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Oundle School 13+ English 2024

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EXAMINATION PAPER

Junior Entrance 2024

English

Time allowed: 1 hour

Name: _____

Instructions

- Dictionaries are not allowed.
- Answer on lined paper. Write your name clearly at the top of each sheet of paper that you use.
- Start Section B on a new sheet of paper.
- Answer **ALL** the questions in Section A. Choose **ONE** question from Section B. You are given advice about how long to spend of each section.
- You are expected to write clearly and accurately throughout each of your answers. Accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar will be evaluated throughout the paper (and especially in Section B), although there is no actual mark allocation for these elements. You should leave some time towards the end of the examination to check your work carefully.
- The maximum number of marks for this paper is 50.

SECTION A: COMPREHENSION

You should spend about 35 minutes on this section. You should write in full sentences, including as much detail as necessary to explain your point/points clearly. **[Please note that this section is worth 30 marks and the final question carries 12 marks].**

Read this extract adapted from Charles Dickens' novel Oliver Twist set in London in 1837, and answer the questions which follow. In this extract a character called Fagin leaves his house to visit a man called Bill Sykes.

It was a chill, damp, windy night, when Fagin, buttoning his great-coat tight round his shrivelled body, and pulling the collar up over his ears so as completely to obscure the lower part of his face, emerged from his house. He paused on the step as the door was locked and chained behind him and slunk down the street as quickly as he could.

5 The house to which he headed was in the neighborhood of Whitechapel. Fagin stopped for an instant at the corner of the street; and, glancing suspiciously round, crossed the road, and struck off in the direction of the Spitalfields.

10 The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets; the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as Fagin to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the old man seemed like some dinosaur, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.

15 He kept on his course, through many winding and narrow ways, until he reached Bethnal Green; then, turning suddenly off to the left, he soon became involved in a maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter.

20 Fagin was evidently too familiar with the ground he traversed to be at all bewildered, either by the darkness of the night, or the intricacies of the way. He hurried through several alleys and streets, and at length turned into one, lighted only by a single lamp at the farther end. At the door of a house in this street, he knocked; having exchanged a few muttered words with the person who opened it, he walked upstairs.

A dog growled as he touched the handle of a room-door; and a man's voice demanded who was there.

"Only me, Bill; only me, my dear," said Fagin looking in.

25 "Bring in your body then," said Sikes. "Lie down, you stupid brute! Don't you know the devil when he's got a great-coat on?"

Apparently, the dog had been somewhat deceived by Mr. Fagin's outer garment; for as he unbuttoned it, and threw it over the back of a chair, he retired to the corner from which he had risen, wagging his tail as he went, to show that he was as well satisfied as it was in his nature to be.

"Well!" said Sikes.

30 "It is cold, said the Fagin as he warmed his skinny hands over the fire. "It seems to go right through one," added the old man, touching his side.

"It must be a piercer, if it finds its way through your heart," said Mr. Sikes. "Give him something to drink, Nancy*. Burn my body, make haste! It's enough to turn a man ill, to see his lean old carcass shivering in that way, like a ugly ghost just rose from the grave."

35 A long silence ensued; during which Fagin was plunged in deep thought, with his face wrinkled into an expression of villainy perfectly demoniacal. Sikes eyed him furtively from time to time. Nancy sat with her eyes fixed upon the fire.

** A woman called Nancy is in the room too and it is she Sikes turns to in this final paragraph*

Questions:

1. Look at the first paragraph (Lines 1-4) . Which words and phrases suggest to you that Fagin did not want to be seen that night? [4 marks]
2. Read lines 8-10. Explain what impression you get of London **using your own words**. [3 marks]
3. What simile does Dickens use to describe Fagin in line 11. [1 mark]
4. Why is this simile effective? Look closely at lines 8 to 12 and explain your answer fully. [4 marks]
5. Explain the meaning of the following words or phrases as they appear in the passage.
 - Abound (Line 15)
 - Traversed (Line 16)
 - The intricacies of the way (Line 17)
 - Retired (Line 27)[4 marks]
6. Looking at the passage as a whole, what impressions do you get of Fagin? Explore your answer fully. [12 marks]

[TURN OVER FOR SECTION B]

SECTION B: CREATIVE WRITING

You should spend around 25 minutes on this section

Answer ONE of the following questions.

