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Caterham School 13+ English

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CATERHAM SCHOOL

**11+ & 13+ DEFERRED ENTRY
ENTRANCE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH**

SPECIMEN PAPER

Section A: Reading

Section B: Writing

Instructions to Candidates:

1. You have a total of 45 minutes to complete this paper. We recommend that you spend about 20 minutes on each section, with 5 minutes to check your work.
2. In Section A, read the passage carefully before you answer the question.
3. In Section B, you are only asked to write the opening of a description, not a full story.

Section One - Reading

Read the following short extract from *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. The extract focuses on Montag, a fire-starter, whose job is to burn books.

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor
5 playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history. With his symbolic helmet numbered 451 on his solid head, and his eyes all orange flame with the thought of what came next, he flicked the igniter and the house jumped up in a gorging fire that burned the evening sky red and yellow and black. He strode in a swarm of fireflies. He wanted above all, like the old joke, to shove a marshmallow on a stick in the furnace, while the
10 flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house. While the books went up in sparkling whirls and blew away on a wind turned dark with burning.

Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men singed and driven back by flame.

- 1) Looking at the extract as a whole, how does the writer use language, imagery and structure to make the text dramatic? You should use quotations from the extract to support your answers and try to be as technical with your analysis as you can. (10 marks)

Section Two – Writing

Write the opening of a description inspired by the picture below. You only have around twenty minutes so focus on filling your writing with the most imaginative language and imagery.

(10 marks)





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13+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH
SPECIMEN PAPER

Section A: Comprehension

(45 minutes)

Section B: Writing

(30 minutes)

Section A: Comprehension

Read the passage below and answer the questions which follow. The passage is taken from 'I'm the King of the Castle' by Susan Hill.

1 The cornfield was high up. He stood in the very middle of it, now, and the sun came
2 glaring down. He could feel the sweat running over his back, and in the creases of
3 his thighs. His face was burning. He sat down, although the stubble pricked at him,
4 through his jeans, and looked over at the dark line of trees on the edge of Hang
5 Wood. They seemed very close – all the individual branches were clearly outlined.
6 The fields around him were absolutely still.

7 When he first saw the crow, he took no notice. There had been several crows. This
8 one glided down into the corn on its enormous, ragged black wings. He began to be
9 aware of it when it rose up suddenly, circled overhead, and then dived, to land not
10 very far away from him. Kingshaw could see the feathers on his head, shining black
11 in between the butter-coloured corn-stalks. Then it rose, and circled, and came down
12 again, this time not quite landing, but flapping about his head, beating its wings and
13 making a sound like flat leather pieces being slapped together. It was the largest
14 crow he had ever seen. As it came down for the third time, he looked up and noticed
15 its beak, opening in a screech. The inside of its mouth was scarlet, it had small
16 glinting eyes.

17 Kingshaw got up and flapped his arms. For a moment, the bird retreated a little way
18 off, and higher up in the sky. He began to walk rather quickly back, through the path
19 in the corn, looking ahead of him. Stupid to be scared of a rotten bird. What could a
20 bird do? But he felt his own extreme isolation, high up in the cornfield.

21 For a moment, he could only hear the soft thudding of his own footsteps, and the
22 silky sound of the corn, brushing against him. Then, there was a rush of air, as the
23 great crow came beating down, and wheeled about his head. The beak opened and
24 the hoarse caaw came out again and again, from inside the scarlet mouth.

25 Kingshaw began to run, not caring, now, if he trampled the corn, wanting to get
26 away, down into the next field. He thought that the corn might be some kind of crow's
27 food store, in which he was seen as an invader. Perhaps this was only the first of a
28 whole battalion of crows, that would rise up and swoop at him. Get on to the grass
29 then, he thought, get on to the grass, that'll be safe, it'll go away. He wondered if it
30 had mistaken him for some hostile animal, lurking down in the corn.

