

11+ PAST PAPER PACK

Highgate School 11+ English

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HIGHGATE

11+ test for entry

ENGLISH – Practice Paper 1

Time allowed: 45 minutes

- **Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis):** 30 minutes, including the time you take to read the passage.
- **Question 4 (creative writing):** 15 minutes, including the time you take to check your answer to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Name	
Candidate number	
Current school	

Teacher use only	Qu. 1-3 (out of 15)	Qu. 4 (out of 10)	Qu. 4 SPAG (out of 5)

Read the passage below before answering questions 1-3 on the next page.

In this extract, Simon (who is on a desert island) wanders off from his friends to explore the jungle alone.

1. Simon turned away from them and went where the just noticeable path led him. Soon high jungle closed in. Tall trunks bore unexpected pale flowers all the way up to the dark canopy where life went on noisily. The air here was dark too, and the creepers dropped their ropes like the rigging of sinking ships. His feet left prints in the soft soil and the creepers shivered throughout their lengths when he bumped them.
2. He came at last to a place where more sunshine fell. Since they had not so far to go for light, the creepers had woven a great mat that hung at the side of an open space in the jungle; for here a patch of rock came close to the surface of the canopy and would not allow more than little plants and ferns to grow. The whole space was walled with dark perfumed bushes, and was a bowl of heat and light. A great tree, fallen across one corner, leaned against the trees that still stood.
3. Simon paused. He looked over his shoulder behind him and glanced swiftly round to confirm that he was utterly alone. For a moment his movements were almost secretive. Then he bent down and wormed his way into the centre of the mat. The creepers and the bushes were so close that he left his sweat on them and they pulled together behind him. When he was secure in the middle he was in a little cabin screened off from the open space by a few leaves.
4. He squatted down, parted the leaves and looked out into the clearing. Nothing moved but a pair of colourful butterflies that danced round each other in the hot air. Holding his breath he listened to the sounds of the island. Evening was advancing toward the island; the sounds of the bright fantastic birds, the bee-sounds, even the crying of the gulls that were returning to their roosts among the square rocks, were fainter. The deep sea breaking miles away on the reef made an undertone less noticeable than the whispering of his heart.
5. Simon dropped the screen of leaves back into place. The slope of the bars of honey-coloured sunlight decreased; the light slid up the bushes, passed over the green candle-like buds, moved up toward the canopy, and darkness thickened under the trees. With the fading of the light the riotous colours died and the heat and urgency cooled away. The candle-like buds stirred. Their green leaves drew back a little and the white tips of the flowers moved delicately to meet the open air.
6. Now the sunlight had lifted clear of the open space and withdrawn from the sky. Darkness poured out, submerging the ways between the trees till they were dim and strange as the bottom of the sea. The candle-like buds opened their wide white flowers glimmering under the light from the first stars. Their scent spilled out into the air and took possession of the island.

Spend 30 minutes on Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis), including the time you take to read the passage.

Re-read paragraph 1.

Question 1

- (a) Write down **one** word that means ‘the highest branches of trees in a forest forming a roof of leaves’.

.....

(1 mark)

- (b) Name two things that Simon sees when he enters the jungle.
(2 marks)

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(2 marks)

Re-read paragraph 4.

Question 2

- (a) Write out a quotation that gives you the impression that Simon is enchanted by the sights or sounds of the jungle.

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(1 mark)

- (b) Explain how the quotation gives you this impression. Consider the meaning of the words and their associations.

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(3 marks)

Re-read paragraphs 5 and 6.

Question 3

(a) What two impressions do you get in paragraphs 5 and 6 about the part of the jungle that Simon is in?

You could think about:

- The light and the way that it gets darker.
- The way that the flowers open and spread their scent.

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(2 marks)

(b) Choose one of these two impressions and explain how the writer creates this impression. Include two quotations in your answer to support your explanation.

Remember to consider the meanings of words and their associations.

