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St Francis College 13+ English

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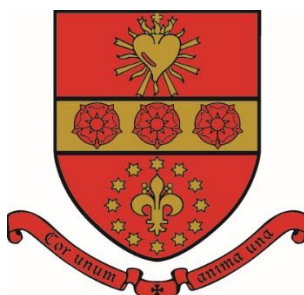
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St. Francis' College



Practice Paper

ENGLISH

Entry into Year 9

Time allowed - 1 hour

SECTION A Answer all of the following section by writing on the question paper.

1. Indicate the correct spelling by circling or underlining.

necessary	neccesary	necessary	
definitelly	definitely	definately	
skillful	skilful	skillfull	
agression	agresion	aggression	
charactar	character	charracter	
independently	independently	independantly	
loneliness	loneleness	lonelyness	
criticicaly	criticaley	critically	
comitted	committed	commited	
laboratory	laboratary	laboratery	10 marks)

2. Match the words below to the meanings

frugal

epitome

succinct

idiosyncratic

incredulous

proclivity

surreptitious

ambivalent

ambiguous

apocryphal

tendency.....
furtive, secret.....
disbelieving.....
economical.....
unsure, in two minds.....
individual, unique.....
vague, confusing.....
untrue, invented.....
essence, embodiment.....
concise, brief.....

(10 marks)

20 marks

SECTION B Comprehension

The following extract is the opening of the story *The Collectors* by Philip Pullman. Read the extract carefully and answer all the questions.

‘But the *thing is*,’ said Horley, ‘they didn’t know each other at all. Never heard of each other. It wasn’t about the makers. Only about the works.’

‘And how did you hear about it?’ said Grinstead.

‘From the dealer who sold me the painting. Falcondale. Max Falcondale.’

‘Reliable?’

‘Well, within limits, you know, but he’d made the sale anyway. He just wanted to tell the story.’

It was December of 1970, and they were sitting in the Senior Common Room of Horley’s college after dinner. It was cold, and the dinner had been meagre and dull, culminating in some sort of nut pudding that closely resembled wet cement. The small fire in the SCR had just enough energy to warm the rug

directly in front of it, and left the corners of the room to fend for themselves. There was more warmth coming from the two standard lamps on either side of the hearth. The company wasn't large: the Librarian, the Chaplain, a couple of young Fellows no one seemed to know by name, a visiting professor of philology, and Grinstead, Horley's guest for the evening. While the rest discussed European politics, Horley and Grinstead, occupying the shadows at the end of the sofa and the deepest armchair respectively, spoke quietly about a painting in Horley's possession.

Grinstead sipped his brandy and said quietly, 'Well, tell me what Falcondale said.'

'He told me the story as he'd heard it from the painter's daughter. Leonora Skipton. Her father usually painted landscapes in a sort of second-hand Impressionist manner, nothing especially original, but agreeable enough. He very rarely did portraits. This one was quite out of his usual range. Falcondale had no idea who the sitter was – a young woman with the most extraordinarily ambiguous expression – one moment she looks cold, disdainful, contemptuous even, and the next on fire with a sort of lost and hopeless and yet somehow very sexy yearning. A very *strong* picture.'

'What's she doing?'

'She's standing in front of a sort of dusty pink curtain, hands clasped in front, wearing a simple dark blue blouse thing and cream-coloured skirt. Very plain, very simple. It's all in the face.'

'She wasn't the daughter – Leonora, was it?' said Grinstead.

'No. The daughter couldn't stand the picture – loathed it. She came into Falcondale's gallery to confirm the identification, and said she wished it had been burnt the day it was painted. That was all she'd say. She's some incredible age – must be nearly a hundred. Oh, and he showed me a remarkable letter—'

'And what about the other piece?'

Re-read the opening up to ‘...wet cement’. Indicate whether the following statements are true or false by circling the letter T or F in each case. **Answer directly on the question paper for this question and write on file paper for the rest of the examination.**

1)

- Grinstead bought the painting from a dealer called Max Falcondale. T
- Falcondale sold the painting in December 1971. T F
- Falcondale had wanted to tell Horley a story. T F
- Horley and Grinstead had enjoyed their meal. T F

(4 marks)

2) What are Horley’s views of art dealers in general and of Falcondale in particular? Use quotations from the text to support your points. (4 marks)

3) The story is set in a college at Oxford University. What impressions have you formed of the college? Use evidence from the text to support your views.