31 His progress was very slow through the cornfield, the thick stalks bunched together
32 and got in his way, and he had to shove them back with his arms. But he reached
33 the gate and climbed it, and dropped on to the grass of the field on the other side.
34 Sweat was running down his forehead and into his eyes. He looked up. The crow
35 kept on coming. He ran.

Questions

1. How does the writer present the crow between lines 7-16? You should consider the appearance and the behaviour of the crow, and should use quotations from the text to support your answer.
(6 marks)
2. In the extract as a whole, explain **in your own words** how Kingshaw's thoughts and feelings change.
(4 marks)
3. How does the writer use language, imagery and structure to create a tense and exciting piece of writing? You must use quotations to support your analysis and should be as technical as you can be.
You may wish to write about:
 - The behaviour of Kingshaw
 - The use of varied sentence structure
 - Any other valid ideas(15 marks)

Section B: Writing

Describe a situation where you (or your character) has to overcome a difficult experience or challenge.

- You can use the comprehension passage as inspiration, but do not steal the ideas or lift lines from the passage.
- Make sure that you describe the experience in lots of detail, choosing your words carefully and creating vivid images for the reader. Beware of introducing too many characters or including too much action or dialogue which might detract from the description.
- Aim to write about between one and two sides, depending on the size of your handwriting.
- This piece could be real or made up.

Up to 20 marks are available for the content of your work: this means the ideas, narrative and creativity.

Up to 5 marks are available for the accuracy and written style of your work (spelling, punctuation and grammar).

(Total: 25 marks)

You can plan your ideas in the box below.

Paper Notes: 13+ English Specimen Paper (13+ English Specimen Paper)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

Overview

This is a **specimen paper** for **Caterham School's 13+ entrance examination in English**, designed to give prospective pupils a clear picture of what to expect on the day. The paper is divided into two timed sections: **Section A (Comprehension)** runs for 45 minutes and uses an extract from Susan Hill's novel *I'm the King of the Castle*, whilst **Section B (Writing)** allows 30 minutes for a descriptive piece on overcoming a challenge.

The comprehension questions test close reading, analytical thinking, and the ability to write about language and structure. Pupils must support answers with quotations and show awareness of literary techniques. The writing task awards up to 25 marks (20 for content and ideas, 5 for technical accuracy), so both creativity and precision matter.

This paper is pitched at candidates aged 12 or 13 preparing for entry into **Year 9**. It assumes familiarity with the conventions of GCSE-style textual analysis, making it a rigorous test of reading and writing skills for pupils aspiring to Caterham's senior school.

How this paper is organised

The paper opens with **Section A: Comprehension**, worth a total of **25 marks** (6 + 4 + 15), and allocated **45 minutes**. Candidates read a tense prose extract about a boy named Kingshaw being menaced by a crow in a cornfield, then answer three questions of increasing difficulty. Question 1 (6 marks) asks about the presentation of the crow within specified lines; question 2 (4 marks) requires pupils to track the character's changing thoughts in their own words; question 3 (15 marks) demands technical analysis of language, imagery, and structure.

Section B: Writing follows, with a single descriptive task worth **25 marks** (20 for content, 5 for spelling, punctuation, and grammar) and a time limit of **30 minutes**. Pupils describe a situation in which they or a fictional character overcomes a difficult experience, aiming for one to two sides of writing. A planning box is provided on the paper.

The entire examination lasts **75 minutes** (45 + 30), and pupils must manage time independently, balancing detailed comprehension responses against the need to craft an original, vivid piece of descriptive writing.