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(6 marks)

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End of Paper

Paper Notes: 11+ English Practice Paper (11+ English Practice 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 **Highgate School's 11+ English Practice Paper 1**, designed to prepare candidates for the school's entrance examination at **Year 7 entry**. The paper assesses two core English skills: reading comprehension paired with textual analysis, and creative descriptive writing under timed conditions.

The comprehension section uses an extract from **William Golding's Lord of the Flies**, focusing on Simon's solitary exploration of the jungle. Questions test vocabulary retrieval, quotation selection, inference about character mood, and close analysis of how the writer creates atmosphere through language choices. Candidates must demonstrate understanding not only of what happens but of how Golding's word choices and imagery build impressions of the setting.

The creative writing task requires students to produce **a short descriptive passage set in an unfamiliar city location**, incorporating sensory detail and figurative language. Marks are awarded separately for content (10 marks) and for spelling, punctuation and grammar (5 marks), reflecting the dual emphasis on imaginative expression and technical accuracy that characterises independent school English entrance assessments.

How this paper is organised

The paper runs to **45 minutes** and divides into two unequal sections. Questions 1 to 3 (comprehension and analysis) carry **15 marks in total** and should take approximately 30 minutes, including time to read the passage carefully. Question 1 comprises simple retrieval tasks worth 3 marks (a vocabulary definition and identifying two visual details). Question 2 awards 4 marks for selecting and explaining a quotation that conveys Simon's enchantment. Question 3, the most demanding, is worth 8 marks: candidates identify two impressions from paragraphs 5 and 6, then analyse how one impression is created, supporting their explanation with two quotations.

Question 4 (creative writing) allows **15 minutes** and is marked out of **10 marks for content and 5 marks for SPAG** (spelling, punctuation and grammar). Students write a descriptive piece about discovering a new place in a city. The paper provides lined space equivalent to roughly one to one-and-a-half pages.

The layout is clear and generous, with question prompts in bold and bullet-pointed guidance to scaffold responses. Candidates write answers directly onto the paper.

Topics covered

- Reading comprehension of mid-twentieth-century literary fiction (Golding's *Lord of the Flies*) with focus on setting and atmosphere
- Vocabulary in context, including identifying subject-specific terms such as 'canopy' to describe forest structure
- Quotation selection to support inferences about character mood and response to environment
- Close language analysis: examining connotations, imagery and word choice to explain how writers create impressions
- Understanding of figurative language, particularly simile and metaphor, both in reading and in the creative task
- Descriptive writing in the first person with a focus on place, mood and sensory detail
- Application of spelling, punctuation and grammar conventions under exam conditions
- Time management across comprehension and creative writing within a single timed session

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise selecting short, focused quotations that directly answer the question rather than copying out whole sentences unnecessarily.
- Learn to explain how word choices work: what they connote, what associations they trigger, and how these create a specific impression.
- Revise literary terminology such as imagery, simile, metaphor, personification, and be ready to spot and name these techniques in unseen texts.
- Time yourself writing descriptions for exactly 12 minutes to simulate the pressure of Question 4, leaving 3 minutes to proofread.
- Read a range of classic and modern fiction extracts (particularly those set in vivid natural or urban environments) to build familiarity with descriptive style.
- Practise writing with all five senses: what you see, hear, smell, feel and taste, not just visual description.
- Proofread your creative writing systematically for one type of error at a time (first full stops and capital letters, then apostrophes, then spellings).

