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Shrewsbury School 16+ English 2024

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SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2024 ENTRY

BUSINESS (1 Hour)

Instructions to candidates:

Answer all questions, writing your answers in the spaces provided.

The number of marks for each question is shown in brackets.

In section B please show all of your workings.

Section A – One Mark Questions
Answer all questions

(15 marks)

1. The Advertising Standards Authority has been spending more of its time investigating 'greenwashing' in adverts. What is greenwashing?
 - A. False claims about positive impacts on the environment []
 - B. False comparison to competitors []
 - C. False reporting of previous prices []
 - D. False claims about products being 'vegan-friendly' []

2. Who are the top four UK supermarkets?
 - A. Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Morrisons []
 - B. Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Lidl []
 - C. Tesco, Sainsburys, Asda, Aldi []
 - D. Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons Asda []

3. According to BRANDZ what are the top five most valuable global brands (in order)?
 - A. Apple, Google, Coca-Cola, facebook, McDonald's []
 - B. Google, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, Visa []
 - C. Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, Google, Visa []
 - D. Apple, Google, Amazon, Samsung, Alibaba []

4. The UK left the EU in 2020, how many member states still remain?
 - A. 25 []
 - B. 27 []
 - C. 30 []
 - D. 34 []

5. A huge oilfield has been approved for exploration by the UK government. What is it called?
 - A. Daisymoor []
 - B. Thornland []
 - C. Rosefield []
 - D. Dandelion Bank []

6. Which business is to invest up to £3.2billion in an AI startup called Anthropic?
 - A. Amazon []
 - B. Apple []
 - C. Google []
 - D. Tesla []

7. Hollywood writers have agreed to end a five-month strike. What is their union called?
- A. Union of Storytellers []
 - B. Plot Twist Society []
 - C. Writer Guild of America []
 - D. United Scriptwriters of America []
8. Which company was fined over £300 million for breaking EU data law on children's accounts?
- A. Apple []
 - B. Instagram []
 - C. X (formerly known as twitter) []
 - D. TikTok []
9. Name the supplier to Apple who manufactures their iPhones in India
- A. Grundig []
 - B. Foxconn []
 - C. Toshiba []
 - D. Breville []
10. Shrewsbury School is opening a new school in the near future. Where will it be?
- A. China []
 - B. America []
 - C. India []
 - D. Saudi Arabia []

Please turn over the page for question 11.

In questions 11 to 15 please match the name with the organisation that they are associated with:

11. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan is financially involved with which English football club?
- A. Liverpool []
 - B. Manchester City []
 - C. Manchester United []
 - D. Chelsea []
12. Jeff Bezos is associated with which global organisation?
- A. Apple []
 - B. TikTok []
 - C. Amazon []
 - D. Microsoft []
13. Larry Page and Sergy Brin founded which organisation?
- A. Google []
 - B. Alibaba []
 - C. Nintendo []
 - D. Netflix []
14. Which of these brands is part of Mark Zuckerberg's product portfolio?
- A. TikTok []
 - B. Twitter []
 - C. WhatsApp []
 - D. Snapchat []
15. Mike Ashley is associated with all of the following brands apart from
- A. Sports Direct []
 - B. Jack Wills []
 - C. Top Shop []
 - D. Flannels []

Section B-Calculations

(15 marks)

Answer all questions

1. Jimmy Chews is a sweet shop located in Telford. This year, the owner estimates that the business, which also sells soft drinks, will sell 3,360 cans of Pepsi, 5% more than last year.

Calculate how many cans of Pepsi Jimmy Chews sold last year. (3 marks)

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2. Wooden it be Lovely is a small manufacturer of wooden children’s toys. Last week, the business produced 32,000 toys, of which 40% were checked for quality. Of the 40% checked, 1/5 had a defect.

Calculate how many wooden toys were found to **not** have a defect.

(3 marks)

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3. Walter Wall sells luxury carpets in Shropshire. The following data relates to his new 'wooltwist' line.

- Selling price of the carpet is £180 per unit
- Each carpet costs £100 to make.
- The rent (fixed costs) is £8,000 per year no matter how many carpets are sold.

