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King Edward's School 11+ English

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KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

Admission Paper in English

Section A: Reading and answering questions.

Reading Time: 10 minutes

Writing Time: 30 minutes

(This paper will be collected at the end your time, and you will be given a second paper.)

This leaflet contains an excerpt from a story, which you are asked to read carefully.

When you have read each one, please answer the questions. Write complete sentences, not short phrases, unless the question simply asks you to list words. So, if the question asks "Where was Humpty Dumpty sitting before his fall?",

- **don't** write "a wall" or "on a wall"
- **do** write "He was sitting on a wall."

It is worth being careful about this: you will score better in the examination if you write in sentences.

Good Luck!

Candidate's Name

Candidate's Number

At Christmas in 1914, soon after the start of the First World War, British and German soldiers abandoned shooting at each other and played football instead. Here is an excerpt from a story about those events...

Tom used his left foot to trap the football as it bounced across the frozen mud, flicked it up with his right and headed it towards Tocky, who dived, caught the ball in both hands and threw it to a group of Germans.

5 In a flash a fast and furious football match had begun. Goals were marked by caps: Tocky, naturally, was in one goal and a huge German in the other. Apart from that, it was wonderfully disorganised: part football, part ice-skating, with unknown numbers on each team. There was no referee and no one recorded the score.

10 How good it was to be no longer an army of moles, but up and running on top of the ground that had threatened to entomb them for so long. And this time Tom could really hear a big crowd: and he was playing for England.

Tom played his usual centre forward position, with Titch to his left and little Billy on the wing. As the game surged back and forth across No Man's Land the players warmed to their sport, and the goalposts grew into piles of discarded greatcoats and tunics. Steam rose from the men, and their faces were wreathed in smiles and clouds of breath in the clear frosty air.

15 Some British officers took a dim view of the sport, and when the game ended in exhaustion the men were encouraged back to their trenches for a carol service and supper.

"Good night, Tommies. See you tomorrow."

"Night, Fritz. We'll have another game."

20 But Boxing Day passed without a game: the officers were alarmed at what had happened. If such friendly relations continued, how would they persuade the men to fight again? How could the war go on? So the men were not allowed to leave their trenches. There were a few secret meetings here and there along the Front, and gifts and souvenirs were exchanged when officers were not watching.

25 Two days later, a message was thrown over from the German side. An important general was due to visit their section that afternoon, and would expect to see some action. The Germans therefore would start firing at 3 p.m. and all Tommies should please keep their heads down. At three o'clock a few warning shots were fired over the British trenches and then heavy fire lasted for an hour. All Tommies kept their heads down.

30 At dawn a few days later, the Germans mounted a full-scale attack. The friendly Germans from Saxony had been withdrawn and been replaced by fresh, warlike troops from Prussia.

Withering British fire drove them back and the order was given to counter-attack, to take the German trenches before they could reorganise themselves. Tom and his comrades scrambled over the parapet. Tocky, who still had the football, dropkicked it far into the mist of No Man's Land.

35 "That'll give somebody a surprise," he said.

"Why are goalies always daft?" thought Tom.

They were on the attack now, running in a line: Tom in a centre forward position, Titch to his left and young Billy on the wing.

40 From the corner of his eye Tom saw Tocky dive full-length, then curl up as if clutching a ball in the best goalkeeping tradition.

"Daft as a brush," Tom thought.

Suddenly they were all tackled at once: the whole line went down. Tom found himself in a shell crater, staring at the sky. Everything went black for a few seconds, then he could see the hazy sky again. He couldn't move his legs. And there was someone else in the crater.

45 Tom dimly recognised the gleam of a fixed bayonet, the outline of a German.

"*Wasser, Wasser,*" the German said.

It was almost the only German word Tom knew. He fumbled for his water bottle and passed it across. The German drank thirstily, but was too weak to return the bottle.

50 "*Kinder?*" he asked. Tom shook his head. The German held up three fingers; when Tom tried to shake his head again, to show that he did not understand, everything went black again.