You are reminded of the importance of clear and accurate written English and of careful presentation in your answer. All questions carry equal marks.

Start your answer on a new sheet of paper and write your name at the top.

EITHER

1. In the passage from *Oliver Twist*, Fagin leaves his house and arrives at Bill Sykes' house. Neither houses are described. Choose **one** and describe it in a way which seems fitting in light of what you have read in the passage.

OR

2. In the passage, London is presented in a negative light. Write a description or story in which a character travels, portraying the character and place in a positive way. You could choose a city, or the countryside or the coast, or a place of your own choice. Your character does not have to be a man.

[22 marks]

END OF PAPER

Paper Notes: 13+ English Question Paper (13+ English Past Paper (2024))

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

Overview

This is the **2024 Junior Entrance English examination paper** published by **Oundle School** in Northamptonshire, designed for candidates seeking entry at **13+ (Year 9)**. The paper comprises two sections: a comprehension exercise based on an extract from **Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist**, and a creative writing task. The total time allowed is **one hour**, and the paper is worth **50 marks** in total.

The comprehension section requires candidates to analyse language, identify literary devices, and explore character impressions through close reading of a Victorian text. Questions range from straightforward retrieval to sophisticated literary analysis, with the final question carrying **12 marks**. The extract itself is a vivid passage describing the villainous character Fagin journeying through 1837 London to visit Bill Sykes.

This paper is aimed at academically able 12- and 13-year-old students preparing for independent school entrance examinations. It tests reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, analytical writing, and creative composition in equal measure. Accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar is evaluated throughout, though no specific marks are allocated to these elements.

How this paper is organised

The paper is divided into **Section A: Comprehension** (suggested time: 35 minutes, worth **30 marks**) and **Section B: Creative Writing** (suggested time: 25 minutes, worth **22 marks**, with an implied 2 marks for written accuracy). Section A contains six questions based on the Oliver Twist extract, progressing from simple language retrieval to extended character analysis. The final comprehension question alone carries 12 marks and requires a sustained, exploratory response.

Section B offers a choice of two creative writing prompts. Candidates must select one and produce a descriptive or narrative piece that demonstrates imagination, vocabulary range, and technical accuracy. Both prompts relate to the Dickens extract: one asks students to describe Fagin's or Sykes' house in a manner consistent with the passage, while the other invites a positive portrayal of travel and place, contrasting with Dickens' bleak London.

Students are instructed to write on separate lined paper, to start Section B on a new sheet, and to reserve time at the end for careful proofreading. Dictionaries are not permitted.

Topics covered

- Close reading and textual analysis of Dickensian prose fiction, with attention to vocabulary, imagery, and narrative tone
- Identification and explanation of similes and other figurative language in literary contexts
- Inference and characterisation: drawing conclusions about Fagin's personality, motives, and moral qualities from descriptive detail
- Vocabulary in context: defining words such as 'abound', 'traversed', 'intricacies', and 'retired' as they appear in 19th-century prose
- Understanding of Victorian London as a literary setting, including references to Whitechapel, Spitalfields, and Bethnal Green
- Extended analytical writing: constructing a well-developed, evidence-based response to a character impression question
- Creative descriptive writing: producing atmospheric descriptions of settings based on stylistic models
- Narrative or descriptive composition with a focus on positive tone and characterisation, demonstrating control of mood and vocabulary
- Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar across both comprehension and creative tasks
- Time management and independent examination technique, including planning, proofreading, and question selection

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the Oliver Twist passage at least twice before attempting the questions. Mark key words and phrases that reveal character or atmosphere to use as evidence.
- For the vocabulary question (question 5), always consider how the word is used in that particular sentence. Don't just give a dictionary definition out of context.
- Plan your answer to question 6 carefully. Aim for at least three distinct impressions of Fagin (e.g. secretive, villainous, experienced in crime) and support each with close textual reference.
- In Section B, spend five minutes planning your creative piece before you start writing. Decide on your key descriptive details and the overall mood you want to create.
- Practise writing descriptively in different tones. This paper specifically asks for a positive portrayal if you choose question 2, so avoid slipping into gloom or negativity.
- Leave at least five minutes at the end to reread your work. Check for spelling errors, missing punctuation, and sentences that don't quite make sense.
- Read other Dickens extracts to familiarise yourself with Victorian narrative style, especially passages that build atmosphere through weather, setting, and character movement.