How many carpets need to be sold to cover all of the costs/breakeven?
(3 marks)

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4. Sparked Out is a retailer of electrical products located in Shrewsbury. The owner, Joseph Sparks, is analysing the sales figures of two product lines, the Lavazza coffee machine and the Breville toaster.

In 2023, the total value of Lavazza coffee machine sales was £12,100 whilst the total value of Breville toaster sales was £5,292. Joseph noticed that the sales of Lavazza coffee machines have been increasing by 10% per year, whilst the sales of Breville toasters have been increasing by 5% per year, over the last two years.

Calculate the total sales value of Lavazza coffee machine sales and Breville toasters in 2021.
(3 marks)

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Paper Notes: 16+ English Question Paper (16+ 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 **Shrewsbury School Sixth Form Entrance Examination for Business**, designed for candidates seeking **Year 12 entry in 2024**. Published by **Shrewsbury School** in Shropshire, it tests a broad understanding of current business affairs, quantitative analysis, and extended evaluative reasoning. The paper is aimed at academically strong 16-year-olds who wish to study Business at A-level, requiring both up-to-date knowledge of the commercial world and the ability to apply mathematical techniques to real-world scenarios.

The exam comprises three distinct sections: **15 multiple-choice questions** on contemporary business news and key figures (Section A, 15 marks), **five calculation problems** covering percentages, breakeven, compound growth and profit/loss (Section B, 15 marks), and **two extended essay questions** that demand balanced discussion of corporate decision-making and operational challenges (Section C, 30 marks). Candidates have **one hour** to complete all tasks, making time management essential.

This paper reflects the school's expectation that incoming Sixth Formers will already be well-read in business current affairs and confident with GCSE-level numeracy. It is a discriminating test, rewarding candidates who follow the news, understand brand portfolios, and can structure coherent arguments under time pressure. The blend of factual recall, quantitative problem-solving, and evaluative writing mirrors the demands of A-level Business Studies and related disciplines.

How this paper is organised

The paper opens with **Section A** (15 marks), comprising 15 single-mark multiple-choice questions that test knowledge of recent business headlines, market structures, corporate personalities, and the school's own international expansion. Topics range from **greenwashing** regulation by the Advertising Standards Authority to the identity of Hollywood's writers' union and the correct ranking of global brands according to BRANDZ. Candidates must also recognise figures such as Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Section B (15 marks) contains five quantitative problems, each worth three marks and requiring full workings. These cover percentage change (calculating last year's sales given a 5% increase), quality control statistics (finding non-defective toys from a

fraction of checked output), **breakeven analysis** (determining the number of carpet sales needed to cover fixed and variable costs), reverse compound growth (working backwards from 2023 sales to 2021), and profit/loss from ticket resale. The calculations demand care with fractions, percentages, and multi-step reasoning.

Section C (30 marks) presents two extended discussion questions, each worth 15 marks. The first asks whether Apple should recall iPhone 15 handsets given a 0.1% defect rate affecting 5,000,000 units, requiring candidates to weigh reputational, financial, and ethical factors. The second explores the implications of **Shrewsbury Confectioners** concentrating 80% of its chocolate production in the October-to-March period for Easter, prompting analysis of cash flow, capacity utilisation, staff retention, and market risk. Generous lined space is provided for both answers.

Topics covered

- Contemporary business affairs and current events, including greenwashing regulation, Hollywood writers' strikes, EU data law fines, and oilfield exploration approvals
- UK supermarket market structure and the identity of the top four grocery retailers (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons)
- Global brand valuation rankings according to BRANDZ, and knowledge of the world's most valuable companies (Apple, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Visa)
- Key business personalities and their associations: Jeff Bezos with Amazon, Larry Page and Sergey Brin with Google, Mark Zuckerberg's product portfolio including WhatsApp, Mike Ashley's retail brands, and Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan's ownership of Manchester City
- Reverse percentage calculations to determine previous-year sales figures from growth rates
- Quality control statistics involving percentages and fractions to identify defect rates within sampled production runs
- Breakeven analysis with fixed and variable costs, requiring calculation of the sales volume needed to cover total expenses
- Compound growth and reverse compounding over multiple years, working backwards from current sales to historical values
- Profit and loss calculations from ticket resale scenarios with multiple price points and unsold inventory
- Evaluative discussion of corporate recall decisions, balancing brand reputation, legal liability, customer safety, and financial costs
- Analysis of seasonal production patterns and their operational, financial, and strategic implications for manufacturing businesses