(6 marks)

4) Using evidence from the text, explain in detail what is unusual about the painting. (6 marks)

5) This is the opening section of a story. Explain in detail how Pullman uses language and structure to create mystery and suspense. Use quotations to support your ideas. (10 marks)

30 marks

SECTION C

Extended writing 30 marks

You should aim to write 1 – 2 sides.

Credit will be given for: good vocabulary

variety and originality of ideas

accurate spelling, punctuation and paragraphing

Write a description suggested by the title **The Quiet Room**.

Paper Total 80

Paper Notes: 13+ English Practice Paper (13+ English Practice Paper)

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

Overview

This is a **13+ entrance examination practice paper** published by **St Francis' College** in Letchworth Garden City, designed for students preparing for **entry into Year 9**. The paper tests core English skills across spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and creative writing, with a one-hour time limit and a total of **80 marks** available. The format reflects the rigour expected at this level, combining technical accuracy with literary analysis and original composition.

The paper is divided into **three distinct sections**. Section A assesses spelling and vocabulary through multiple-choice and matching tasks. Section B centres on a **literary comprehension exercise** using an extract from Philip Pullman's story *The Collectors*, requiring close textual analysis, inference, and essay-style responses. Section C calls for an extended piece of descriptive writing on the title *The Quiet Room*, testing imaginative control, structure, and technical accuracy.

This paper suits students in Year 8 preparing for **grammar school or independent school entrance exams**. It mirrors the style and demands of selective school assessments, balancing foundational skills with higher-order literary appreciation. The inclusion of a Pullman extract and open-ended creative task reflects the expectation that candidates can read sophisticated fiction and write with originality under timed conditions.

How this paper is organised

The paper opens with **Section A**, worth **20 marks** in total, which students complete directly on the question paper. It contains two tasks: a ten-mark spelling exercise asking candidates to identify the correct spelling from three options across ten commonly misspelt words, and a ten-mark vocabulary matching task pairing ten advanced words (frugal, epitome, succinct, idiosyncratic, incredulous, proclivity, surreptitious, ambivalent, ambiguous, apocryphal) with their definitions.

Section B allocates **30 marks** to reading comprehension. Students read an extract from Philip Pullman's *The Collectors* and answer five questions of increasing difficulty. Question 1 is a four-mark true/false exercise completed on the paper itself. Questions 2 to 5, written on separate paper, require progressively deeper analysis: Horley's views on art dealers (4 marks), impressions of the college setting (6 marks), the unusual

features of the painting (6 marks), and a substantial exploration of how Pullman creates mystery and suspense through language and structure (10 marks).

Section C is an extended writing task worth **30 marks**. Candidates write a description inspired by the title *The Quiet Room*, aiming for one to two sides of writing. Marks are awarded for vocabulary, originality, spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing. The entire paper must be completed within **one hour**.

Topics covered

- Spelling of commonly confused and misspelt words, including necessary, definitely, skilful, aggression, character, independently, loneliness, critically, committed, and laboratory
- Advanced vocabulary recognition and definition matching, covering words such as frugal, epitome, succinct, idiosyncratic, incredulous, proclivity, surreptitious, ambivalent, ambiguous, and apocryphal
- Close reading comprehension of a literary extract from Philip Pullman's *The Collectors*, a narrative text with sophisticated sentence structures and atmospheric description
- Retrieval and inference skills, including true/false judgements and the extraction of character attitudes from dialogue and narration
- Analysis of setting and atmosphere in fiction, using evidence from the text to form impressions of an Oxford college Senior Common Room
- Interpretation of descriptive detail, particularly the portrayal of a painting with an ambiguous and emotionally complex subject
- Evaluation of narrative techniques for creating mystery and suspense, including the use of dialogue, structure, foreshadowing, and withheld information
- Extended descriptive writing to a creative title, requiring original ideas, control of tone, and imaginative engagement with the concept of a quiet room
- Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing across all written responses
- Time management and exam technique, balancing quick-answer tasks with sustained analytical and creative writing

