

# Eton College King's Scholarship Examination 2023

## 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**

*Below is an extract from Seamus Heaney's Nobel Lecture, 'Crediting Poetry', given on 7th December 1995 in Stockholm.*

1 I credit poetry for making this space-walk possible. I credit it immediately because of a  
line I wrote fairly recently instructing myself (and whoever else might be listening) to  
“walk on air against your better judgement”. But I credit it ultimately because poetry can  
5 make an order as true to the impact of external reality and as sensitive to the inner laws  
of the poet's being as the ripples that rippled in and rippled out across the water in that  
scullery bucket fifty years ago. An order where we can at last grow up to that which we  
stored up as we grew. An order which satisfies all that is appetitive in the intelligence  
and prehensile in the affections. I credit poetry, in other words, both for being itself and  
10 for being a help, for making possible a fluid and restorative relationship between the  
mind's centre and its circumference, between the child gazing at the word “Stockholm”  
on the face of the radio dial and the man facing the faces that he meets in Stockholm at  
this most privileged moment. I credit it because credit is due to it, in our time and in all  
13 time, for its truth to life, in every sense of that phrase.

...

15 In one of the poems best known to students in my generation, a poem which could be  
said to have taken the nutrients of the symbolist movement and made them available in  
capsule form, the American poet Archibald MacLeish affirmed that “A poem should be  
equal to: / Not true.” As a defiant statement of poetry's gift for telling truth but telling it  
slant, this is both cogent and corrective. Yet there are times when a deeper need enters,  
20 when we want the poem to be not only pleurably right but compellingly wise, not only  
a surprising variation played upon the world, but a re-tuning of the world itself. We want  
the surprise to be transitive like the impatient thump which unexpectedly restores the  
picture to the television set, or the electric shock which sets the fibrillating heart back to  
its proper rhythm. We want what the woman wanted in the prison queue in Leningrad,  
25 standing there blue with cold and whispering for fear, enduring the terror of Stalin's  
regime and asking the poet Anna Akhmatova if she could describe it all, if her art could  
be equal to it. And this is the want I too was experiencing in those far more protected  
circumstances in Co. Wicklow when I wrote the lines I have just quoted, a need for  
poetry that would merit the definition of it I gave a few moments ago, as an order “true  
30 to the impact of external reality and ... sensitive to the inner laws of the poet's being.”

GENERAL II

(a) Read the extracts from Seamus Heaney's 'Crediting Poetry' on page 2.

(i) Heaney praises poetry for 'its truth to life, in every sense of that phrase' (line 13). What are the different senses of the phrase that Heaney explores?

[4]

(ii) Heaney repeatedly praises poetry as being a force of order. Why and how might a poem create such order?

[3]

(iii) Heaney quotes Archibald MacLeish's affirmation:

*A poem should be equal to:  
Not true*

Giving specific examples from the extract, discuss the idea that poetry aims to capture what is 'not true'.

[5]

(b) *There is fiction in the space between  
The lines on your page of memories  
Write it down but it doesn't mean  
You're not just telling stories*

(Tracy Chapman.)

To what extent do you agree that art can never completely capture reality?

[13]

[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) To what extent can studying the past teach us about the future, if at all?

*OR*

- (b) Can we make moral judgements about people from different times and places from our own? Why or why not?

*OR*

- (c) If you could get rid of all pain (mental and physical), would you? Why or why not?

[Total mark for Question 2: 25]

END OF PAPER