How to use this paper for revision

- Keep up with business news in the months before the exam. Read the **BBC Business section**, the **Financial Times**, or listen to podcasts such as The Bottom Line to stay current on mergers, regulatory changes, and industry trends.
- Memorise the top UK supermarkets and the BRANDZ top five global brands. Make flashcards for key business figures (Bezos, Zuckerberg, Page, Brin, Ashley) and the companies or products they control.
- Practise reverse percentage problems until they are automatic. If sales this year are 5% higher than last year, divide this year's figure by 1.05 to find the base. Similarly, master reverse compound growth by dividing successively by (1 + growth rate).
- Write out full workings for every calculation, even if the method seems obvious. Examiners award method marks generously, so showing each step protects you if you make an arithmetic slip.
- Time the extended essays carefully. Allocate roughly **12–13 minutes per essay**, leaving a few minutes at the end to review Section A and check calculations. Plan a short introduction, two or three developed points for and against, and a brief conclusion.
- For the discussion questions, structure your answer with clear paragraphs. Use connectives such as 'On the one hand', 'Conversely', and 'In conclusion' to signal the progression of your argument. Balance is key: examiners reward candidates who see both sides.
- Revise breakeven formulae: breakeven output equals fixed costs divided by (selling price minus variable cost per unit). Write the formula at the top of your working so the examiner can follow your logic even if you misread a number.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Confusing the top four UK supermarkets. Many candidates include Lidl or Aldi, but the traditional 'big four' are **Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, and Morrisons**. Discount chains have gained market share but are not yet in the top four by revenue.
- Forgetting to show workings in Section B. Even if you reach the correct answer mentally, you must write out each step to earn full marks. A bare number scores zero if the method is unclear.
- Misapplying percentage change. If this year's figure is 5% more than last year, students often multiply instead of dividing. Remember: to find the base, divide by (1 + percentage increase), not multiply.
- Rushing the extended essays and writing one-sided answers. Examiners expect discussion, meaning arguments both for and against. A response that only considers Apple's legal duty to recall, without mentioning cost or the low defect rate, will score poorly.
- Losing track of which year is the starting point in compound growth questions. Sketch a timeline if necessary: 2021 → 2022 → 2023, and work backwards carefully, dividing at each step.
- Ignoring the context in the essay questions. Mentioning 'Apple' or 'Shrewsbury Confectioners' by name, and referring to specific details (0.1% defect rate, 80% production in six months), demonstrates engagement and earns more credit than generic business theory.

Exam technique

Begin with **Section A**, aiming to complete all 15 multiple-choice questions in about **10–12 minutes**. If you are unsure of an answer, mark your best guess and move on; each question is worth one mark, so spending three minutes on a single item is inefficient. Return to any blanks at the end if time permits.

Move to **Section B** and allocate roughly **3–4 minutes per calculation**, totalling about 18 minutes for the five problems. Write out every step of your working, label each stage clearly (e.g. 'Last year's sales = $3360 \div 1.05$ '), and circle or underline your final answer. If you make an arithmetic error, partial credit for method can still earn you two out of three marks. Use the margins for rough work, but cross through any drafts neatly so the examiner knows which version to mark.

Section C deserves the remaining **25–28 minutes**, split roughly equally between the two essays. Spend a minute jotting down a brief plan for each: list two or three points in favour of the decision, two or three against, and a concluding judgement. Then write in

continuous prose, developing each point with reasoning and evidence from the scenario. Aim for clarity and balance rather than length; a well-structured answer of 200–250 words per essay will outscore a rambling 400-word response. Reserve two minutes at the end to reread your work and correct obvious errors.

