

Common Entrance Revision

PAPER 1 – Comprehension

Section A

Reading Non-Fiction

- Scan the questions.
- Read the passage through twice.
- Read the questions with care – what are they asking?
- Underline or highlight anything you feel might be relevant in the questions or the passage.
- Answer in full sentences
- Make a note of how many marks each question is worth, adjust the time spent on each question and the length of the answer to the number of marks you can earn.
- Keep an eye on the clock.
- Remember to use the text as evidence to support your answers.

The examiners are looking for you to:

- Show that you understand the text.
- Collect information or ideas from the text.
- Use the PEE technique
 - make a **P**oint
 - provide **E**vidence
 - give an **E**xplanation for the point you have made
- Show that you understand the purpose of the text
 - to persuade (e.g. an advert or charity leaflet)
 - to inform/instruct (e.g. a factual account)
- Show that you are aware of the audience of the text (e.g. who is it written for?/ who will be reading it?)

Section B

Reading Poetry

- Read the poem through carefully.
- Read it again and make sure you take note of the punctuation to help you make sense of the poem.
- Read the questions carefully – what are they asking?
- Underline or highlight anything you feel might be relevant in the questions or the passage.
- Answer in full sentences.

- Make a note of how many marks each question is worth, adjust the time spent on each question and the length of the answer to the number of marks you can earn.
- Keep an eye on the clock.
- Remember to use the text as evidence to support your answers.

Things to **look for** and **comment** upon when **looking at Poetry**:

- **The Title** – What is it? Does it tell you anything in particular?
- **Rhyme and Rhythm** – often makes a poem memorable. What does it sound like in your head? Do the lines run quickly or slowly? Are words, phrases or sounds repeated? Does the rhythm change at all? What effect does this have?
- **What is the poem about?** – Try and summarise the main subject of the poem in one or two sentences.
- **Who is speaking in the poem? To Whom?** – Is it the poet's voice speaking in the poem or is it the voice of somebody else? Is the poet speaking to you, or quietly reflecting to himself/herself, or is the poet addressing the world in general? Is there another voice in the poem?
- **How does the poem convey its message?**
 - **Verses** – What do you notice about the poem's appearance? What is its shape? Short lines? Long lines? What is the effect?
 - **Imagery** – What are the main images the writer uses? Does the poet use any comparisons? Similes? Metaphors? Personification?
 - **Adjectives, verbs and adverbs.**
 - **Sentence types and lengths.**
 - **Repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia**
 - **Tense** – What tense does the poet use?
 - **Punctuation** – Does the punctuation (or lack of it) help you to see how the poem should be read? Do the lines run into each other?
 - **Mood** – What is the mood of the poem? Does it feel happy, sad, sentimental, defiant, thoughtful, triumphant?
 - **Tone** – How should the poem be read?
 - **Symbolism** – Does the poem represent something else?

PAPER 2 – Writing

Section A

Studied Literature: Theme – Relationships (make sure you spell these correctly)

Holes – Louis Sachar
Tribes – Catherine MacPhail
Private Peaceful – Michael Morpurgo
Boy in Striped Pyjamas – John Boyne

- Make sure you know how to spell the title of the book and how to spell the author's name.
- Make sure you know how to spell the names of the main characters.
- Make sure you always put the title of the book in inverted commas. E.g. 'Holes'.
- Read the questions carefully. There will be **four** questions.
- You only need to answer **one** question.
- There will be **two** questions will be on Relationships.
- There will be **two** questions that are general.
- Make sure you **ANSWER THE QUESTION** by referring to **relevant** incidents in the texts. **Do not just rewrite an essay we have done in class.**

The examiners are looking for you to:

- offer opinions.
- make comparisons and show preferences.
- show a response to what you have been reading.
- express yourself clearly and accurately, using standard English spelling, grammar, punctuation and appropriate vocabulary.

If possible, try to refer to more than one text in your answer.

Section B

Composition

- Read all the titles carefully and see what they require of you.
- Choose wisely – the one that will **demonstrate your skills** most fully. It may not be the easiest one!
- **MAKE A PLAN**. There are lots of ways to plan, but a paragraph plan is an effective way of organising your thoughts.
- Think about your first and last paragraphs. The first must make the reader want to read on. The last should conclude all the events in an interesting way – twist, moral etc.
- Begin your writing with your title in mind. Do not be long-winded getting into your essay.

Think about the common failings of essays:

- 'Laundry List' ('then I did this, then I did that, then I did....')
 - The essay is too far fetched. (.....and we found a magic cave full of jewels and then a skeleton appeared and started to talk about.....)
 - Don't write about things you know nothing about. (e.g. A Day in the Life of a Policeman)
 - 'Purple prose' ('a walk on the crunchy, cornflake leaves and we saw the sweet foxes and the rabbits, gambolling badgers and the feather-legged water ferret...') In other words, don't go over the top!
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- Try to write from your own experience where possible.
 - Remember to use an excellent, attention grabbing opening paragraph.
 - When describing, think of all the senses: smell, sound, touch, taste as well as the obvious one, sight.
 - Make good use of figures of speech – simile, metaphor and good adjectives.
 - Write in the past tense – you will make fewer mistakes!
 - Do not use speech marks unless it is really necessary and you are confident that you can use them properly. You can always use reported speech instead.
 - Do not get carried away or too wrapped up in your essay. This leads to spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes, which you need to eliminate.
Remember: Quality is better than quantity.
 - Handwriting matters – good presentation impresses and can help to increase marks!
 - Leave time to proof read your work.

REMEMBER:

You are trying to show off **all** your English writing skills – so use them!

Tips for Narrative Writing

Choose your title or question.

Plan your story

1. Make sure your story is well structured using a clear introduction, problem, climax and ending.
2. Decide on an atmosphere. For example, sad, eerie, fun etc
3. Choose whether you are writing in the first person (I), or third person (she/he) and stick to it.
4. Focus on one or two characters.
5. Give your main characters rounded personalities and life.
6. Keep the time scale and plot short.
7. Choose a past or present tense and **stick to it**.

Write your story

8. Give the opening sentence impact by using a question, "direct speech" or an exclamation!
9. Use the senses (touch, see, hear, smell...) to describe the setting or place.
10. Keep the plot moving but use relevant details that bring the atmosphere and characters to life.
11. Include some conversation if you are confident to do so correctly. Do not use too much – avoid death by dialogue.
12. Use interesting words; avoid words like 'nice', 'got', 'good', 'bad', 'weak'...
13. Do not use abbreviations, for example, e.g. etc, O.K...
14. Use similes, metaphors and personification. E.g. 'He has his head in the sand.'
15. Make sure your ending does not tail off disappointingly. Use an unexpected ending or a clear, sharp last sentence.
16. Check your story for silly mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitals, full stops, paragraphs, use of a new line for a new speaker...

Above all:- KEEP YOUR READER, THE EXAMINER, ENTERTAINED.