



MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

Sample Scholarship Examination Paper

ENGLISH PAPER

1½ hours

Instructions

- Write your name clearly on the top of each sheet of paper
- You must start Section B on a new sheet of paper
- Answer EVERY question in Section A and ONE question in Section B

Information

- There are 25 marks available for Section A and 25 marks for Section B
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers

Advice

- You are advised to spend 45 minutes on Section A and 45 minutes on Section B

Section A: Comprehension

Read carefully the extract below. It is taken from Nicholas Nickleby by Charles Dickens. It introduces Mr Wackford Squeers, who runs a school in Yorkshire. In the scene below, he is visiting London to recruit new pupils and a new assistant.

5 There, at the very core of London, in the heart of its business and animation, in the midst of a whirl of noise and motion: stemming as it were the giant currents of life that flow ceaselessly on from different quarters, and meet beneath its walls: stands Newgate; and in that crowded street on which it frowns so darkly—within a few feet
10 of the squalid tottering houses—upon the very spot on which the vendors of soup and fish and damaged fruit are now plying their trades—scores of human beings, amidst a roar of sounds to which even the tumult of a great city is as nothing, four, six, or eight strong men at a time, have been hurried violently and swiftly from the world, when the scene has been rendered frightful with excess of human life; when curious
15 eyes have glared from casement and house-top, and wall and pillar; and when, in the mass of white and upturned faces, the dying wretch, in his all-comprehensive look of agony, has met not one—not one—that bore the impress of pity or compassion.

Near to the jail is the coach-yard of the Saracen's Head Inn. When you walk up this yard, you will see the booking-office on your left, and the tower of St Sepulchre's
20 church, darting abruptly up into the sky, on your right, and a gallery of bedrooms on both sides. Just before you, you will observe a long window with the words 'coffee-room' legibly painted above it; and looking out of that window, you would have seen in addition, if you had gone at the right time, Mr. Wackford Squeers with his hands in his pockets.

Mr. Squeers's appearance was not prepossessing. He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two. The eye he had, was unquestionably useful, but decidedly not ornamental: being of a greenish grey, and in shape resembling the fan-light of a street door. The blank side of his face was much wrinkled and puckered
25 up, which gave him a very sinister appearance, especially when he smiled, at which times his expression bordered closely on the villainous. His hair was very flat and shiny, save at the ends, where it was brushed stiffly up from a low protruding forehead, which assorted well with his harsh voice and coarse manner. He was about two or three and fifty, and a trifle below the middle size; he wore a white neckerchief with long ends, and a suit of scholastic black; but his coat sleeves being a great deal
30 too long, and his trousers a great deal too short, he appeared ill at ease in his clothes, and as if he were in a perpetual state of astonishment at finding himself so respectable.

Mr. Squeers was standing in a box by one of the coffee-room fire-places, fitted with one such table as is usually seen in coffee-rooms, and two of extraordinary shapes
35 and dimensions made to suit the angles of the partition. In a corner of the seat, was a very small deal trunk, tied round with a scanty piece of cord; and on the trunk was perched—his lace-up half-boots and corduroy trousers dangling in the air—a diminutive boy, with his shoulders drawn up to his ears, and his hands planted on his knees, who glanced timidly at the schoolmaster, from time to time, with evident dread
40 and apprehension.

'Half-past three,' muttered Mr. Squeers, turning from the window, and looking sulkily at the coffee-room clock. 'There will be nobody here today.'

Much vexed by this reflection, Mr. Squeers looked at the little boy to see whether he was doing anything he could beat him for. As he happened not to be doing anything
45 at all, he merely boxed his ears, and told him not to do it again.

'At Midsummer,' muttered Mr. Squeers, resuming his complaint, 'I took down ten boys; ten twenties is two hundred pound. I go back at eight o'clock tomorrow morning, and have got only three—three oughts is an ought—three twos is six—sixty pound. What's come of all the boys? what's parents got in their heads? what does it all mean?'

50 Here the little boy on the top of the trunk gave a violent sneeze.
 'Halloa, sir!' growled the schoolmaster, turning round. 'What's that, sir?'
 'Nothing, please sir,' replied the little boy.
 'Nothing, sir!' exclaimed Mr. Squeers.
 'Please sir, I sneezed,' rejoined the boy, trembling till the little trunk shook under
 55 him.
 'Oh! sneezed, did you?' retorted Mr. Squeers. 'Then what did you say "nothing" for, sir?'
 In default of a better answer to this question, the little boy screwed a couple of
 60 knuckles into each of his eyes and began to cry, wherefore Mr Squeers knocked him
 off the trunk with a blow on one side of the face, and knocked him on again with a
 blow on the other.
 'Wait till I get you down into Yorkshire, my young gentleman,' said Mr Squeers, 'and
 then I'll give you the rest. Will you hold that noise, sir?'
 'Ye—ye—yes,' sobbed the little boy, rubbing his face very hard with the Beggar's
 65 Petition in printed calico.
 'Then do so at once, sir,' said Squeers. 'Do you hear?'
 As this admonition was accompanied with a threatening gesture, and uttered with
 a savage aspect, the little boy rubbed his face harder, as if to keep the tears back;
 and, beyond alternately sniffing and choking, gave no further vent to his emotions.

Newgate (line 4) – a prison, outside which public hangings took place until 1868
casement (line 10) – window
oughts (line 48) – zeros
Beggar's Petition in printed calico (lines 64-65) – a popular poem printed on a cloth

Questions

1. Give another word or phrase with the same meaning as the following words, underlined in the passage:
 - a) prepossessing (line 20)
 - b) protruding (line 26)
 - c) perpetual (line 31) (3 marks)
2. How does Dickens vividly describe the atmosphere in this part of the city in the first paragraph (lines 1-12)? Comment closely on the paragraph's language and structure to support your ideas. (5 marks)
3. How does the narrator (the person or voice telling the story) present Mr Squeers in the third paragraph (lines 20-32)? Comment precisely on the language and techniques the writer uses. (5 marks)
4. How does Dickens develop his characterisation of Mr Squeers in the rest of the extract, from the fourth paragraph to the end (lines 33–69)? (5 marks)
5. 'The scene Dickens presents is both frightening and comical.' How far do you agree with this view of the extract as a whole? Support your answer by quoting from the extract and commenting on the language and techniques Dickens uses. (7 marks)

Total marks for this section: 25

End of Section A. Turn over for Section B.

Section B: Composition

Start this section on a new sheet of paper.

Plan your writing carefully before you start and make sure that you give attention to sentence construction, paragraphs, grammar and punctuation during the course of your work. In addition, we are particularly keen to read an engaging and entertaining piece of writing.

Answer ONE of the following questions:

1. Write a story which begins or ends with a meeting in a café.
2. Write a description of a frightening figure.
3. Write a story or description inspired by the image below.



Total marks for this section: 25

END OF TEST