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise spelling tricky words by writing them out repeatedly and identifying the part of the word you find hardest to remember, such as the double letters in committed or the -ary ending in laboratory.
- Build your vocabulary actively by keeping a notebook of advanced words and their meanings, then using each word in a sentence of your own to cement your understanding.
- Read the comprehension extract twice before attempting any questions: once to get the overall sense, and a second time to underline key details and unfamiliar words.
- For vocabulary matching, eliminate the definitions you are certain of first, then use context clues and word roots to narrow down the remaining options.
- When answering comprehension questions that ask for evidence, always quote short phrases from the text and explain what they reveal or suggest.
- Plan your extended writing before you start: jot down three or four sensory details or images you want to include, then organise them into a logical structure.
- Leave five minutes at the end of the exam to read through your answers, checking for spelling errors, missing punctuation, and sentences that do not quite make sense.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Misspelling words by guessing rather than learning their structure: for example, writing definately instead of definitely, or confusing -ence and -ance endings in words like independence.
- In vocabulary tasks, choosing definitions that sound plausible but do not match the word's actual meaning, such as confusing ambiguous (vague, unclear) with ambivalent (unsure, having mixed feelings).
- Writing comprehension answers that simply repeat the question or offer a personal opinion without quoting or referring to the text for evidence.
- Failing to read questions carefully and missing instructions such as 'circle T or F' or 'write on file paper', which can lead to answers being placed in the wrong location.
- In the extended writing task, producing a narrative or story when the question explicitly asks for a description, or writing too little to demonstrate the required range of vocabulary and originality.
- Ignoring the mark allocation: spending too long on low-mark questions such as the true/false statements and leaving insufficient time for the ten-mark analysis of language and structure.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the instructions for each section carefully and noting the mark allocations to guide your time management. **Section A** should take no more than ten minutes: the spelling and vocabulary tasks are quick-fire, so trust your first instinct and move on. If you are uncertain about a vocabulary match, leave it and return after completing the others, as elimination often makes the final answers clearer.

Section B deserves around 25 minutes. Read the Pullman extract twice before attempting question 1, then work methodically through questions 2 to 5, keeping an eye on the marks. A four-mark question needs two clear points with evidence, while the ten-mark question on language and structure requires at least three paragraphs with multiple quotations and detailed analysis. Always embed short quotations and explain what they show, rather than simply describing the story.

Section C should occupy the remaining 25 minutes, including five minutes for planning and checking. Spend two minutes brainstorming sensory details, images, and a loose structure for your description of The Quiet Room. Write in clear paragraphs, vary your sentence openings, and aim for vivid, precise vocabulary. Leave time to proofread for spelling, punctuation, and sense, as technical accuracy contributes directly to your mark.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, students should revise **common spelling patterns and rules**, particularly for words with double consonants, silent letters, and tricky suffixes such as -ly, -ful, and -ness. Work through lists of frequently misspelt words at Key Stage 3 level and test yourself regularly. **Vocabulary extension** is equally important: read widely, particularly fiction written for older readers, and keep a vocabulary journal to record unfamiliar words and their meanings in context.

For the comprehension element, practise reading **literary extracts from contemporary and classic fiction**, focusing on how authors build atmosphere, develop character through dialogue, and control pacing. Study techniques for creating **mystery and suspense**, such as foreshadowing, fragmented information, and the contrast between dialogue and description. Finally, hone your **descriptive writing skills** by responding to a variety of titles and settings, experimenting with different structures (spatial, chronological, thematic) and practising the integration of figurative language and precise vocabulary.

Key terms

Spelling conventions, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Inference, Textual evidence, Quotation, Atmosphere, Setting, Mystery, Suspense, Narrative structure, Descriptive writing, Sensory detail, Paragraphing, Punctuation

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ST. FRANCIS' COLLEGE
SAMPLE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION PAPER (for entry into Year 9)
MARKING INFORMATION

All questions are marked positively not negatively. For example, if a girl gets all of Section A wrong, her score for it would be 0 rather than -20.

SECTION A: Tests knowledge of spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar. Not all of these will be tested in any one paper but candidates should be prepared for questions that cover these areas. Candidates could be asked to correct errors in a piece of writing. In this case all errors would be weighted equally in terms of marks.

SECTION B: Tests comprehension skills. There will be a short prose extract or a poem followed by a series of questions. These questions will test the ability to understand meaning and analyse the effects of a writer's choice of language. Marks are awarded for the content of the answer and for the quality of the candidate's writing.

For the sample paper's question 3 might include reference to:
The college is formal and traditional. This is suggested by the term 'Senior Common Room' and the way in which most of the characters are referred to by their role within the college: Librarian, Chaplain etc.

The college is hierarchical and not very welcoming. These ideas are suggested by the fact that no one has bothered to find out the names of the two 'young Fellows'.

Hospitality is poor overall, as the room is cold and the dinner has been of a poor standard. These points could also indicate that the college is struggling financially.

There is a sinister, rather secretive atmosphere created by the use of darkness in the description of the room and by the way the college members separate into two distinct groups. We are told that Horley and Grinstead were 'occupying the shadows' and speaking 'quietly'. It is as if they do not wish to be overheard.