Common mistakes to avoid

- Choosing quotations that are too long or irrelevant; examiners want precise evidence, not whole paragraphs copied out.
- Identifying a technique (e.g. 'this is a simile') without explaining why the writer chose it or what effect it achieves.
- Writing impressions in Question 3(a) that are too vague ('it is nice' or 'it is scary') rather than specific observations about light, atmosphere or the flowers.
- Rushing the creative writing and neglecting to include figurative language or varied sentence structures, which limits the mark for content.
- Failing to leave time to proofread the descriptive writing, leading to easily avoidable SPAG errors that cost marks.
- Retelling what happens in the passage instead of analysing how language creates mood or impressions.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the passage from *Lord of the Flies* carefully, twice if possible: once for overall sense and a second time underlining or mentally noting key descriptive phrases. Tackle Question 1 quickly (it is worth only 3 marks) to secure easy points, then move to Questions 2 and 3, which require deeper thinking. For Question 2(b) and Question 3(b), always embed your quotations within your sentence and then explain the specific words' effects, not just the general idea.

Allocate your 30 minutes for comprehension roughly as follows: 5 minutes reading, 3 minutes on Question 1, 7 minutes on Question 2, and 15 minutes on Question 3, which carries the most weight. Do not over-write on the early questions at the expense of the later analysis.

For Question 4, spend the first 2 minutes planning your city setting and deciding on at least one simile or metaphor to include. Write for about 10 minutes, aiming for two or three developed paragraphs with varied vocabulary and sentence structures. Reserve the final 3 minutes to read through your work, checking for missing full stops, incorrect homophones (their/there/they're, your/you're) and spelling slips. The 5 SPAG marks reward accurate proofreading, so use the time wisely.

What to revise alongside this paper

Extend your preparation by reading other extracts from **Lord of the Flies** to familiarise yourself with Golding's style and the novel's symbolic use of nature. Practise analysing descriptive passages from authors such as **Michael Morpurgo**, **Robert Louis**

Stevenson or **Charles Dickens**, all of whom are commonly set at 11+ level and employ rich imagery.

Review figurative language in detail: understand the difference between simile, metaphor and personification, and practise writing your own examples in different contexts (natural settings, busy streets, mysterious buildings). Work on expanding your vocabulary for describing light, sound, texture and mood.

Consolidate your grammar and punctuation, particularly sentence variety (simple, compound and complex), correct use of commas in lists and for clauses, and apostrophes for possession and contraction. Many 11+ English papers award separate marks for technical accuracy, so secure these foundational skills early.

Key terms

Canopy, Quotation, Inference, Connotation, Imagery, Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Atmosphere, Descriptive writing, Sensory detail, First person, SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar), Textual analysis, Close reading

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11+ test for entry

ENGLISH – Practice Paper 2

Time allowed: 45 minutes

- **Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis):** 30 minutes, including the time you take to read the passage.
- **Question 4 (creative writing):** 15 minutes, including the time you take to check your answer to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Name	
Candidate Number	
Current school	

Teacher use only	Qu. 1-3 (out of 15)	Qu. 4 (out of 10)	Qu. 4 SPAG (out of 5)

Read the passage below before answering questions 1-3 on the next page.

In this passage, a garden party has just been held for invited guests only. Children are now emerging from the trees, where they have been spying on the guests.

1. The Mulberry Garden surrendered to darkness and quiet. The three fiddles, the flute and the singer had gone home; the waiters, stalking on tiptoes like shabby crows, had poked and pried in the trees and under the tables for valuables left behind, and then blew out the lanterns in the trees.
2. A great stillness lay over the garden; such a stillness that the imagination might have heard the motion of a spider or the scream of a fly.
3. Suddenly there came the sound of a bell – a small, frail ringing: once, twice, three times...
4. The trees began to rustle, at first softly and then with increasing violence. Again the bell rang. The hedges began to shake, vines snapped and leaves fell to the ground. For a moment it seemed that the garden was in the grip of ghosts, called up by the bell to partake of the warmth left by the living. Indeed, the garden was reputed to be haunted...
5. Then this invisible violence died as mysteriously as it had sprung up; and out of the low branches and down the sides and backs of the trees slid and dropped various creatures, like misshapen fruits.
6. Perhaps a dozen, in all, made up this eerie **windfall***. Silently they gestured to each other before scuttling along the paths to the dark and silent house that adjoined the gate.
7. One by one they slipped through a back door and began to descend a flight of stone steps. The rattle of feet and the noise of panting suggested that a small-sized hailstorm had got inside the house and panicked.
8. The creatures, the **windfall*** from the trees, turned out to be children, human children of supernaturally ragged and filthy appearance. Several of them exhibited cuts and scratches from thorns and broken branches, and it seemed that they'd bled not blood but dirt, that they were dirt all through, that their very bones were grubby. Only their eyes, the windows of their souls, were bright and gleeful.