Common mistakes to avoid

- In question 1, simply listing words without explaining how they suggest secrecy. Words like 'obscure' and 'slunk' must be unpacked to show their connotations.
- In question 2, copying out phrases from the text instead of using your own words as instructed. The examiner wants you to demonstrate understanding by rephrasing.
- Identifying the simile in question 3 but then failing to explore its full effect in question 4. You must link the comparison to the surrounding description of slime, darkness, and offal.
- Rushing the extended question 6 because time has run short. This question is worth 12 marks, nearly half of Section A, so it demands a structured, detailed response.
- In Section B, writing a creative piece that is too short or too rushed. 25 minutes should produce at least a full side of detailed, carefully crafted prose.
- Choosing the wrong creative writing task. If you are not confident with Dickensian style, question 2 (the positive journey) may be a safer choice than imitating his dark tone.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the entire paper to understand its scope, then tackle Section A methodically. Spend roughly five to six minutes per question for questions 1 to 5, leaving a full 10 to 12 minutes for question 6. Write in full sentences throughout, even for shorter questions, and always quote or paraphrase from the text to support your points. For question 6, structure your response with a clear introduction, at least three developed paragraphs exploring different impressions of Fagin, and a brief conclusion.

When you reach Section B, read both creative writing options carefully before committing. Question 1 requires you to inhabit Dickens' style and imagine the interior of a 19th-century criminal's dwelling, while question 2 gives you more freedom to write in your own voice about a positive journey. Choose the prompt that plays to your strengths. Spend five minutes planning (jot down key images, vocabulary, structure) and then write steadily for 18 to 20 minutes.

Reserve the final five minutes of the exam to proofread both sections. Check that your handwriting is legible, that you have written your name on every sheet, and that Section B is on a new page as instructed. Look for common errors: missing full stops, incorrect homophones (their/there, your/you're), and unclear pronoun references. Since spelling, punctuation, and grammar are evaluated throughout, careful proofreading can lift your overall mark significantly.

What to revise alongside this paper

Students should revise other 19th-century fiction extracts, particularly those by Dickens, the Brontës, or Robert Louis Stevenson, to build familiarity with Victorian narrative style and vocabulary. Practise identifying and analysing similes, metaphors, and personification, as these are central to literary comprehension at this level. Work on writing extended analytical paragraphs using the **Point, Evidence, Explanation** structure, which is essential for tackling 12-mark questions effectively.

For creative writing, read widely across genres to develop a range of descriptive techniques. Study passages that create strong sense of place, whether positive or negative, and note how writers use sensory detail, sentence variety, and vocabulary choice to control mood. Practise planning and drafting short descriptive pieces within a time limit to build speed and confidence.

Finally, consolidate grammar, punctuation, and spelling skills through regular proofreading exercises. Pay particular attention to sentence boundaries (avoiding run-ons and fragments), correct use of speech punctuation, and commonly confused homophones. These foundational skills underpin both sections of the paper and are

particularly important for students aiming at competitive independent schools like Oundle.

Key terms

Simile, Characterisation, Inference, Imagery, Atmosphere, Victorian prose, Descriptive writing, Narrative tone, Connotation, Textual evidence, Literary analysis, Context (historical and social), Figurative language, Vocabulary in context, Creative composition

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EXAMINATION PAPER
Non Common Entrance 2024

English

Time allowed: 1 hour

Name: _____

Instructions

- Dictionaries are not allowed.
- Answer on lined paper. Write your name clearly at the top of each sheet of paper that you use.
- Answer **ALL** the questions in Section A. Choose **ONE** question from Section B. You should divide your time equally between both sections.
- You are expected to write clearly and accurately throughout each of your answers. You should leave some time towards the end of the examination to check your work carefully.
- The maximum number of marks for this paper is 50.