Later he saw a pale ball of gold in the misty sky. "There's a ball in heaven," he thought. "Thank God. We'll all have a game when this nightmare's over."

Questions

1. Find and write out **four** words or phrases from the passage which show that the day of the football match was a very cold day.

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2. Find and write out **three** pieces of evidence from the passage that Tocky is a goalkeeper.

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3. How were the goals marked at the beginning of the match?

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.....

4. How did the goalposts *change* as the match went on, and why did this happen?

HOW.....

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.....

WHY.....

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5. List **three** ways in which this football match is *unlike* a normal one.

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6. Why was the match “part ice-skating” (line 6), do you think?

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.....
.....
.....

7. List **two** ways in which this football match is making Tom’s dreams come true.

ONE.....

.....

TWO.....

.....

8. Why did the soldiers feel “entombed” (line 9) much of the time? Try to think of **two** reasons.

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9. Explain briefly why the British officers disapproved of the football match.

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10. The passage describes *two* separate attacks by the German troops. How were these two attacks different, and why?

HOW.....

.....

.....

WHY.....

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.....

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11. The writer makes the British counter-attack (beginning at line 31) sound like another football match. List **five** details which make the two things sound surprisingly similar.

ONE.....

.....

TWO.....

.....

THREE.....

.....

FOUR.....

.....

FIVE.....

.....

12. Can you suggest why the writer might have *wanted* to compare the two things?

.....

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13. This passage shows us that soldiers fighting on both sides in World War I sometimes felt great sympathy and friendliness towards the enemy. Please list **five** examples of such sympathy or friendliness from the passage.

ONE.....

.....

TWO.....

.....

THREE.....

.....

FOUR.....
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FIVE.....
.....

14. Can you suggest a plausible reason *why* they might have felt this way?
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.....
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.....

15. The German whom Tom meets in the shell crater sounds dangerous or menacing when we first hear of him. How does the writer make him sound this way?
.....
.....

16. What does *Wasser* (line 46) mean in German?
.....

17. *Kinder* (line 49) is the German word for “children”. Why do you think the German said this to Tom?
.....
.....

This is the end of this paper. If you have any time spare, use it to check your answers. You will be given the second English paper soon.

Paper Notes: 11+ English Sample Paper (11+ English Sample 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 **King Edward's School, Birmingham's** 11+ admission paper in **English**, Section A, focused on **reading comprehension and written response**. It presents candidates with a single historical fiction extract about the **1914 Christmas Truce** during the First World War, when British and German soldiers played football in No Man's Land. The passage runs to just over fifty lines and is followed by **seventeen comprehension questions** of varying difficulty.

The paper awards **10 minutes reading time** and **30 minutes writing time**, and candidates are instructed to write **complete sentences** rather than short phrases unless asked to list words. Questions range from straightforward retrieval tasks (finding evidence in the text) to higher-order inference and analysis (explaining the writer's intent, suggesting plausible motives for characters' behaviour).

This paper is suited to students preparing for entrance to selective independent schools at **11+**. The historical setting, layered vocabulary, and nuanced comprehension tasks demand both careful reading and thoughtful written expression. The extract combines vivid narrative with moments of poignancy, testing candidates' ability to engage with complex themes of humanity, conflict, and perspective.

How this paper is organised

The paper opens with a **single prose extract** set during the Christmas Truce of 1914, followed by **seventeen numbered questions**. The questions are presented on separate pages with ruled lines for answers, and the format explicitly requires **full-sentence responses** in most cases. The rubric at the top states that this Section A paper will be collected after the allotted time, and candidates will then receive a second paper.

Questions begin with straightforward **retrieval tasks** (Questions 1 and 2 ask candidates to locate and quote evidence from the passage) and progress through explanation and inference (Questions 7, 9, and 14 ask students to deduce motives or interpret feelings). The final cluster of questions (11 to 17) demands **higher-order analysis**, including comparison of narrative events (the football match and the counter-attack) and commentary on the writer's technique.