* **windfall** = the fruit blown down from a tree or bush by the wind

Spend 30 minutes on Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis), including the time you take to read the passage.

Re-read paragraph 1.

Question 1

- (a) Write down **one** word that means 'admitted defeat'.

.....

(1 mark)

- (b) Name two things that the waiters do in paragraph 1.

.....

.....

(2 marks)

Re-read paragraph 4.

Question 2

- (a) Write out a quotation that gives you the impression that the garden has become frightening.

.....

(1 mark)

- (b) Explain how the quotation gives you this impression. Consider the meaning of the words and their associations.

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(3 marks)

Re-read paragraphs 5 to 8 which describes the children dropping out of the trees and entering the house.

Question 3

(a) What two impressions do you get about the children in paragraphs 5 to 8?

You could think about:

- The children's movements as they drop out of the trees and enter the house.
- The children's appearance when they enter the house.

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(2 marks)

(b) Choose one of these two impressions and explain how the writer creates this impression. Include two quotations in your answer to support your explanation. Remember to consider the meanings of words and their associations.

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(6 marks)

Spend 15 minutes on Question 4 (creative writing), including the time you take to check your answer to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 4

Write a short description about a place which is busy and noisy, but becomes quiet and peaceful.

You should try to make it clear:

- where you are
- how the place changes
- how your feelings change

You might like to:

- use the senses
- use a simile or a metaphor
- use a range of sentence structures for effect

(10 marks for content, 5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.)

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End of Paper

Paper Notes: 11+ English Practice Paper (11+ English Practice 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 **Highgate School's 11+ English Practice Paper 2**, designed to prepare candidates for entry into Year 7 at one of London's most academically selective independent schools. The paper tests two core skill areas within a strict **45-minute time limit**: comprehension and literary analysis (30 minutes) followed by creative descriptive writing (15 minutes). Candidates must demonstrate both close reading skills and the ability to produce polished, imaginative prose under timed conditions.

The comprehension section centres on a literary extract from *The Mulberry Garden*, a passage rich in atmosphere and figurative language. Students encounter a garden party's eerie aftermath, where hidden children emerge from the trees. Questions range from straightforward vocabulary retrieval to sophisticated analysis of how language choices create mood and character impression. The passage is deliberately challenging, requiring inference, sensitivity to connotation, and the ability to support interpretations with precise quotation.

The creative writing task mirrors the transition explored in the reading passage, asking students to describe a place that shifts from **busy and noisy to quiet and peaceful**. Candidates are assessed on content (10 marks) and separately on **spelling, punctuation and grammar (5 marks)**, reflecting Highgate's expectation that technical accuracy must underpin imaginative expression. The prompt encourages sensory detail, figurative language, and varied sentence structure, rewarding students who can craft mood through deliberate stylistic choices.

How this paper is organised

The paper is divided into two distinct sections with clearly allocated time and marks. **Questions 1 to 3** (comprehension and analysis) carry **15 marks in total** and should take 30 minutes, including initial reading time. Question 1 tests retrieval and basic inference (3 marks total): part (a) asks for a synonym from paragraph 1, while part (b) requires two factual details about the waiters' actions. Question 2 (4 marks) moves to analytical reading of paragraph 4, asking students first to select an appropriate quotation that conveys a frightening atmosphere (1 mark), then to explain how that quotation achieves its effect through word meaning and association (3 marks).