SECTION A: READING

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions below. Please note the final question carries 8 marks.

Persepolis is a ruined ancient city in what was Persia and is now Iran. It was once a capital city withing the Persian empire. In this extract, the travel writer Robert Byron approaches the city.

There are still things to be said about Persepolis.

In its prime, when the walls were mud and the roofs wood, it may have looked rather shoddy—rather as it would look, in fact, if reconstructed at Hollywood. Today, at least, it is not shoddy. Only the stone of the city has survived, but for a few of Alexander's¹ ashes which they dig up now and then. And stone worked with such opulence and precision has great splendour, whatever one may think of the figures which are sculptured on it. This is increased by the contrast between the stones used, the hard opaque grey and the more lucent white. Isolated ornaments have also been discovered in a jet-black marble without vein or blemish.

10 Is that all?

Patience!

In the old days you arrived by horse. You rode up the steps on to the platform. You made a camp there, while the columns and winged beasts kept their solitude beneath the stars, and not a sound or movement disturbed the empty moonlit plain. You thought of Darius² and Xerxes³ and Alexander. You were alone with the ancient world. You saw Asia as the Greeks saw it, and you felt their magic breath stretching out towards China itself. Such emotions left no room for the aesthetic question, or for any question.

20 Today you step out of a car, while a couple of lorries thunder by in a cloud of dust. You enter by leave of a gate-keeper, and are greeted, on reaching the platform, by a light railway, a neo-German hostel, and a lot of signs with lots of information. These useful additions clarify the intelligence. You may persuade yourself, in spite of them, into a mood of romance. But the mood they invite is that of a critic at an exhibition. This is the penalty of greater knowledge. It isn't my fault. No one would have been more pleased than I to leave the brain idle in a dream of history and landscape and light wind and other impalpable accidents. But if circumstances insist on showing me more than I want to see, it is no good telling lies about it.

¹ Alexander (the Great): Macedonian king who conquered Persia in the 4th Century BC.

² Darius. Another 5th Century BC Persian king.

³ Xerxes A Persian ruler from the 5th Century BC. Also often known as Xerxes the Great.

30 The columns, therefore, can be disposed of in a word. They are surprising, as Sir Gilbert Scott's town hall in Mumbai is surprising because it combines Hindu themes with Gothic. Like mules, these mixtures are infertile. They have no bearing on the general course of architecture, and hold no precepts for it. You may like them in a casual way, if they happen to agree with some current of contemporary fashion. The columns at Persepolis don't.

35 The columns jump to the eye first. Other architectural features are the stairs, the platform, and the palace doors. The doorways alone boast a gleam of true invention; they suggest ideas, they utter a comment, with regard to other doorways. Their proportions are narrow and thick, thus inviting a perpetual to and fro; whereas our doors ask the figure to pause and frame itself. Like the arches at Stonehenge, they are made of monoliths, one for each side and one on top. But their mouldings and angles are as sharp and delicate as if cut by a machine. The friezes inside the doorways have proved impervious to age; they remain a bright smooth grey, as slick as an aluminium saucepan. This cleanness reacts on the carving like sunlight on a fake painting; it reveals, instead of the genius one expected, a disconcerting void. I see only too well what Christopher meant when he said the sculptures were 'unemotional without being intellectual'.

45 *Adapted from The Road to Oxiana by Robert Byron*

1. Explain these phrases in your own words.
 - a) "In its prime". (Line 1) [2 marks]
 - b) "Looked rather shoddy". (Lines 2- 3) [2 marks]
2. Look at lines 5 to 9. What features of the remaining stonework remain impressive. **Explain your answer in your own words.** [3 marks]
3. Look at lines 12 to 26. How does the writer convey the difference between arriving in ancient times and modern times? You may use brief quotations to support your answer. [6 marks]
4. Look at lines 34 to 41. How does the writer convey his admiration for the doorways? Comment on the imagery and language the writer uses. [4 marks]
5. Do you think the writer likes Persepolis? **This question carries the most marks.** Look at the whole passage and explain your answer beyond what you wrote for question 3. You may use brief quotations to support your answer. [8 marks]

SECTION B: EXTENDED WRITING

You should spend **30 minutes** on this section.