Credit would also be given for pointing out that it is a university college with a strong focus on the academic and the serious for topics of social conversation.

SECTION C: Tests the candidate's ability to write an extended piece of prose. There will be a choice. In her answer the candidate must make sure that she is writing appropriately to the question. For example, a piece of **descriptive** writing should not be a **story**.

Marks are awarded for the quality of the content, and for the quality of written communication. The marks for QWC are awarded separately from the marks for content. Fewer marks are awarded for QWC than for content to ensure that those girls who have difficulty with spelling and punctuation are not disadvantaged.

Marks are awarded on a 'best fit' principle: candidates do not have to meet all of the criteria for a grade to be awarded a mark within that grade.

A* **Content:** Engaging style, strong personal style, successfully uses a range of techniques (such as metaphors), clearly planned, effective structure, impressive range of vocabulary, appropriate to task, has a sense of audience, originality of approach

A* **QWC:** impressive use of a range of sentence structures, achieves a very high level of accuracy in terms of spelling and punctuation, very secure use of paragraphing, mature and very clear handwriting, very high standard of presentation

A **Content:** very good effort made to match vocabulary and style to the task, some good use of techniques (such as metaphors), good effort to plan and to use structure for effect, good vocabulary, touches of originality

A **QWC:** good variety of sentence structures, high level of accuracy in terms of spelling and punctuation, good use of paragraphing, very good handwriting, high standard of presentation

B **Content:** good effort made to match vocabulary and style to the task, some use of techniques (such as metaphors), effort made to plan and to use structure for effect, some elements of good vocabulary

B **QWC:** some variety of sentence structures, generally good level of accuracy in terms of spelling and punctuation, generally accurate use of paragraphing, good handwriting, good standard of presentation

C **Content:** some sense of how to match vocabulary and style to the task but not always consistently successful, attempts to use techniques (such as metaphors), reasonably well planned, vocabulary generally used accurately but mainly of a basic level, underdeveloped

C **QWC:** accurate spelling of most commonly used words, generally uses capital letters and full stops accurately, attempts to use a variety of sentences structures, some correct use of paragraphing, clear handwriting, reasonable standard of presentation

D **Content:** vocabulary and style not always appropriate to the task, unplanned/not well planned, basic level of vocabulary, underdeveloped or uncontrolled

D **QWC:** spelling of simple words generally accurate, uses punctuation but frequently inaccurately, poor paragraphing/no paragraphing, handwriting sometimes illegible, poor standard of presentation

E **Content:** material not always relevant to the task, inappropriate style, poor vocabulary, significantly short work

E **QWC:** inaccurate spelling and punctuation hinders comprehension, significant elements of illegibility, very poor standard of presentation

Paper Notes: 13+ English Question Paper (13+ English Past 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 a **sample entrance examination paper** published by **St. Francis' College** in Letchworth Garden City, designed for candidates applying for entry into **Year 9** (the 13+ age group). The document provides detailed marking information and assessment criteria rather than the complete question paper itself, making it an invaluable guide for understanding how the college evaluates prospective students' English skills.

The paper tests three core areas: spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar in Section A; comprehension skills (including literary analysis of prose extracts or poetry) in Section B; and extended prose writing in Section C. Each section is marked using positive scoring, with Section C assessed separately for content quality and quality of written communication (QWC). The college explicitly states that QWC carries fewer marks to avoid disadvantaging candidates who struggle with spelling and punctuation.

This resource is particularly useful for parents and tutors preparing girls for competitive independent school entrance exams. The detailed grade descriptors (from A* down to E) offer transparency about the standard expected at each level, and the sample answers for Section B illustrate the depth of textual analysis required. The 'best fit' principle means candidates need not meet every criterion to achieve a particular grade.

How this paper is organised

The examination is divided into **three sections**, each testing distinct English skills. Section A focuses on technical accuracy, covering spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar, though not all elements appear in every paper. Candidates may be asked to correct errors in a passage, with each error carrying equal mark weighting.

Section B presents a short prose extract or poem followed by comprehension questions that assess both literal understanding and analytical skills. Marks are awarded for the content of answers and for the quality of the candidate's own writing. The sample question provided asks candidates to infer atmosphere and institutional character from textual details such as character titles, lighting, and dialogue.