Question 3 is the most substantial, worth **8 marks**. Part (a) asks for two impressions of the children drawn from paragraphs 5 to 8 (2 marks), with bullet prompts about movement and appearance. Part (b) requires an extended response (6 marks) in which students choose one impression and analyse the writer's methods, embedding **two quotations** and exploring connotation and effect. The second section, **Question 4**, is the creative writing task (10 marks for content, 5 marks for SPAG), to be completed in 15 minutes including proofreading time.

The layout provides generous lined space for extended answers, particularly for Question 3(b) and Question 4, signalling the expectation of developed, paragraph-length responses rather than brief notes.

Topics covered

- Close reading and retrieval of explicit information from literary fiction (synonym identification, factual detail extraction)
- Selection and deployment of quotations to support interpretations of atmosphere, tone and mood
- Analysis of how specific language choices (verb choice, simile, metaphor, personification) create effects and shape reader response
- Exploration of connotation and word association in descriptive and Gothic-influenced narrative prose
- Inference of character traits and impressions from physical description and action within a literary text
- Creative descriptive writing with a specified structural arc (transformation from noise to stillness)
- Application of sensory detail and figurative language (simile, metaphor) to evoke place and emotion
- Control of sentence variety and syntactic structure for stylistic effect in timed writing conditions
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar accuracy under exam pressure, assessed separately in the creative task

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise selecting short, precise quotations rather than copying out entire sentences. Examiners reward economy and relevance.
- When analysing language, always move beyond identifying a technique (e.g. 'simile') to explaining what effect it creates and why the comparison works in context.
- Time yourself strictly on the creative writing task. Fifteen minutes is tight, so plan a simple structure (opening busy scene, transition moment, closing peaceful scene) in the first two minutes.
- Look for connotations beyond the literal meaning of words. 'Stalking', 'poked', 'pried' all suggest something sinister about the waiters' behaviour.
- In Question 3(b), weave your two quotations into flowing sentences rather than listing them separately. Use phrases like 'The writer describes them as..., which suggests...'
- Proofread your creative writing in the final two minutes. Highgate awards 5 marks for SPAG, so careless errors in spelling or punctuation cost you a third of the writing marks.
- Underline or highlight key words in questions ('How does...?', 'Explain...', 'two impressions') to ensure you address every part of the task.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Copying out long quotations that contain irrelevant detail instead of trimming to the phrase that precisely demonstrates the point being made.
- Identifying a literary technique (metaphor, personification) but failing to explain what impression or feeling it creates in the reader's mind.
- Rushing Question 3(b) and providing only one quotation or a vague assertion ('The writer makes the children seem scary') without analysing word choice or effect.
- Spending too long planning the creative writing task and leaving insufficient time to write a developed, varied piece or to proofread for SPAG errors.
- Writing a narrative story in Question 4 instead of the requested **descriptive** writing focused on place and atmosphere.
- Ignoring the paper's emphasis on connotation and association, treating words as if they have only dictionary definitions rather than exploring their emotional or cultural resonance.

Exam technique

Allocate your 30 minutes for comprehension carefully. Spend the first five minutes reading the passage twice: once for overall sense, then again while underlining or mentally noting key descriptive phrases and shifts in tone. Questions 1 and 2 should take no more than eight minutes combined, leaving 17 minutes for Question 3, which carries over half the comprehension marks. In Question 3(b), plan which impression you will explore before you begin writing, and identify your two quotations in the passage margins to avoid time wasted hunting later.

For Question 4, use the first two minutes to jot down a three-part structure (busy opening, moment of change, peaceful close) and to list sensory details or a simile you might use. Write fluently for ten minutes, aiming for varied sentence openings and at least one piece of figurative language. Reserve the final three minutes strictly for proofreading: read your work aloud in your head to catch missing words, check for consistent past or present tense, and scan for common spelling errors (their/there, its/it's, apostrophes in plurals).