Topics covered

- Close reading and retrieval of evidence from a literary fiction extract (Susan Hill's I'm the King of the Castle)
- Analysis of how a writer presents a character (the crow) through descriptive detail, action, and sensory language
- Tracking a character's changing emotions and thoughts across a passage, expressed in the candidate's own words
- Technical analysis of language devices, including simile, imagery, personification, and narrative pacing
- Understanding structural choices such as sentence variety, paragraph transitions, and the manipulation of tension
- Descriptive writing that conveys atmosphere, physical detail, and internal experience
- Creative narrative planning and the ability to sustain focus on a single experience without over-complicating plot or dialogue
- Accurate spelling, punctuation, and grammar under timed conditions
- Use of vivid, carefully chosen vocabulary to evoke images and emotions
- Integration of textual quotations to support analytical points

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the Susan Hill extract twice before attempting the questions: once for overall meaning, then again to underline key quotations and note techniques.
- Practise writing quotations correctly, using speech marks and embedding short phrases within your own sentences rather than dropping in long chunks.
- For question 3, annotate the passage by labelling literary devices (simile, personification, short sentences for tension) in the margin.
- Time yourself on past or specimen papers to ensure you can complete both sections comfortably within 75 minutes without rushing the creative writing.
- When planning your Section B piece, jot down five sensory details (sight, sound, touch, smell, internal feeling) before you begin writing.
- Study GCSE-level mark schemes for AQA or Eduqas English Language to understand how examiners reward technical terminology and analytical depth.
- Read extracts from literary fiction (particularly pre-1990s novels) aloud to familiarise yourself with formal narrative voices and varied sentence rhythms.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Retelling the passage rather than analysing it: question 3 asks how the writer creates tension, not what happens in the story.
- Using quotations without comment or explanation; always follow every quotation with a sentence that interprets or explores the effect of the language.
- Writing in vague, general terms ('the writer uses good description') instead of naming specific techniques such as onomatopoeia ('caaw'), colour imagery ('scarlet mouth'), or triadic structure.
- Spending too long on question 3 and leaving insufficient time for Section B, resulting in a rushed or incomplete creative piece.
- In Section B, introducing too many characters or switching scene halfway through, which dilutes descriptive detail and weakens focus.
- Forgetting to proofread the creative writing for basic spelling and punctuation errors, losing easy marks in the technical accuracy band.

Exam technique

Begin with a quick skim of the entire paper to understand what lies ahead, then read the extract carefully, underlining or annotating in pencil as you go. Tackle the comprehension questions in order: question 1 is straightforward retrieval and analysis (aim for 6 to 8 minutes), question 2 tests inference and rephrasing (5 to 6 minutes), whilst question 3 is the analytical heart of Section A and deserves at least 25 minutes, including time to re-read relevant lines and plan your points.

Leave about 5 minutes at the end of Section A to review your answers, checking that every quotation is correctly punctuated and that you have used technical vocabulary. Then move decisively to Section B. Spend 3 to 4 minutes planning your descriptive piece in the box provided (list your opening image, key moments, sensory details, and closing line), write for about 22 minutes, and reserve the final 3 minutes to proofread for spelling, missing full stops, and sentence fragments.

If you find yourself running short of time in Section B, prioritise finishing the piece with a strong closing sentence over adding extra paragraphs in the middle. A complete, well-structured shorter piece will score more highly than an unfinished longer one, and the 5 marks for technical accuracy depend on demonstrating control across the whole text.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, pupils should revise the full range of **language analysis techniques** expected at GCSE, including metaphor, alliteration, asyndeton, and the effects of different sentence types (simple, compound, complex, minor). Practise annotating unseen prose extracts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction to sharpen your ability to identify and explain writers' choices under time pressure.

For the creative writing component, study **descriptive and narrative writing** models that balance external action with internal thought, and experiment with varying sentence length to control pace. Read short stories by writers such as Roald Dahl, Shirley Jackson, or Ray Bradbury to see how experienced authors sustain tension and mood within a compact structure.

Finally, consolidate your grasp of **spelling, punctuation, and grammar conventions** by working through targeted exercises on homophones, apostrophes, commas in complex sentences, and paragraphing. Even a technically brilliant analysis or creative piece will lose marks if basic accuracy falters, so keep a checklist of your personal error patterns and proofread systematically.

Key terms

Simile, Imagery, Personification, Sensory language, Narrative perspective, Sentence structure, Triadic structure, Onomatopoeia, Verb choice, Tension, Isolation, Descriptive writing, Embedding quotations, Atmosphere, Technical terminology

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