Section C offers a choice of extended writing tasks and is marked under two separate criteria: content (the larger portion) and quality of written communication. Grade descriptors span from A* (showing engaging style, impressive vocabulary, sophisticated technique) to E (material not relevant, poor vocabulary, significantly

short). The dual marking system acknowledges that strong ideas may sometimes be accompanied by weaker technical skills.

Topics covered

- Spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar through error correction exercises
- Reading comprehension of literary prose extracts, with particular focus on inferring atmosphere and institutional character from descriptive details
- Analysis of a writer's language choices, including how specific words, phrases and structural devices create meaning and effect
- Extended descriptive or narrative writing, with emphasis on matching style and vocabulary to the task
- Use of literary techniques such as metaphor, simile and other figurative language in original writing
- Planning and structuring extended prose, including effective paragraphing and logical sequencing
- Writing with awareness of audience and purpose, demonstrating appropriate register and tone
- Quality of written communication: sentence variety, punctuation accuracy, handwriting clarity and overall presentation standards

How to use this paper for revision

- Practise identifying and correcting common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar by working through passages with deliberate mistakes, timing yourself to build speed.
- Read the sample answer for Section B carefully to understand the level of detail and inference expected when analysing atmosphere, character and setting from textual evidence.
- When preparing for Section C, write practice pieces under timed conditions, then self-assess against the grade descriptors to identify which band your work fits.
- Focus on vocabulary building by keeping a notebook of ambitious words and phrases, ensuring you understand their precise meanings and can deploy them accurately.
- Study the distinction between descriptive and narrative writing, as the college emphasises that candidates must match their response to the specific task set.
- Review how to embed quotations smoothly into analytical writing, as Section B rewards both content knowledge and the quality of your own written expression.
- Practise planning extended writing in five minutes or less, creating a brief structural outline that will help you organise ideas and maintain coherence under exam pressure.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Confusing descriptive writing with narrative storytelling in Section C, when the task explicitly requires a specific mode; always check whether you are being asked to describe or to tell a story.
- Failing to support comprehension answers with precise textual evidence, instead making general statements about mood or character without reference to specific words or phrases.
- Neglecting to plan extended writing, resulting in rambling or poorly structured responses that lose marks for organisation and coherence.
- Using ambitious vocabulary inaccurately in an attempt to impress, which can undermine clarity and cost marks; only deploy words whose meanings you genuinely understand.
- Writing too little in Section C due to poor time management, as 'significantly short work' is explicitly penalised even when the quality of what is written is reasonable.
- Ignoring the quality of presentation, including handwriting legibility, when the mark scheme clearly awards separate marks for visual clarity and standard of presentation.

Exam technique

Divide your time carefully across the three sections, ensuring you leave enough for Section C, which typically carries the most marks and requires sustained writing. Start with Section A to build confidence through technical questions, then move to Section B where you should read the extract or poem twice before attempting any answers.

In Section B, underline or highlight key words in each question to ensure your answer addresses what is actually being asked. Support every point with quotation or close reference to the text, and remember that marks are awarded both for your understanding and for how well you express it. Write in full sentences and check your own spelling and punctuation even while analysing someone else's writing.

For Section C, spend at least five minutes planning your response before you begin writing. Identify which task suits your strengths, sketch a brief structure, and list vocabulary or techniques you want to include. As you write, keep the grade descriptors in mind: aim for varied sentence structures, accurate paragraphing, and an engaging style that shows you have thought about your audience. Leave time to proofread, focusing on basic errors in spelling and punctuation that can pull your QWC mark down.

What to revise alongside this paper

Candidates should revise core grammar rules, including the correct use of commas, semicolons, apostrophes and speech punctuation, as Section A may test any of these areas. Reading widely in the months before the exam will strengthen both comprehension skills and exposure to sophisticated vocabulary in context.

Study classic literary techniques such as personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia and imagery, as Section C rewards the effective use of a range of devices. Practise writing in different modes (descriptive, persuasive, narrative) to ensure flexibility on the day. Familiarise yourself with how to write about literature analytically, using the PEE structure (Point, Evidence, Explanation) to build coherent paragraphs.

Consider working through other 13+ English papers from independent schools to compare question styles and marking expectations. Broaden your reading to include both nineteenth-century and contemporary fiction, as the sample extract analysed in the marking guidance suggests a formal, literary register is valued.

Key terms

Quality of written communication (QWC), Inference, Atmosphere, Textual analysis, Figurative language, Metaphor, Register, Audience awareness, Descriptive writing, Narrative writing, Paragraphing, Sentence variety, Grade descriptors, Best fit principle, Extended prose

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