If you finish early on the comprehension section, do not skip ahead to Question 4. Instead, reread your answers to Questions 2(b) and 3(b) and check whether you have genuinely explained effects rather than simply described what the text says. Highgate's mark schemes reward precise, analytical thinking, so even one additional sentence clarifying why a word choice matters can lift your mark.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, students should practise close reading of **pre-20th-century and Gothic fiction**, as the Mulberry Garden extract uses heightened, literary language and imagery of darkness and the supernatural. Familiarity with classic children's literature (Dickens, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Leon Garfield) will help students navigate complex syntax and rich vocabulary. Work on identifying and explaining the effects of figurative language is essential: simile, metaphor, personification and sensory imagery are staples of 11+ comprehension at selective schools.

For the creative writing component, students should study model descriptive passages that demonstrate shifts in mood or atmosphere. Practise writing paragraphs that use varied sentence structures (simple, compound, complex; short and long for deliberate effect) and that layer sensory detail (sight, sound, smell, touch) to build a vivid sense of place. Revision of common spelling patterns, correct use of apostrophes, and consistent tense control will safeguard the SPAG marks.

Finally, timed practice under exam conditions is crucial. Highgate's 45-minute format is tight, and students must learn to read, think and write at speed without sacrificing

accuracy or depth. Regular mini-mock papers, ideally using similar literary extracts and transformation-based writing prompts, will build both confidence and stamina.

Key terms

Quotation, Inference, Connotation, Atmosphere, Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Figurative language, Sensory detail, Impression, Effect, Word association, Descriptive writing, Sentence variety, SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar)

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11+ test for entry

ENGLISH – Practice paper 3

Time allowed: 45 minutes

- **Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis):** 30 minutes, including the time you take to read the passage.
- **Question 4 (creative writing):** 15 minutes, including the time you take to check your answer to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Name	
Candidate number	
Current school	

Teacher use only	Qu. 1-3 (out of 15)	Qu. 4 (out of 10)	Qu. 4 SPAG (out of 5)

Read the passage below before answering questions 1-3 on the next page.

In this passage, a young boy who has moved to a Greek island with his family describes the family's villa (house) and a local taxi driver called Spiro.

1. The villa was small and square, standing in its tiny garden with an air of pink-faced determination. Its shutters had been faded by the sun to a delicate creamy-green, cracked and bubbled in places. The garden, surrounded by tall pink hedges, had the flower-beds worked in complicated geometrical patterns, marked with smooth white stones. The white cobbled paths, scarcely as wide as a rake's head, wound laboriously round flowerbeds hardly larger than a big straw hat, flowerbeds in the shape of stars, half-moons, triangles, and circles, all overgrown with a shaggy tangle of flowers run wild.
2. Roses dropped petals that seemed as big and smooth as saucers, flame-red, moon-white, glossy, and unwrinkled; marigolds like broods of shaggy suns stood watching their parent's progress through the sky. In the low growth the pansies pushed their velvety, innocent faces through the leaves, and the violets drooped sorrowfully under their heart-shaped leaves. The brightly coloured bush that sprawled luxuriously over the tiny front balcony was hung, as though for a carnival, with its lantern-shaped pink flowers. In the darkness of the hedge a thousand ballerina-like blooms quivered expectantly.
3. The warm air was thick with the scent of a hundred dying flowers, and full of the gentle, soothing whisper and murmur of insects. As soon as we saw it, we wanted to live there – it was as though the villa had been standing there waiting for our arrival. We felt we had come home.
4. Having lumbered so unexpectedly into our lives, Spiro now took over complete control of our affairs. It was better, he explained, for him to do things, as everyone knew him, and he would make sure we were not swindled.
5. 'Don'ts you worrys yourselves about anythings, Mrs Durrells,' he had scowled; 'leaves everythings to me.'
6. So he would take us shopping, and after an hour's sweating and roaring he would get the price of an article reduced by perhaps two drachmas.
7. That he knew everyone on the island, and that they all knew him, we soon discovered was no idle boast. Wherever his car stopped, half a dozen voices would shout out his name, and hands would beckon him to sit at the little tables under the trees and drink coffee. Policemen, peasants, and priests waved and smiled as he passed; fishermen, grocers, and cafe-owners greeted him like a brother. 'Ah, Spiro!' they would say, and smile at him affectionately as though he was a naughty but lovable child. They respected his honesty, his aggressiveness, and above all they adored his scorn and fearlessness.