What to revise alongside this paper

Strengthen your grasp of **financial calculations** by reviewing GCSE topics such as ratio and proportion, percentage change, and simple and compound interest. Practise breakeven problems from A-level Business textbooks, ensuring you can rearrange the formula to solve for price, output, or costs. Familiarity with profit and loss statements will also help you interpret revenue and cost data quickly.

Read around **corporate social responsibility** and **business ethics**, particularly case studies of product recalls (e.g. Samsung Galaxy Note 7, Volkswagen emissions scandal). Understanding the trade-offs between short-term costs and long-term reputation will deepen your answers in Section C. Similarly, explore **operations management** topics such as capacity planning, inventory control, and the challenges of seasonal demand, as these underpin the Shrewsbury Confectioners question.

Broaden your awareness of **market structures** (monopoly, oligopoly, perfect competition) and how they shape pricing and competitive behaviour. Follow major mergers, acquisitions, and regulatory interventions reported in the business press, and consider the strategic motives behind them. This contextual knowledge will make you a stronger candidate not only for this entrance exam but for A-level Business and Economics more generally.

Key terms

Greenwashing, Advertising Standards Authority, BRANDZ rankings, Breakeven analysis, Fixed costs, Variable costs, Contribution per unit, Compound growth, Reverse percentage, Quality control, Defect rate, Product recall, Brand reputation, Seasonal production, Capacity utilisation

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SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2024 ENTRY

ENGLISH: Linguistic Competence (45 minutes)

Instructions to candidates:

- The quality of your answer and therefore your close reading of the printed extract will be assessed: you should think carefully before writing and perhaps briefly plan your answer.
- In answering the question, you should pay close attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation.
- It is advised that you should spend around 15 minutes reading the extract and planning your essay and 30 minutes writing your actual answer. Make sure also that you have read the question carefully before you begin.
- Answer on lined paper.

QUESTION:

Read the attached **NON-FICTION TEXTS; Text A: My best friendships happen online but that doesn't make them any less valid and Text B: The limits of friendship.**

Write a **magazine article** for young people about modern friendship.

In your article you should:

- evaluate the ideas about friendship given in the texts.
- explain, based on what you read, to what extent you think social media affects friendship.

Base your article on what you have read in both texts, but be careful to use your own words.

Address both of the bullet points.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Pay careful attention to the accuracy and presentation of your writing.

[30 marks]

Text A: My best friendships happen online but that doesn't make them any less valid

The following text is about online friendships.

We blame the internet for all human sins. It has grown popular to berate the internet for its role in our ever-growing loneliness epidemic.

Scientists regularly release studies that suggest a correlation between social media use and loneliness, low self-esteem and social isolation. But even they have to admit we do not know what came first: the loneliness or the social media.

I'd like to defend the internet. I've just spent a year researching friendship for my book, which is about precisely this: the intersection between loneliness and friendship.

I've spoken to countless people, both my own friends and strangers from the internet, who would simply not have access to the same social life without social media. I know a woman who met all three of her bridesmaids – the women she cherishes most in the world – online. She says she feels like her most authentic self when she's online.

This is perhaps exactly the point: we can no longer quite so easily distinguish between our online selves and our 'real' selves. We are becoming confident enough to merge our online and offline selves as we realise that social media is an important platform for friendship.

My best friends in the world live in Melbourne, New York, Los Angeles and New Orleans. I am, at any time, a minimum of 5000 kilometres away from them. Catch-ups over lunch are not possible for us. Our group chat has become a glorious mishmash of the trivial and the meaningful – home to career advice, dog pictures, memes and moral support. I am indignant and distressed by anyone who would suggest our largely online friendship is in any way less valid than people who have the luxury of sharing oxygen in the same physical place.