No mark allocation is printed on the paper, and there is no explicit section weighting. However, the emphasis on **sentence construction** and the varied cognitive demand

signal that both retrieval accuracy and quality of expression will be assessed. The historical and thematic complexity of the passage ensures that even simple-looking questions require careful thought.

Topics covered

- Close reading and retrieval of evidence from a historical fiction narrative
- Inference of character traits and motives from actions and dialogue
- Understanding figurative language and implied meanings (e.g. 'entombed', 'ice-skating', 'daft as a brush')
- Analysis of how a writer uses vocabulary and imagery to create tone and atmosphere
- Recognition of structural parallels within a narrative (the football match mirrored by the counter-attack)
- Evaluation of authorial purpose and thematic intent
- Understanding historical context (First World War, trench warfare, the Christmas Truce)
- Interpretation of foreign-language words used in an English text (German: Wasser, Kinder)
- Written expression in full sentences with accurate grammar and coherent explanation
- Empathy and perspective-taking (understanding soldiers' humanity across enemy lines)

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the passage twice before attempting any questions: once for the story, once to notice details of language and structure.
- Underline or highlight key phrases as you read, especially descriptive words that reveal setting, character, or mood.
- When a question asks for evidence, copy the quotation exactly as it appears in the text, using quotation marks if appropriate.
- Always answer in a complete sentence unless the question explicitly asks for a list or single word.
- For inference questions, check that your answer is supported by something in the text rather than pure guesswork.
- Budget roughly two minutes per question, leaving a few minutes at the end to check spelling, punctuation, and sentence sense.
- Practise writing concise explanations: answers should be clear and precise, not padded with unnecessary words.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Writing fragments instead of sentences (e.g. 'frozen mud' rather than 'The passage mentions frozen mud, showing it was cold').
- Quoting evidence without explaining how it answers the question, especially in higher-mark inference tasks.
- Missing the specific instruction to find a set number of examples (e.g. providing only two pieces of evidence when three are required).
- Over-explaining simple retrieval questions or under-explaining complex inference questions, misjudging the cognitive demand.
- Ignoring line references, which can waste time and lead to citing the wrong part of the passage.
- Failing to check that an interpretation is grounded in the text, relying instead on personal opinion or background knowledge.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the passage carefully during the **10-minute reading time**, noting anything unusual or striking in the margin. When the writing time starts, skim the questions to see which require simple quotation and which demand reasoning, then tackle them in order unless a later one looks significantly easier.

For retrieval questions (like 1, 2, or 3), scan the passage for the relevant detail and write it out in a sentence that mirrors the question's wording. For inference and explanation questions (like 9, 12, or 14), identify a piece of textual evidence first, then explain what it suggests or why it matters. Always tie your reasoning back to the words on the page.

Leave two or three minutes at the end to re-read your answers, checking that every response is a complete sentence, that you have provided the correct number of examples where specified, and that your spelling and punctuation are accurate. If you are unsure about a higher-order question, write a plausible answer rooted in the text rather than leaving it blank.

What to revise alongside this paper

Students should consolidate their understanding of **inference and deduction**, practising how to move from textual evidence to reasoned conclusion. Work on recognising **figurative and descriptive language** (simile, metaphor, personification) and explaining its effect on the reader will support answers to questions about the writer's technique.

Familiarity with **First World War history**, particularly life in the trenches and the phenomenon of the Christmas Truce, will deepen comprehension of this passage's context, though the questions are designed to be answered from the text alone. Reading other historical fiction extracts (from writers such as Michael Morpurgo or Robert Westall) will build confidence with period vocabulary and complex narrative voice.

Practise writing answers of varying length and complexity, from single-sentence evidence retrieval to short paragraphs of analysis. Timed comprehension exercises using similarly challenging prose will help students learn to pace themselves and allocate effort appropriately across a range of question types.