Spend 30 minutes on Questions 1-3 (comprehension and analysis), including the time you take to read the passage.

Re-read paragraph 1.

Question 1

(a) Write down **one** word that means 'with difficulty' or 'strenuously'.

.....

(1 mark)

(b) Name two different features of the villa.

.....

.....

(2 marks)

Re-read paragraph 2.

Question 2

a. Give a quotation that gives the impression that the flowers are mysterious or unusual.

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(1 mark)

b. Explain how the quotation gives you this impression. Consider the meaning of the words and their associations.

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(3 marks)

Spend 15 minutes on Question 4 (creative writing), including the time you take to check your answer to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 4

Imagine you have travelled to a strange new place on holiday. Write a short diary entry describing your destination and a person whom you encounter.

You should try to make it clear:

- What the place is like
- What the person is like
- How you feel about them

You might like to:

- Use the senses
- Use a simile or a metaphor

(10 marks for content, 5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.)

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End of Paper

Paper Notes: 11+ English Practice Paper (11+ English Practice 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 **Practice Paper 3** in a series of **11+ English entrance exams** published by **Highgate School**, designed to assess candidates applying for Year 7 entry. The paper is timed at **45 minutes total** and splits into two distinct sections: comprehension and analysis of a literary passage, followed by a creative writing task.

The comprehension element uses an extract from Gerald Durrell's memoir *My Family and Other Animals*, describing a villa on a Greek island and the colourful character Spiro. Questions progress from simple vocabulary retrieval through to extended textual analysis, requiring candidates to quote, explain and evaluate the writer's craft. This mirrors the typical 11+ demand for close reading and inference skills.

The creative writing task allocates **15 minutes** and asks pupils to write a diary entry about encountering a new place and person, explicitly encouraging sensory detail and figurative language. The paper suits students preparing for competitive independent school entry, particularly those targeting schools that value literary awareness, precise quotation technique and imaginative yet controlled prose. Highgate's marking rubric awards **15 marks** for comprehension, **10 marks** for content in creative writing, and a further **5 marks** for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

How this paper is organised

The paper divides into **four numbered questions** across two sections. Questions 1 to 3 form the comprehension section, carrying **15 marks in total** and allowing **30 minutes** including reading time. Question 1 splits into a one-mark vocabulary task and a two-mark retrieval task; Question 2 awards one mark for a relevant quotation and three marks for explanation; Question 3 divides into a two-mark identification of impressions and a six-mark analytical response requiring two quotations and close language analysis.

Question 4 is the standalone creative writing task, worth **10 marks for content** and an additional **5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar** (SPAG). Candidates have **15 minutes** for this section, including time to proofread. The paper provides generous lined space for extended answers, with Question 3(b) and Question 4 each occupying over a page.

The reading passage is divided into seven short numbered paragraphs, making it straightforward to locate the material needed for each question. The layout is clear, with bold instructions and mark allocations printed beside each part, helping students allocate time efficiently during the exam.