Besides, befriending apps are popping up all over. Some alleviate the loneliness for new mums or help you find new friends when you move to a new city. The clever thing about so many of these apps is they use the very thing we blame for our disconnection from others – technology – to bring us back together. They take away the difficulty of usual social interaction and reduce the chance of rejection. Think how many people this technology might particularly help: introverts, people with disabilities that make it difficult to leave the house or even speak, deaf people, people with mental health problems, people who just find social interaction terrifying.

The internet could be just the thing to help us revive friendship.

Text B: The limits of friendship

The following text is about the changing nature of friendship.

Robin Dunbar, an anthropologist working with primates some years ago, was researching why primates spend so much time in groups. He moved from there to humans and claimed that the average person could have up to 150 people in their social group. Anything beyond that is unmanageable. Since then, Dunbar has been exploring whether our ever-expanding social networks have done anything to change it.

Within the group of 150 only 5 will be your closest support group. Dunbar found that while the group sizes are stable, their composition is fluid. Your five today may not be your five next week.

As constant use of social media has become normal, people have challenged the relevance of Dunbar's number. Isn't it easier to have more friends when we have social media to help us to cultivate and maintain them? Our real-world friends tend to know each other but online we can expand our networks. Yet, 150 has remained constant, despite the ease of online connections compared with face-to-face ones.

However, social media is changing the nature of human interaction. It allows you to keep track of people who would otherwise disappear. What keeps face-to-face friendships strong is the nature of shared experience. The social media equivalent – sharing, liking, knowing that your friends have looked at the same cat video – lacks the synchronicity of shared experience. We've seen the same movie, but we cannot bond over it in the same way.

With social media, we can easily keep up with the lives of far more people. But without investing the face-to-face time, we lack deeper connections with them, and the time we invest in superficial relationships comes at the expense of more profound ones. We may widen our network to 400 people that we see as friends, but keeping up an actual friendship requires time. Putting in the effort to 'like', comment and interact with an ever-widening network means we have less time and capacity left for our closer friends – the ones that really matter

Paper Notes: 16+ English Question Paper (16+ 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 **Shrewsbury School Sixth Form Entrance Examination for 2024 entry**, testing **English: Linguistic Competence** in a **45-minute paper**. It assesses candidates' ability to synthesise arguments from two non-fiction texts about friendship and social media, then produce a coherent magazine article that evaluates competing perspectives. The paper is aimed at students applying for **Year 12 entry** at Shrewsbury, one of Britain's leading independent schools.

The task requires students to read Text A ('My best friendships happen online but that doesn't make them any less valid') and Text B ('The limits of friendship'), then write a **250 to 350 word** magazine article for young people about modern friendship. Candidates must evaluate the ideas presented in both texts and explain the extent to which social media affects friendship, using their own words throughout.

This paper tests **analytical reading, synthesis, and transactional writing skills** at a sophisticated level appropriate for prospective sixth-formers. The assessment places equal weight on comprehension of nuanced arguments and the ability to produce accurate, well-presented prose suitable for a specific audience and purpose. The paper carries **30 marks** and emphasises technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

How this paper is organised

The paper consists of a single extended writing task worth **30 marks**, to be completed in **45 minutes**. Candidates are advised to spend approximately **15 minutes reading and planning** and **30 minutes writing** their response. The question provides two non-fiction passages: Text A defends online friendships as valid and authentic, while Text B discusses **Dunbar's number** and argues that social media creates superficial connections at the expense of deeper relationships.

The task specifies two bullet points that must be addressed: evaluating the ideas about friendship in the texts, and explaining to what extent social media affects friendship. Candidates must produce a **magazine article** for a young audience, which means adopting an accessible, engaging tone whilst maintaining analytical rigour.

The instructions emphasise careful reading, planning, and attention to **spelling, punctuation, grammar, and presentation**. Answers must be written on lined paper. The

word count requirement is explicit (**250 to 350 words**), testing candidates' ability to write concisely and meet professional writing constraints.

