like that to you – but I'm not, believe me. I don't even want to waste my breath talking about it. What I need for myself is very different from what other people need.'

'Isn't this house a bit big for one person?'

'Much too big.'

'Then why did you buy it?' I asked.

'I liked the name of the street, Columbus Square. It appealed to me. It seemed like a good omen. Coming back to America after I'd been living overseas for so long – and then finding a house on a street named after Columbus. There was a certain logic to it.'

'What do you want from me?'

'I have some things to give you. At a certain point, I realized that I owed you an explanation for what I did. At least an attempt. I've spent the past six months trying to get it down on paper.'

'I thought you gave up writing for good.'

'This is different. It has no connection with the novels or the poems I used to write.'

'Where is it?'

'Behind you. On the floor of the closet under the stairs. It's all there in the red notebook.'

I turned around, opened the closet door, and picked up the notebook. It was a standard spiral affair with two hundred pages. I gave a quick glance at the contents and saw that all the pages had been filled: the same familiar writing, the same black ink, the same small letters I had seen so often before. I stood up and returned to the crack between the doors.

'What now?'

'Take it home with you. Read it.'

'What will you do now? Is there anything else?'

'I don't think so. We've probably come to the end. I took poison two hours ago, so I'm already dead.'

I no longer knew what to say. Fanshawe had used me up, and as I heard him breathing on the other side of the door, I felt as if the life were being sucked out of me, too. Then,

overwhelmed by my own weakness and stupidity, I started pounding the door like a child, shaking and spluttering, on the point of tears.

'You'd better go now,' Fanshawe said. 'Take the notebook and go back to New York. That's all I ask of you.'

I was so exhausted for a moment I thought I was going to fall down. I clung to the doorknob for support, my head going black inside, struggling not to pass out. I started walking away from the house, mechanically putting one foot in front of the other, unable to concentrate on where I was going.

It was just after seven o'clock when I arrived at South Station. A train for New York had left fifteen minutes earlier, and the next one wasn't scheduled until eight-thirty. I sat down on one of the wooden benches with the red notebook on my lap. After ten minutes of fighting off the impulse, I at last opened the notebook.

1. Look at lines 1–11. Name one emotion the narrator seems to be feeling in each of the four quotations below? **(4 marks)**

(i) 'I waited but nothing happened. I twisted the bell again, but no one came.' (lines 3–4)

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(ii) 'Then, testing the door with my hand, I saw that it wasn't locked – pushed it open, paused, and went in.' (lines 4–5)

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(iii) 'I hesitated for a moment, decided on the stairs, and was about to go up when I hear something from behind the double doors – a faint tapping... (lines 8–10)

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(iv) 'I turned from the staircase and looked at the door, listening for the voice again. Nothing happened. (lines 10–11)

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2. Look at lines 1–8. What impressions do these descriptions of the house create? Comment on the effect created by each of the three quotations below. **(6 marks)**

(i) 'There was a rusted metal clapper in the door, a half-sphere with a handle in the centre… (line 1)

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(ii) '…when I twisted the handle, it made the sound of someone retching…' (line 2)

(iii) 'The front hall was empty. To my right was the staircase, with its mahogany banister and bare wooden steps…' (lines 5–6)

**3.** Look at lines 16-19. Explain the effect created by the following two pieces of imagery: **(4 marks)**

(i) 'We were so close that I felt as if the words were being poured into my head.' (lines 17-18)

(ii) 'I could feel his breath slithering through the crack.' (lines 19-20)

4. Look at lines 20–34. Describe the friendship between Fanshawe and the narrator. Make two points, referring to details in the passage.
**(4 marks)**

5. Look at lines 38-45. **(4 marks)**

(i) Why do you think Fanshawe found the name of the street, 'Columbus Square' appealing?

(ii) What do you think the fact that Fanshawe likes the name so much suggests about his character?

6. Look again at lines 54–57. The notebook is Fanshawe's attempt to explain himself to the narrator. What does the amount of writing in the notebook imply about Fanshawe? **(2 marks)**

7. Look again at lines 59–73. What are your feelings, as you read the last section, about:

- Fanshawe telling the narrator he has taken the poison
- The narrator's feelings about Fanshawe
- The narrator's actions as he leaves the house.

Quote words and phrases to support your opinions. (**10 marks**)

8. Write the first section of Fanshawe's red notebook. You may use invented material *and* information from the passage. Bear in mind the information you were given in the introduction to the passage:

The first-person narrator (who is unnamed in the story) is visiting a friend he has known since childhood named Fanshawe, at Fanshawe's request. Fanshawe disappeared some years before and has asked the narrator to his house so that Fanshawe can give him a notebook which will explain why Fanshawe disappeared for so many years and why he has decided to kill himself.

**(16 marks)**

## SECTION B: Descriptive Writing [40 marks]

You should spend 30 minutes on this section.
What you write may be true, or invented.

**Write a description in which you use vivid vocabulary.**
**Choose one of the following topics and underline your chosen title:**

(i) Standing outside a burning building

(ii) An autumn morning in the countryside

(iii) A train station at rush hour

(iv) Inside the Olympic Stadium

**END OF EXAM**