Topics covered

- Close reading and textual retrieval from descriptive narrative prose, focusing on Gerald Durrell's Mediterranean memoir style
- Vocabulary in context, identifying single-word synonyms from literary text
- Quotation technique: selecting apt short phrases that support a stated impression or interpretation
- Explanation and analysis of writers' language choices, considering connotation, imagery and figurative language such as simile and personification
- Inference of character from dialogue, action and authorial description, particularly the presentation of Spiro's personality
- Extended analytical writing requiring dual quotations and sustained exploration of textual effects
- Creative descriptive writing in diary form, using sensory detail and figurative language (simile and metaphor)
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar accuracy under timed conditions in creative prose
- Time management across reading comprehension and creative writing within a 45-minute window

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise locating key words and phrases quickly by scanning paragraphs for specific details; underlining or annotating the passage can save time in Questions 1 and 2.
- When explaining quotations, always comment on the specific words chosen by the writer rather than paraphrasing the general idea; focus on connotations and imagery.
- For character questions like Question 3, look at what the character says, how they are described, and how other people react to them; these three angles often yield the strongest evidence.
- In the creative writing section, plan your diary entry in the first two minutes: jot down three sensory details and one simile or metaphor before you start writing.
- Leave three minutes at the end to proofread Question 4 carefully; the five SPAG marks reward accurate spelling, varied punctuation and correct sentence construction.
- Revise common literary devices such as personification, simile, metaphor and sensory imagery so you can identify and explain them confidently in the passage.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Copying out long quotations in Question 2(a) rather than selecting the shortest, most precise phrase that shows mystery or strangeness; examiners reward economy and precision.
- Paraphrasing or summarising the quotation in Question 2(b) instead of analysing the meanings and associations of individual words like 'ballerina-like' or 'quivered expectantly'.
- Writing two separate mini-essays in Question 3(b) rather than developing one sustained impression with two integrated quotations; coherence and depth score more highly than breadth.
- Rushing the creative writing and producing a rambling narrative without clear description of place and person; the task explicitly asks for a diary entry, so structure and focus matter.
- Neglecting to use a simile or metaphor in Question 4, even though the prompt specifically suggests it; examiners look for evidence that you can deploy figurative language purposefully.
- Running over time on the comprehension section and leaving fewer than 15 minutes for creative writing, which loses marks on both content and SPAG through hurried, careless errors.

Exam technique

Allocate your **30 minutes** for comprehension carefully: spend roughly five minutes reading the passage closely and annotating it, then about four minutes each on Questions 1 and 2, leaving the bulk of your time (around 15 minutes) for Question 3(b), which carries six marks. Write in full sentences for all parts except Question 1(a); even short-answer questions benefit from clear phrasing. In Question 3(b), embed your two quotations naturally within your explanation rather than listing them at the start, and make sure each quotation is followed by close analysis of language.

For the **15-minute creative writing section**, spend two minutes planning your diary entry: decide on your setting (a specific strange place) and your person (one memorable character), then list three sensory details and one comparison. Write in first person, past tense, and aim for around 150 to 200 words. Keep sentences varied in length and structure to demonstrate control.

Leave the final three minutes to check your spelling, punctuation and grammar in Question 4. Read your work aloud in your head to catch missing words, run-on sentences and comma splices. Check that you have used a simile or metaphor as prompted, and that your description makes clear what the place and person are like and how you feel about them. If working through this paper at home, mark yourself honestly using the total of 30 marks and compare your answers with the sort of detail expected at 11+ standard.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, revise the key features of **descriptive writing**: how to build atmosphere through word choice, sentence variety and figurative language. Practise identifying and explaining literary techniques such as **metaphor, personification and alliteration** in short extracts, so you can deploy them confidently in analytical answers and creative tasks.

Read widely in the memoir and travel-writing genres; Gerald Durrell, Roald Dahl's *Boy*, and Laurie Lee's *Cider with Rosie* all share the vivid, affectionate tone found in this passage. Understanding how published writers present character and place will strengthen both your comprehension answers and your own descriptive prose.

For students aiming at the most selective independent schools, progress to more complex inference questions that ask you to comment on narrative voice, tone and the effects of sentence structure. Practise writing under timed conditions regularly, aiming to produce polished short pieces within 15 minutes, and always leave time to proofread for accuracy.

Key terms

Quotation, Inference, Connotation, Imagery, Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Sensory detail, Characterisation, Textual analysis, SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar), Diary entry, First person narrative, Figurative language

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