Topics covered

- Synthesis of opposing arguments from non-fiction texts with contrasting perspectives on digital friendship
- Evaluation and critical analysis of ideas about the validity of online versus face-to-face relationships
- Transactional writing in the magazine article format with appropriate register for a young adult audience
- Understanding of Dunbar's number and anthropological research on social group size limits
- Analysis of the debate surrounding social media's impact on loneliness, connection, and authenticity
- Discussion of synchronicity in shared experience and its role in bonding
- Consideration of accessibility benefits of online friendship for marginalised groups
- Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and grammar at sixth-form level
- Planning and time management under timed examination conditions
- Paraphrasing and expressing source material in original language

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise writing in different transactional formats (magazine articles, speeches, letters) so you can adjust your tone and structure to suit the specified audience and purpose quickly.
- Read quality journalism aimed at young people, such as The Guardian's opinion section, to absorb the conventions of magazine article writing: punchy openings, direct address, varied sentence structures.
- Time yourself reading complex non-fiction passages and identifying the main argument, supporting evidence, and counter-arguments in under 10 minutes to build reading efficiency.
- Develop a brief planning template for synthesis tasks: create a two-column table noting points from each text, then decide which to adopt, challenge, or balance in your response.
- Revise vocabulary for discussing argument structure (such as 'contends', 'acknowledges', 'refutes', 'concedes') to demonstrate analytical sophistication.
- Practise writing to strict word counts; learn to self-edit and prioritise your strongest points when space is limited.
- Review contemporary debates about technology and society so you can bring informed personal insight to questions about social media, screen time, and digital life.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Simply summarising both texts sequentially rather than synthesising their ideas into an original argument that addresses the question directly and evaluates both perspectives.
- Forgetting to adopt the magazine article format, resulting in an essay-style response without an engaging opening, direct address to the reader, or appropriate register for young people.
- Copying phrases directly from the source texts instead of paraphrasing in original language, which the question explicitly warns against.
- Neglecting one of the two bullet points, for example evaluating the texts but failing to explain the extent to which social media affects friendship.
- Writing significantly over or under the 250 to 350 word limit, either through poor planning or failure to monitor word count during writing.
- Rushing the reading phase and missing key nuances, such as Text A's focus on accessibility for introverts and disabled people, or Text B's distinction between network size and close friendships.

Exam technique

Allocate your time strictly: **15 minutes for reading and planning, 30 minutes for writing**. Begin by reading both texts carefully, annotating key arguments, evidence, and any quotable phrases. Identify where the texts agree, disagree, or offer complementary perspectives. Then spend 3 to 4 minutes planning your article structure: a punchy opening that introduces the debate, two to three body paragraphs that evaluate both perspectives and explain social media's impact, and a brief conclusion.

Write in a **magazine article register**: use a headline if you have time, address the reader directly ('we', 'you'), employ varied sentence lengths, and aim for clarity over complexity. Keep one eye on the word count as you write, and leave the final 2 minutes to check **spelling, punctuation, and grammar**, which the rubric explicitly assesses. If you are running short on time, prioritise completing both bullet points over perfecting your introduction.

Remember to evaluate the texts rather than merely describe them. Use phrases such as 'Text A persuasively argues', 'Text B overlooks', 'while both writers acknowledge'. Balance evidence from both texts to demonstrate synthesis. Above all, answer in your own words; paraphrase rather than quote, and ensure your voice and argument are clear throughout.

What to revise alongside this paper

To prepare for this type of synthesis task, revise **persuasive and argumentative writing techniques** such as concession, rebuttal, and balanced argument. Study the conventions of transactional writing formats including speeches, opinion articles, and formal letters, noting how register and tone shift to suit different audiences. Practise analysing **rhetorical devices** in non-fiction prose, such as anecdote, statistical evidence, expert testimony, and emotive language.

Review contemporary **debates about technology and society**, particularly discussions of social media's psychological effects, digital wellbeing, and the value of online communities. Familiarity with thinkers such as Sherry Turkle, Jaron Lanier, or sociologists studying digital culture will deepen your ability to bring informed personal insight to questions about modern life.

Broaden your reading of **high-quality journalism and opinion writing** from publications such as The Guardian, The Times, and magazines aimed at younger readers. Notice how professional writers structure arguments, balance competing perspectives, and maintain an engaging voice. Practise timed writing under examination conditions to build stamina and improve your ability to plan, draft, and self-edit within strict time limits.