Key terms

Retrieval, Inference, Evidence, Quotation, Figurative language, Imagery, Tone, Atmosphere, Narrative structure, Authorial intent, Historical context, Empathy, Perspective, Parallel, Trench warfare

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KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

Admission Paper in English

Section B: Your own writing

Time: 30 minutes

This leaflet consists of lined paper on which to complete a piece of writing. You probably won't fill the leaflet: we aren't expecting you to. If you do fill it, put your hand up and ask the teacher at the front for some more paper. Put any extra paper you use inside this leaflet when you hand it in. Most candidates usually write about one and a half pages: but quality is more important than quantity. In the last few minutes, check your work carefully for errors of spelling and punctuation.

Try to make your writing vivid and interesting. Remember to write in PARAGRAPHS, and to punctuate the ends of sentences properly. Remember that DIALOGUE (characters talking to one another) often helps to make a story more dramatic, and that DESCRIPTIONS allow the reader to picture your scene in detail.

Boys sometimes come to this exam with a composition which they have learned by heart. You must write about the subject described in this box. If you write about another subject, which you have prepared in advance, you will be given a much lower mark.

Here is your subject:

You are a First World War British soldier. During an attack, you become stranded in a shell-crater in No Man's Land: you are not badly wounded, but you cannot get back to the British trenches for fear of being shot if you leave the crater. Then a German soldier falls into the same crater along with you. Like you, he is tired and frightened but not badly wounded: he also cannot get back to his own side. The two of you **are not going to fight**; in fact, if it were not for the war you could have been friends.

What happens?

Candidate's Name

Candidate's Number

Paper Notes: 11+ English Sample Paper (11+ English Sample 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 **Section B** of the **King Edward's School, Birmingham** admission paper in English for **11+ entry**, focusing exclusively on creative writing. Candidates are given **30 minutes** to produce an original narrative response to a detailed historical scenario. The paper explicitly warns students not to use pre-learned compositions, emphasising that the writing must directly address the given prompt to avoid penalty.

The prompt places candidates in the role of a **First World War British soldier** trapped in a shell-crater in No Man's Land alongside a German soldier. Both men are frightened, lightly wounded, and unable to return to their respective lines; neither intends to fight. The scenario is designed to test empathy, moral imagination, and the ability to develop character and tension within a historically charged setting.

This paper suits students preparing for selective independent school entry who have practised narrative writing under timed conditions. The emphasis on **dialogue, description, and paragraphing** reflects the school's expectation that candidates can structure a story coherently and use literary techniques to create vivid, emotionally engaging prose. Quality is prioritised over length, with most students writing roughly one and a half pages.

How this paper is organised

The paper consists of a single extended creative writing task to be completed in **30 minutes**. Candidates receive a lined leaflet for their response, with instructions noting that most students produce about **one and a half pages**. Extra paper is available on request, but the examiners make clear that **quality matters more than quantity**.

The writing prompt is presented in a highlighted box and provides a detailed scenario rather than a simple title. Students are given context (the First World War setting), their role (a British soldier), the immediate situation (trapped in a crater), and a complication (the arrival of a German soldier). The phrase "What happens?" invites an open narrative response.

Key instructions emphasise the importance of **paragraphing, punctuation, dialogue, and description**. A prominent warning states that candidates who write about a different, pre-prepared subject will receive a much lower mark. The final minutes should be reserved for checking spelling and punctuation errors.

Topics covered

- Creative narrative writing under timed conditions with a historically grounded scenario
- First World War setting: life in the trenches, No Man's Land, and the lived experience of soldiers
- Dialogue technique to reveal character emotion, tension, and relationship development
- Descriptive writing to evoke setting (shell-craters, battlefield conditions, sensory detail)
- Paragraph structure and organisation of a coherent narrative arc
- Moral and emotional complexity: exploring humanity, empathy, and the absurdity of war
- Character development in extreme circumstances with limited backstory provided
- Spelling, punctuation, and technical accuracy under exam pressure