Answer ONE of the following questions. You are reminded of the importance of clear and accurate written English and of careful presentation in your answer. All questions carry equal marks.

1. Describe a place which you think your reader will find interesting. Write in a way that creates a clear picture of what this place looks like and how your reader would feel if they were there.

[25 marks]

OR

2. "My brain was idle in a dream of history". Write a story that begins with these words.

[25 marks]

OR

3. "Museums and ancient buildings such as castles should do more to bring history alive for young people ". Use this view as the basis for

EITHER

- a) a letter to the manager of a museum or ancient building arguing for a more engaging experience for young people.

[25 marks]

OR

- b) The words for a leaflet encouraging young people to come to a museum or ancient building. (The museum or building does not have to actually exist.)

[25 marks]

Paper Notes: 13+ English Question Paper (13+ English Past Paper (2024))

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

Overview

This is the **2024 Non Common Entrance English paper** for **13+ entry** to **Oundle School**, an independent school in Northamptonshire. The paper tests reading comprehension and extended writing under exam conditions in a **one-hour time limit**, worth a total of **50 marks**. It is designed for candidates seeking entry to Year 9 who are not taking the traditional Common Entrance examination route.

The paper is divided into two equally weighted sections: **Section A (Reading)** focuses on close analysis of a challenging prose extract from Robert Byron's travel writing, whilst **Section B (Extended Writing)** offers a choice of creative and persuasive writing tasks. The reading passage about **Persepolis**, the ancient Persian capital, demands sophisticated comprehension skills, including the ability to paraphrase, analyse language, track the writer's attitude, and synthesise evidence across the whole text.

This paper suits high-ability Year 8 pupils preparing for selective independent school entrance exams, particularly those applying to schools that set their own papers rather than relying on Common Entrance. The literary style of the reading extract and the open-ended nature of the writing tasks make this a demanding assessment that rewards confident, fluent responses and independent thinking.

How this paper is organised

The paper is divided into **two sections**, each designed to occupy **30 minutes** of the hour. Candidates are instructed to divide their time equally and to answer all questions in Section A plus one question from Section B. **Section A** carries **25 marks** and consists of five comprehension questions on the Persepolis extract, ranging from 2-mark paraphrase tasks to an 8-mark evaluative question that requires students to synthesise evidence from the whole passage.

The questions increase in difficulty and complexity: early questions test simple explanation and retrieval, middle questions focus on language analysis and imagery, whilst the final question demands personal judgement supported by textual evidence. The progression mirrors the AQA and Edexcel GCSE reading paper structure, though pitched at a higher level of linguistic sophistication.

Section B also carries **25 marks** and offers a choice of three extended writing tasks: descriptive writing, creative narrative writing, or persuasive writing (with two sub-

options for the third task). Candidates select one only. The rubric emphasises the importance of **clear and accurate written English** and careful presentation, signalling that spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting all contribute to the final mark.

Topics covered

- Reading comprehension of sophisticated travel writing with classical allusions and reflective tone
- Paraphrasing and explaining vocabulary and phrases in context without dictionary support
- Analysing language choices, imagery, and stylistic devices (simile, metaphor, contrast)
- Tracking and evaluating a writer's changing attitude or perspective across an entire text
- Using brief quotations accurately to support analytical points in prose answers
- Extended descriptive writing focused on sense impressions and atmosphere
- Creative narrative writing from a given opening line with historical or dream-like themes
- Persuasive letter writing with formal register and structured argument
- Writing persuasive leaflet copy using appropriate non-fiction conventions and audience awareness
- Sustained accuracy in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and presentation under timed conditions

