ST EDWARD'S OXFORD

Department of English

13+ ENTRANCE EXAM

Spring 2010 • 1 hour

Name: _____

Section One: Comprehension

The passage below is the beginning of 'The Red Room', a story by H.G. Wells, written in 1896. Read the passage and then answer the questions below. Use ***full sentences*** *and write as carefully as possible. You should spend about* ***30 minutes*** *on this section.*

A Haunted House?

"I can assure you," said I, "that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me." And I stood up before the fire with my glass in my hand.

"It is your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm, and glanced at me askance.

"Eight-and-twenty years," said I, "I have lived, and never a ghost have I seen as yet."

The old woman sat staring hard into the fire, her pale eyes wide open. "Ay," she broke in; "and eight-and-twenty years you have lived and never seen the likes of this house, I reckon. There's a many things to see, when one's still but eight-and-twenty." She swayed her head slowly from side to side. "A many things to see and sorrow for."

I half suspected the old people were trying to enhance the spiritual terrors of their house by their droning insistence. I put down my empty glass on the table and looked about the room, and caught a glimpse of myself, abbreviated and broadened to an impossible sturdiness, in the queer old mirror at the end of the room. "Well," I said, "if I see anything to-night, I shall be so much the wiser. For I come to the business with an open mind."

"It's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm once more.

I heard the sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags in the passage outside, and the door creaked on its hinges as a second old man entered, more bent, more wrinkled, more aged even than the first. He supported himself by a single crutch, his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth. He made straight for an arm-chair on the opposite side of the table, sat down clumsily, and began to cough. The man with the withered arm gave this new-comer a short glance of positive dislike; the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire.

"I said--it's your own choosing," said the man with the withered arm, when the coughing had ceased for a while.

"It's my own choosing," I answered.

The man with the shade became aware of my presence for the first time, and threw his head back for a moment and sideways, to see me. I caught a momentary glimpse of his eyes, small and bright and inflamed. Then he began to cough and splutter again.

Now answer the following questions:

1) How many people are there in this story so far? Briefly say who they are. *(4 marks)*
2) What sort of a person tells the story? Use examples from the passage that support your ideas. *(8 marks)*
3) Using words from the passage to help you, describe the room in which the story begins. What do the furniture and other objects add to the mood of the story? *(8 marks)*
4) Look at the speech, behaviour and physical appearance of the 'old people'. How do they add to the story's atmosphere? Be as specific as you can. *(8 marks)*
5) In line 10 the speaker says, 'I half suspected the old people were trying to enhance the spiritual terrors of their house with their droning insistence'. What does he mean? *(4 marks)*
6) What do you think the word 'tangible' in line 1 means? *(1 mark)*
7) What does the old woman mean when she says, 'There's a many things to see when one's still but eight-and-twenty' in line 8? *(2 marks)*
8) What do you think the word 'abbreviated' means in line 12? What is it used to describe here? *(2 marks)*
9) Why do you think the phrase, 'It is your own choosing' is repeated so often? Does this add to the reader's expectations of the rest of the story? *(3 marks)*
10) What does the story-teller mean when he says, 'I come to the business with an open mind' (line 14)? *(2 marks)*
11) Write the next five to ten lines of the story. What do you imagine happens next in this story? Try to maintain the atmosphere of the original, and resist the temptation to introduce unrealistic or unlikely events. *(8 marks)*

(Total for Section One: 50 marks)

Section Two: Creative Writing

*Choose only **one** of the questions in this section. Marks will be awarded for originality, clarity and vocabulary as well as spelling and punctuation. Take a few minutes to plan your piece before you begin writing. You should spend about **30 minutes** on this section.*

EITHER:

a) Write a story beginning with the words, "Who's there?"

OR:

b) Write the beginning of a story about someone who has to do something frightening.

Try to be thoughtful and interesting and use language as imaginatively as you can to interest the reader.