How to use this paper for revision

- Read short stories and extracts set during the First World War to build authentic vocabulary and atmosphere. Authors like Michael Morpurgo and poetry from Wilfred Owen can offer insight into soldiers' perspectives.
- Practise writing openings that immediately establish tension. Describe sounds, smells, and sights of the crater before introducing dialogue; sensory detail anchors the reader in the moment.
- Plan quickly but effectively. Spend two minutes noting key beats: initial shock, tentative communication, a moment of shared humanity, and a resolution (escape attempt, rescue, or agreement to wait).
- Use dialogue to reveal character. Show fear, exhaustion, or cautious trust through what the soldiers say and how they say it, rather than simply telling the reader how they feel.
- Check your paragraphing. Each new speaker, change of focus, or shift in time should trigger a new paragraph. This is explicitly mentioned in the instructions and will be marked.
- Reserve the final three to five minutes for proofreading. Look for common errors: missing full stops, incorrect speech punctuation, and misspelled high-frequency words.
- Avoid cliché endings. Resist the temptation to kill off one or both characters for easy drama. A quiet moment of understanding or an unresolved but hopeful close can be more powerful.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Writing a pre-learned story about a different topic. The paper explicitly penalises this, so read the prompt carefully and stick to the First World War crater scenario throughout.
- Overloading the opening with background. Students often waste time explaining how the soldier got to the crater. Start in the moment; let context emerge through action and dialogue.
- Forgetting to paragraph dialogue. Each new speaker must begin a new line. Examiners notice this immediately, and poor dialogue layout makes stories hard to follow.
- Rushing the emotional arc. Some candidates move too quickly from hostility to friendship. Build trust gradually; small gestures (sharing water, showing a photograph) are more convincing than sudden declarations of kinship.
- Neglecting descriptive detail. The instructions stress the importance of description. Include sounds of distant gunfire, the mud and blood in the crater, the fear in each soldier's eyes.
- Spelling errors in basic vocabulary. Words like 'frightened', 'soldier', 'wounded', and 'Britain' should be automatic. Mistakes here suggest carelessness rather than difficulty.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the entire prompt twice, underlining key details: the setting, the constraint (both men are trapped), and the instruction that they will not fight. Spend **two minutes planning** a simple three-part structure (arrival and shock, dialogue and tentative connection, resolution or cliffhanger). Jot down sensory words and a possible line of dialogue to anchor your ideas.

Start writing immediately after planning. Aim to complete your story in **22 to 25 minutes**, leaving time for checking. Open with vivid description of the crater to establish mood, then bring in the German soldier's sudden arrival. Use short paragraphs and varied sentence lengths to control pacing; longer descriptive passages can slow the moment, while short, sharp exchanges of dialogue quicken it. Show the soldiers' shared humanity through actions (offering a cigarette, removing helmets, sharing names) rather than abstract reflection.

In the final **three to five minutes**, reread your work line by line. Check every sentence ends with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark. Verify that speech is punctuated correctly and that each new speaker begins a new paragraph. Correct

obvious spelling errors. If you have time, add one or two adjectives to strengthen weak descriptions. Quality and accuracy will impress more than length.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this creative writing paper, students should revise **reading comprehension skills**, particularly inference and analysis of character motivation, as Section A of the King Edward's School English paper will test these areas. Familiarity with literary texts set during or about the First World War (poetry, short fiction, novels like *Private Peaceful*) will deepen understanding of historical context and enrich vocabulary choices.

Broader narrative writing techniques should be practised: writing openings that hook the reader, developing conflict and resolution, and using figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification) to enhance description. Students should also review **grammar and punctuation conventions**, especially the layout and punctuation of direct speech, as these are explicitly assessed.

For further challenge, explore moral dilemmas in literature and history. How do individuals retain humanity in dehumanising situations? How do writers convey complex emotions through action and dialogue rather than exposition? These questions underpin strong responses to scenario-based creative writing prompts and will prepare students for similar tasks in other selective school entrance exams.

Key terms

No Man's Land, Shell-crater, Dialogue, Paragraphing, Description, Narrative structure, Characterisation, Sensory detail, First World War, Vivid language, Speech punctuation, Tension, Empathy, Setting, Proofreading

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