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise paraphrasing complex sentences without using a dictionary, focusing on extracting meaning from context and sentence structure rather than looking up individual words.
- When analysing language, always explain the effect of the writer's choices on the reader rather than simply identifying techniques or features.
- For the 8-mark question, plan your answer by gathering evidence from across the whole passage before you start writing, organising points thematically rather than chronologically.
- In Section B, spend five minutes planning your response, sketching out a clear structure or sequence of ideas to ensure your writing has shape and direction.
- Use the first two or three minutes to read the entire passage carefully, annotating any unfamiliar references or striking phrases that might be useful later.
- Leave at least five minutes at the end to re-read your work, checking for basic errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction that can be quickly corrected.
- Practise writing under timed conditions regularly so that you develop a natural sense of how much you can produce in 25 to 30 minutes without rushing or padding.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Copying out the original words from the passage when asked to explain 'in your own words', which gains no credit even if the meaning is correct.
- Identifying a language feature (such as metaphor or simile) without explaining what effect it creates or why the writer chose to use it.
- Rushing the 8-mark question because earlier questions have overrun, leading to a thin or one-sided answer that ignores contradictory evidence in the text.
- Writing far too much for low-mark questions (2 or 3 marks) and running out of time for the extended writing section, which carries half the total marks.
- In Section B, choosing a writing task because it seems easy or short rather than because you have clear ideas, resulting in vague or repetitive responses.
- Neglecting to check work for basic spelling and punctuation errors, particularly in Section B where accuracy is explicitly assessed and weighted.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the entire Persepolis passage carefully, noting the writer's shifting tone from admiration for the stonework to disappointment with the modern tourist

experience and lukewarm assessment of the columns. Annotate the text lightly to mark where Byron describes past versus present, positive versus critical observations.

Answer the Section A questions in order, keeping a close eye on the clock: aim to finish the reading section by the 30-minute mark, leaving exactly half your time for Section B.

For the 8-mark question, which is worth a third of Section A's marks, write at least two developed paragraphs that explore both positive and negative elements of Byron's attitude. Use short embedded quotations rather than copying out long sentences, and make sure you link your evidence back to the question. Avoid simply retelling the passage; the examiner wants to see you making a judgement and defending it.

In Section B, choose the question that immediately sparks ideas rather than the one that looks easiest. Spend five minutes planning: for descriptive or narrative writing, jot down sensory details and a sequence of moments; for persuasive writing, sketch out three or four distinct arguments with supporting points. Write fluently and aim for variety in sentence structure and vocabulary, but prioritise clarity and accuracy over trying to impress with overly complex language. Save three to five minutes to proofread, focusing particularly on common errors like sentence fragments, comma splices, and missing apostrophes.

What to revise alongside this paper

To prepare for this style of paper, practise reading and annotating **pre-20th-century and early 20th-century non-fiction prose**, including travel writing, essays, and memoir extracts by authors such as Orwell, Woolf, or Stevenson. These texts share Byron's reflective, literary style and require similar close-reading skills. Work on identifying and explaining the effect of figurative language, particularly unexpected similes and metaphors that require careful unpacking.

Revise the conventions of **formal letter writing** and **persuasive techniques** (rhetorical questions, direct address, anecdote, counter-argument), as these are likely to recur in Section B of future papers. Practise planning and writing timed responses to open creative prompts, developing your ability to generate vivid sensory detail and narrative pace quickly. Build stamina by completing full one-hour papers under exam conditions rather than tackling sections in isolation.

If you found the Persepolis passage challenging, strengthen your background knowledge of **classical history and mythology** (Alexander the Great, Persian kings, Stonehenge), as independent schools often select extracts with cultural or historical allusions. Read widely in both fiction and non-fiction to build your vocabulary and sense of varied sentence structures, which will improve both your comprehension and your own writing fluency.

Key terms

Paraphrase, Inference, Imagery, Metaphor, Simile, Tone, Attitude, Contrast, Quotation, Register, Persuasive writing, Descriptive writing, Narrative voice, Allusion, Synthesis

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