Key terms

Synthesis, Transactional writing, Magazine article register, Audience and purpose, Dunbar's number, Synchronicity, Anthropological research, Evaluation and analysis, Paraphrasing, Counter-argument, Social isolation, Authentic self, Face-to-face interaction, Superficial relationships, Word count discipline

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SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2024 ENTRY

ENGLISH: Literature (1 Hour)

Instructions to candidates:

- The quality of your answer and therefore your close reading of the printed texts will be assessed: you should think carefully before writing and perhaps briefly plan your answer.
- In answering the question, you should pay close attention to spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation.
- It is advised that you should spend no more than 20 of the available minutes reading and marking up the texts, with the remaining 40 minutes being used to plan and write your answer.
- Answer on lined paper.

READ CAREFULLY the two poems attached overleaf on pages three and four: *The Darkling Thrush* and "*Hope*" is the thing with feathers.

Then answer the following **QUESTION**:

ESSAY: Compare the ways the writers powerfully present feelings of hope in *The Darkling Thrush* and "*Hope*" is the thing with feathers.

In answering the question you should pay particular attention to:

- Your personal reaction to the poems;
- The language and images that are used;
- The way the poems are structured;
- The tone of the poems;
- The message you think the poets are trying to convey.

Try to write as much as you can in the time allowed.

[30 marks]

Text One: *The Darkling Thrush* by Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928)

I leant upon a coppice gate
 When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
 The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
 Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
 Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
 The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
 Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
 Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
 The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
 Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
 In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
 Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
 Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
 Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
 His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
 And I was unaware.

**Text Two: *"Hope" is the thing with feathers* by Emily Dickinson
(1830 – 1886)**

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

Paper Notes: 16+ English Question Paper (16+ English Past Paper (2024))

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Overview

This is the **Shrewsbury School Sixth Form Entrance Examination** English Literature paper for **2024 entry**, designed for candidates aged 16+ seeking admission to Year 12. The paper tests literary analysis skills through a single comparative essay question worth **30 marks** and allows **one hour** to complete.

Candidates are provided with two poems exploring the theme of hope: **Thomas Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush' (1900)** and **Emily Dickinson's "'Hope" is the thing with feathers' (c. 1861)**. The task requires close reading, comparative analysis, and the ability to explore language, imagery, structure, tone and authorial message. Instructions emphasise the importance of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar alongside literary insight.

The paper suits students with strong experience in poetry analysis and the confidence to produce sustained comparative writing under timed conditions. The question design privileges personal response and interpretative flair over formulaic technique, reflecting the expectations of a selective independent school's sixth form entry process.

How this paper is organised

The examination lasts **one hour** and consists of a single essay question carrying **30 marks**. Candidates are advised to spend approximately **20 minutes reading and annotating** the two poems, leaving **40 minutes** for planning and writing the comparative essay.

Two complete poems are printed in the exam paper: Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush' (eight quatrains, 32 lines) appears on page three, and Dickinson's "'Hope" is the thing with feathers' (three quatrains, 12 lines) appears on page four. Both texts include the poets' dates and are clearly labelled as Text One and Text Two.

The essay question is accompanied by five bullet points directing candidates to consider personal reaction, language and imagery, structure, tone, and the poets' messages. The instruction to 'write as much as you can in the time allowed' signals an expectation of substantial, developed analysis rather than brief commentary.

