Shrewsbury School

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2014

ENGLISH

(1 hour)

Instructions to candidates:

- Answer ALL the questions in SECTION A and ONE question from SECTION B.
- Always write in full sentences, paying close attention to spelling, punctuation and clarity of presentation.
- The quality of your answers will be assessed and you should think carefully before writing.
- Marks are shown in brackets at the end of each question, and should be used as guidance for the length of time to spend on each question.
- Answer on lined paper.

Section A: Comprehension (30 minutes)

Read the passage below, taken from *Secrets* by Bernard MacLaverty, before answering the questions.

He had been called to be there at the end. His Great Aunt Mary had been dying for some days now and the house was full of relatives. He had just left his girlfriend's home - they had been studying for 'A' levels together - and had come back to the house to find all the lights spilling onto the lawn and a sense of purpose which had been absent from the last few days.

He knelt at the bedroom door to join in the prayers. His knees were on the wooden threshold and he edged them forward onto the carpet. They had tried to wrap her fingers around a crucifix but they kept loosening. She lay low on the pillow and her face seemed to have shrunk by half since he had gone out earlier in the night. Her white hair was damped and pushed back from her forehead. She twisted her head from side to side, her eyes closed. The prayers chorused on, trying to cover the sound she was making deep in her throat. Someone said about her teeth and his mother leaned over her and said, 'That's the pet,' and took her dentures from her mouth. The lower half of her face seemed to collapse. She half opened her eyes but could not raise her eyelids enough and showed only crescents of white.

'Hail Mary full of grace . . .' the prayers went on. He closed his hands over his face so that he would not have to look but smelt the trace of his girlfriend's handcream from his hands. The noise, deep and guttural, that his aunt was making became intolerable to him. It was as if she were drowning. She had lost all the dignity he knew her to have. He got up from the floor and stepped between the others who were kneeling and went into her sitting-room off the same landing.

He was trembling with anger or sorrow, he didn't know which. He sat in the brightness of her big sitting-room at the oval table and waited for something to happen. On the table was a cut-glass vase of irises, dying because she had been in bed for over a week. He sat staring at them. They were withering from the tips inward, scrolling themselves delicately, brown and neat. Clearing up after themselves. He stared at them for a long time until he heard the sounds of women weeping from the next room.

His aunt had been small - her head on a level with his when she sat at her table - and she seemed to get smaller each year. Her skin fresh, her hair white and waved and always well washed. She wore no jewelry except a cameo ring on the third finger of her right hand and, around her neck, a gold locket on a chain. The white classical profile on the ring was almost worn through and had become translucent and indistinct. The boy had noticed the ring when she had read to him as a child. In the beginning fairy tales, then as he got older extracts from famous novels, *Lorna Doone, Persuasion, Wuthering Heights* and her favourite extract, because she read it so often, Pip's meeting with Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations.* She would sit with him on her knee, her arms around him and holding the page flat with her hand. When he was bored he would interrupt her and ask about the ring. He loved hearing her tell of how her grandmother had given it to her as a brooch and she had had a ring made from it. He would try to count back to see how old it was. Had her grandmother got it from *her* grandmother? And if so what had she turned it into? She would nod her head from side to side and say, 'How would I know a thing like that?' keeping her place in the closed book with her finger.

Section A: Comprehension (30 minutes)

1)	Where was the narrator and what was he doing when he was called to Great Aunt Mary's bedside?	2 marks
2)	What made the lower half of Great Aunt Mary's face seem "to collapse" (line 13)?	1 mark
3)	Describe, using your own words, the sound that Great Aunt Mary made as she lay dying and the effect this had on the narrator.	5 marks
4)	How long had Great Aunt Mary been in bed?	1 mark
5)	Describe, in your own words, how Great Aunt Mary looked.	5 marks
6)	What was Great Aunt Mary's favourite story?	2 marks
7)	Where did Great Aunt Mary's ring come from?	2 marks
8)	What sort of flowers did Great Aunt Mary like?	1 mark
9)	Which phrase tells us that the narrator is confused about his feelings towards Great Aunt Mary's death?	2 marks
10)	How does the author make it clear (lines 25-30) that Great Aunt Mary has died?	2 marks
11)	Do you think the narrator had a close relationship with Great Aunt Mary? Give reasons for your answer.	2 marks

[25 marks]

Section B: Short essay (30 minutes)

Write as much as you can in response to **one** of the following:

1) Describe an elderly person you know.

2) Write a story entitled: "Secrets".

3) Write a letter to Mr Turner, Shrewsbury School Headmaster, to persuade him that you would make positive contribution to Shrewsbury School.

[25 marks]

[Total = 50 marks]