

**ENTRANCE EXAMINATION, MILL HILL SCHOOL****ENGLISH*****Specimen Paper (for first examination to be set in January 2010)***

This paper contains two sections, A and B. Section A is subdivided into i) and ii) (prose and poetry respectively).

Section A is worth a total of 40 marks, and Section B is 30 marks, totalling 70 marks for the whole paper.

Answer all questions in Section A (on both the prose passage and poem) and one from Section B.

In Section A the questions are marked as to real relative difficulty as follows:

- \* = straightforward
- \*\* = slightly difficult
- \*\*\* = more challenging/complex

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**Section A: Comprehension:****i) PROSE (20 marks)**

**Read the following passage and then answer all of the questions that follow it. You will be assessed upon the quality of your understanding as well as powers of analysis and evaluation, appreciation of poetic technique and personal response. You should spend about 30 minutes on the prose passage and its related questions.**

*Jeremy Paxman here discusses the recent construction of the high speed railway link from Paris to London and how the French and British respectively viewed and handled the project:*

Travel to England by the cross-channel train from Paris to London and you can see the English indifference to the nation state at once. It is a journey from a city that, with its grand boulevards and avenues, proclaims a belief in central planning, to one that has just grown like Topsy. Paris remains a city where the government can still plough ahead with *grands projets* like La Defense or the Bastille Opera, whereas London can scarcely agree on a new statue. Even the railway itself testifies to the difference. By December 1994 trains were running directly from Paris to London. Having decided to embark on their *grand projet*, the French government simply willed it to happen. A high-speed railway line was built from Paris to the coast on which, from the moment the tunnel opened, trains hurtled at up to 186 miles per hour. On emerging into the Kent countryside, the trains cut their speed by nearly half. The English had not got around to building their high-speed rail line. Excuses were given by the authorities about the greater density of population in Kent, the fact that it was in the most prosperous corner of England, as opposed to the relatively deprived north of France. But the

real reason was the different relationship between the individual and the state. The French government is simply readier to impose its will; if it wants to build a railway line or nuclear power station, it wills the means, no matter whose back garden it happens to be in. The English not only won't raise the taxes to make it happen, but hold planning enquiries at which every objection from Dunroamin can be weighed. The different priorities – the centrally decreed needs of the state and the individual worries of the citizen – speak volumes. The English expect their high-speed rail line from the tunnel to be finished by 2007. Perhaps it will be.

Belonging to a naturally melancholic people, some of the English found the state of the cross-channel rail link embarrassing. How was it that even something as simple as a collaborative railway line could end up giving the French an opportunity to crow about the superiority of their engineering? A more positive way of looking at it would have been for them to celebrate the fact that they lived in a country where the state cannot do as it pleases and walk all over the citizen. It is tempting to conclude that the French believe the state *is* the people, while in England, the state is something else – 'them'.

*The English, A Portrait of a People* by Jeremy Paxman (Penguin Books, 1998)

1. Outline briefly the author's view of how the experience of completing *grands projets* (major building projects) differs in London from Paris. **(3 marks) \***
2. Explain what is meant by the following words/phrases *in the context of this passage*:
  - i) indifference (paragraph 1) **(1 mark)\***
  - ii) hurtled (paragraph 1) **(1 mark)\***
  - iii) deprived (paragraph 1) **(1 mark)\***
  - iv) melancholic (paragraph 2) **(1 mark)\*\***
  - v) a collaborative railway line **(2 marks)\*\***
3. The author claims that 'the real reason' for the English and French not having completed a high speed rail link between their two capital cities was 'the different relationship between the individual and the state' *Explain in your own words* how this is shown by the writer in paragraph 1. **(6 marks)\*\***
4. Read paragraph 2 again. Do you think that the author prefers the English or French way of approaching the high speed railway project? Provide evidence (quotations and/or references) in support of your ideas. **(5 marks)\*\*\***

**ii) POETRY (20 marks)**

**Read the following poem and then answer all of the questions that follow it. You will be assessed upon the quality of your understanding as well as powers of analysis and evaluation, appreciation of poetic technique and personal response. You should spend about 30 minutes on the poem and its related questions.**

**The Pylons**

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages  
Of that stone made,  
And crumbling roads  
That turned on sudden hidden villages.

Now over these small hills, they have built the concrete  
That trails black wire;  
Pylons, those pillars  
Bare like nude giants that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look  
And the green chestnut  
Of customary root,  
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures  
Like whips of anger  
With lightning's danger  
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek  
So tall with prophecy:  
Dreaming of cities  
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

**Stephen Spender**

1. In the first two stanzas the poet appears to be complaining about how the countryside has changed. Explain briefly *in your own words* what this change is.\* **(4 marks)**
2. Explain briefly what is meant by the following words and phrases *in the context of this poem*:
  - *sudden hidden villages*\*
  - *The valley with its gilt and evening look*\*\*
  - *Clouds shall lean their swan-like neck* \*\* **(6 marks)**
3. Write out any two of the similes in the poem and explain how they are effective. \*\* **(4 marks)**
4. What do you understand by the last stanza and how effective is it as a conclusion to the poem? You will need to consider the whole poem to answer this fully. \*\*\* **(6 marks)**

**Section B: Composition (30 marks)**

**Answer any one of the following questions: you should spend about 40 minutes on this section. You will be assessed upon the quality of your ideas, expression, correct grammar and syntax, as well as your range of vocabulary. Your writing must be adopted appropriately to the chosen task.**

5. Write a short story on any one of the following titles:

*The Bravest of Women*

*Firelight*

*A Temporary Matter*

*The Bear, the Wolf and the Hunter*

*Songs for the Rain*

**(30 marks)**

6. 'In a world where television and the internet dominate, there is less need to travel the world.'

Write an article for your school magazine in which you either agree or disagree with this statement.

**(30 marks)**

7. You have been given a large sum of money by a relation, but a condition attached is that you must spend it equally on three worthy causes. Write a letter to your relation outlining which causes you have chosen to spend this money upon, giving detailed reasons for your choice.

**(30 marks)**

4. Write about a time in your life when you were given a major surprise. Outline what happened, why it happened and its effect on you afterwards.

**(30 marks)**

5. 'Some people are luckier than others.' Write about the most lucky or unluckiest person you have ever known or heard about. Explain in your answer why you consider them to be so fortunate/unfortunate.

**(30 marks)**