Independent Schools Examinations Board

COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION AT 13+

ENGLISH

LEVEL 1

PAPER 1: READING

Monday 23 January 2012

Please read this information before the examination starts.

- You have 1 hour 10 minutes which includes reading and note-making time.
- The paper is divided into two sections.
- Answer **all** the questions.
- Remember to write **Level 1** at the top of your answer paper.
- Vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation and presentation are important and will be taken into account.

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LEVEL 1

SECTION A: NON-FICTION

The Crossing

This extract is from The Crossing *by Kathy Watson. Here she describes the start of a cross-channel swim by a man called Webb.*

The morning of Tuesday 24 August broke gloriously. The barometer signalled calm weather, the sky was overcast but not threatening, there was no wind and the sea was 65 degrees and as smooth as green glass. That day Toms had good news: it was his considered opinion that Webb should start that day around one o'clock. He reckoned Webb would be able to do it in 14 hours. On the other hand, the captain of the *Castalia* passenger boat, thought to be the man most knowledgeable about Channel conditions in England, said he thought 20 hours was nearer the mark. The truth was, nobody really knew – and Webb was about to find out.

However large and encouraging your support team, nothing can change the fact that swimming the Channel is a solo endeavour. It's you who has to do it. You're the only one who strips, shivering in the cold air, who dips a hand into the jar of thick grease and rubs it over your body and who has to get into that uncompromisingly cold water and start swimming.

The momentary hesitation at the end of the pier was Webb's alone; so too was that view into the greenish-black water 10 feet below. The water would be piercingly cold; that was certain. And the waves would slap his face and the salt water sting his eyes and make his tongue sore and so swollen it would feel too large for his mouth. On a clear day you can see the coast of France from Dover, but that day it was hazy and, before he reached the other shore, there would be hard work and an aching body and frozen limbs and a tiredness that goes right through to the bone and perhaps, after all that, failure again. But still he had to dive in.

He waited. For what? He played to the gallery by pointing significantly in the direction of the opposite coast and, perhaps, bought himself just another second. Then, at precisely four minutes to one o'clock, Webb dived into the Channel. The watching crowd gave three cheers but the sounds were blurred because his ears were full of water and soon the noise stopped and it was just him alone, in the silence of the sea.

LEVEL 1

SECTION A: NON-FICTION

Read the passage opposite entitled* The Crossing *and then answer all the questions below, using complete sentences. The marks at the end of each question are a guide as to how much you should write in your answers.

1. Look carefully at paragraph 1.
   At what time does Toms think Webb should start his cross-Channel swim? (1)

2. Give three reasons why Toms thinks Tuesday 24 August is a good day for the swim. (3)

3. Toms disagrees with the captain of the *Castalia* passenger boat on one point.
   Explain what this is. (2)

4. Look carefully at paragraph 2.
   What is the most difficult thing about swimming the Channel and why? (3)

5. What do swimmers do to prepare themselves for the swim and why? (2)

6. Look carefully at paragraph 3.
   Write down three short quotations which show that Webb is feeling nervous. (3)
   Explain your choices. (6)

7. Look carefully at paragraph 4.
   Imagine you are Webb.
   Describe your feelings at the start of this important swim. (5)

(Total marks for this section: 25)

LEVEL 1

SECTION B: POETRY

Blessing

The skin cracks like a pod.
There never is enough water.

Imagine the drip of it,
the small splash, echo
in a tin mug,
the voice of a kindly god.

Sometimes, the sudden rush
of fortune. The municipal pipe bursts,
silver crashes to the ground
and the flow has found
a roar of tongues. From the huts,
a congregation: every man woman
child for streets around
butts in, with pots,
brass, copper, aluminium,
plastic buckets,
frantic hands,

and naked children
screaming in the liquid sun,
their highlights polished to perfection,
flashing light,
as the blessing sings
over their small bones.

Imtiaz Dharker

LEVEL 1

SECTION B: POETRY

Read the poem opposite entitled* Blessing *and answer all the questions below, using complete sentences. The marks at the end of each question are a guide as to how much you should write in your answers.

1. What is the 'blessing' being received by the people in this poem? (2)

2. In stanza 3, the water pipe bursts open and it is clear that the people are desperate for water.

   Look carefully at lines 10–17 and write down two short quotations which tell you that they have been longing for water. Explain your choices briefly. (4)

3. In stanza 3, the poet mixes together long and short lines and includes the use of run-on lines, lots of commas and lists of items.

   By throwing all these different techniques together, what is the poet telling you about the water? (4)

4. Throughout this poem there are many examples of different sounds.

   Write down two short 'sound' quotations and explain how they bring the poem alive for you. (6)

5. Read the final stanza again, lines 18–23.

   In your own words explain what is happening. (3)

6. (a) What does the poem suggest about the quality of life of the people it describes?

   Use two short quotations from the poem to support your suggestion. (4)

   (b) Having read the poem, how has it made you feel about these people and their lives? (2)

(Total marks for this section: 25)

(Total marks: 50)

The passage is from *The Crossing* by Kathy Watson, published by Headline.

The poem by Imtiaz Dharker is from *Postcards from God*, published by Bloodaxe Books, 1997.