Topics covered

- Comparative analysis of two poems from different literary periods and traditions (Victorian and American nineteenth-century verse)
- Close reading of poetic language, including metaphor, personification and extended imagery (bird as symbol, seasonal setting)
- Analysis of poetic structure, including stanza form, rhyme scheme, metre and line length variation
- Exploration of tone and voice, contrasting Hardy's melancholic speaker with Dickinson's confident assertion
- Interpretation of the theme of hope, examining how abstract concepts are presented through concrete natural imagery
- Understanding of historical and biographical context (Hardy's fin-de-siècle pessimism, Dickinson's reclusive transcendentalism)
- Personal response to literature, articulating individual reactions within an analytical framework
- Sustained comparative essay writing, balancing analysis of both texts throughout
- Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar under timed examination conditions

How to use this paper for revision

- Read both poems aloud several times before the exam to internalise their rhythms and tonal differences; Hardy's formal regularity contrasts sharply with Dickinson's idiosyncratic dashes and capitalisation.
- Practise annotating poems quickly, marking key imagery, structural features and tonal shifts in the margins within a strict 20-minute window.
- Revise poetic terminology that applies to both texts: metaphor, personification, pathetic fallacy, enjambment, caesura, and how to name rhyme schemes and metrical patterns.
- Prepare a mental framework for comparative structure, such as alternating between poets point by point rather than treating each poem separately in two halves.
- Study other Hardy poems ('Neutral Tones', 'The Convergence of the Twain') and Dickinson lyrics to understand their characteristic styles and recurrent themes.
- Write timed practice essays on comparative poetry questions, focusing on integrating personal response with close textual analysis throughout.
- Familiarise yourself with critical vocabulary for discussing hope, despair, transcendence and the symbolic use of birds and seasons in Romantic and post-Romantic verse.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Spending too long on initial reading and annotation, leaving insufficient time to plan and write a full comparative essay that develops points thoroughly.
- Treating the two poems in separate halves of the essay rather than weaving comparison throughout, which weakens the sense of dialogue between texts.
- Identifying poetic techniques (such as 'personification' or 'metaphor') without explaining their effect or linking them clearly to the presentation of hope.
- Neglecting personal response entirely and writing a dry, feature-spotting analysis that ignores the bullet point asking for individual reaction to the poems.
- Overlooking Dickinson's unconventional punctuation and capitalisation, which are integral to her style and meaning, not typographical errors to be ignored.
- Writing in vague generalisations about 'hope' without anchoring analysis in specific quotations and close attention to word choice, sound and imagery.

Exam technique

Begin by reading both poems carefully, annotating as you go. Mark striking images, structural turning points, shifts in tone and any patterns or contrasts you notice. Use the full 20 minutes for this stage, as thorough preparation makes the writing phase faster and more confident.

Plan your essay structure before you start writing. A successful comparative approach might address each bullet point in turn (language and imagery, structure, tone, message) while always discussing both poets together rather than separately. Alternatively, organise by key contrasts: Hardy's external, seasonal landscape versus Dickinson's internal, metaphorical bird; Hardy's doubt and exclusion versus Dickinson's certainty and possession of hope. Whichever structure you choose, ensure both poems receive equal attention throughout.

Write clearly and accurately, quoting precisely and integrating quotations into your sentences. Aim for depth rather than breadth: three or four fully developed comparative points will score more highly than six superficial observations. Reserve time to check your work for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, as the instructions explicitly state these will be assessed. If you run short of time, finish your argument in note form rather than leaving it incomplete.

What to revise alongside this paper

Broaden your reading of **Victorian poetry**, particularly Hardy's other work and contemporaries such as Tennyson and Hopkins, to understand the period's preoccupation with faith, doubt and the natural world. Explore **American nineteenth-century verse**, including Whitman and other Transcendentalist writers, to contextualise Dickinson's treatment of abstract ideas and her distinctive style.

Revise the **Romantic tradition** of finding spiritual meaning in nature, from Wordsworth and Coleridge through to its transformation in later poets. Both Hardy and Dickinson are responding to and revising Romantic conventions, and understanding that inheritance strengthens comparative analysis.

Practise writing about **symbolism and allegory** across different genres, as the ability to discuss how abstract concepts are embodied in concrete images is central to this question. Consider how other writers use birds, seasons and landscapes to explore philosophical or emotional states.

Key terms

Comparative analysis, Metaphor, Extended metaphor, Personification, Pathetic fallacy, Imagery, Symbolism, Tone, Structure, Stanza, Quatrain, Rhyme scheme, Enjambment, Caesura, Transcendentalism

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