

Eton College King's Scholarship Examination 2021

GENERAL II

(One and a half hours)

Remember to write your candidate number on every sheet of answer paper used.

You must answer both questions.

Each question is worth the same number of marks.

You need not answer the questions in the order set, but you must start each one on a separate piece of paper.

Spend about 45 minutes on each question.

Do not turn over until told to do so.

Question 1: START A NEW SHEET OF PAPER NOW

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism.

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. This was done partly by the invention of new words, but chiefly by eliminating undesirable words and by stripping such words as remained of unorthodox meanings. To give a single example. The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as ‘This dog is free from lice’ or ‘This field is free from weeds’. It could not be used in its old sense of ‘politically free’ or ‘intellectually free’ since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed even as concepts, and were therefore of necessity nameless. Newspeak was designed not to extend but to *diminish* the range of thought, and this purpose was indirectly assisted by cutting the choice of words down to a minimum.

The grammar of Newspeak had two outstanding peculiarities. The first of these was an almost complete interchangeability between different parts of speech. Any word in the language (in principle this applied even to very abstract words such as *if* or *when*) could be used either as verb, noun, adjective, or adverb. The word *thought*, for example, did not exist in Newspeak. Its place was taken by *think*, which did duty for both noun and verb. Adjectives were formed by adding the suffix *-ful* to the noun-verb, and adverbs by adding *-wise*. Thus for example, *speedful* meant ‘rapid’ and *speedwise* meant ‘quickly’.

In addition, any word — this again applied in principle to every word in the language — could be negated by adding the affix *un-*, or could be strengthened by the affix *plus-*, or, for still greater emphasis, *doubleplus-*. Thus, for example, *uncold* meant ‘warm’, while *pluscold* and *doublepluscold* meant, respectively, ‘very cold’ and ‘superlatively cold’. It was also possible, as in present-day English, to modify the meaning of almost any word by prepositional affixes such as *ante-*, *post-*, *up-*, *down-*, etc. By such methods it was found possible to bring about an enormous diminution of vocabulary.

—Adapted from ‘The Principles of Newspeak’,
appended to George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

- (a) Read the extract on page 2.
- (i) Applying the principles outlined above, translate the Newspeak phrases below into Standard English:

free
 doubleplustired
 unspedwise
 ref
 speakwrite

[5]

- (ii) Applying the same principles, ‘translate’ the following passage (taken from Iris Murdoch’s *The Sea, the Sea*) into Newspeak:

The sea which lies before me as I write glows rather than sparkles in the bland May sunshine. With the tide turning, it leans quietly against the land, almost unflecked by ripples or by foam. Near to the horizon it is a luxurious purple, spotted with regular lines of emerald green. At the horizon it is indigo. Near to the shore, where my view is framed by rising heap of humpy yellow rock, there is a band of lighter green, icy and pure, less radiant, opaque however, not transparent. We are in the north, and the bright sunshine cannot penetrate the sea. Where the gentle water taps the rocks there is still a surface skin of colour. The cloudless sky is very pale at the indigo horizon which it lightly pencils in with silver. Its blue gains towards the zenith and vibrates there. But the sky looks cold, even the sun looks cold.

[5]

- (b) In the third part of *Gulliver’s Travels*, the adventurer encounters ‘a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever’ in the pursuit of ‘a universal language, to be understood in all civilised nations’. This episode is a parody of a very serious proposition made by John Wilkins (acting under the instruction of the newly formed Royal Society) which he put forward in *An Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (1668).

Might we consider such a scheme advantageous? If so, how so? What, if anything, might be gained – or lost – by the abolition of ‘all words whatsoever’?

[15]

[Total mark for Question 1: 25]

Question 2: *START A NEW SHEET OF PAPER NOW*

Write a response, in whatever form seems appropriate, to ONE of the following.
It is recommended that you write no more than 700 words.

EITHER

- (a) Good character cannot be taught.

OR

- (b) Overall happiness of the population is the best measure of the progress of a society.

OR

- (c) Every problem presents an opportunity.

[Total mark for Question 2: 25]

END OF PAPER