

11+ PAST PAPER PACK

The King's School 11+ English

Complete Past Paper Pack

CONTENTS

01 Specimen Paper

The King's School 11+ English. Work through this paper first.

Includes Paper Notes: overview, topics, revision tips, common mistakes.

02 Sample Paper

The King's School 11+ English. Work through this paper first.

Includes Paper Notes: overview, topics, revision tips, common mistakes.

03 Reading Booklet

The King's School 11+ English. Supporting material included with this pack.

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THE KING'S SCHOOL

C H E S T E R

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
ENGLISH
Specimen Paper

Time allowed: 1 hour

- Read through both the extracts - the passage and the poem.
- Now read them both through again, this time more carefully.
- Look at the marks awarded. There are:
 - 25 marks for Section A
 - 25 marks for Section B
- You should try to spend the same amount of time on each section
- For Section B make sure that you think and plan your answer before writing

SECTION A: READING SKILLS

ANSWER **ALL** THE QUESTIONS (25 marks)

Read **EXTRACT 1** – from ‘Cho Oyu, by favour of the gods’ by Herbert Tichy

- 1) Select three details from the passage which tell you about the terrible weather conditions. Explain how each one shows that the men had never experienced a snowstorm as bad as this.

(6 marks)

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

- 2) How does the writer build up tension in this passage?

(*Hint: you could consider what the men are doing and how they feel.*) (4 marks)

Read EXTRACT 2 – The poem ‘Hurricane’ by James Berry

3) Find each of the following lines in the poem. In each case, explain in your own words what the poet means and name the technique he is using.

a) *Leaves are panic swarms* (line 19) (3 marks)

b) *Fowls are fixed with feathers turned* (line 20) (3 marks)

c) *Then growling it slunk away* (line 23) (3 marks)

Using both passages

4) Which passage do you think best shows the power of the weather? Give two reasons for your answer.

(*Hint:* you could comment on any techniques the writer uses and consider how the passage makes you feel.) (6 marks)

a) _____

b) _____

SECTION B: WRITING SECTION
(25 marks)

Before you start writing make sure that you PLAN your writing carefully

Write approximately ONE side, but you can write more if you wish

Think carefully about the words you choose so that you interest your reader.

Take time to check that you have used capital letters, punctuation and paragraphs.

TASK

Describe an occasion when you experienced some extreme weather. You could think about:

- the snow closing lots of schools for the day,
- some of the heavy rain which has caused floods
- being on holiday somewhere when it has been very hot.

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Paper Notes: 11+ English Specimen Paper (11+ English Specimen 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 **specimen English entrance examination** published by **The King's School, Chester**, designed for candidates applying for **11+ entry** into Year 7. The paper comprises two equally weighted sections and is designed to be completed in **one hour**, testing both comprehension and creative writing skills in a format typical of independent school entrance assessments.

Section A focuses on **reading comprehension** using two contrasting extracts: a prose passage from Herbert Tichy's *Cho Oyu, by favour of the gods* describing a mountaineering expedition in extreme weather, and James Berry's poem *Hurricane*. Questions require candidates to identify details, explain how writers create effects, analyse poetic techniques such as personification and metaphor, and compare the effectiveness of the two texts. This section awards **25 marks** and tests close reading, inference, and the ability to comment on language choices.

Section B allocates the remaining **25 marks** to a single descriptive writing task asking candidates to recount a personal experience of extreme weather. The paper explicitly encourages planning, careful vocabulary choices, proper paragraphing, and thorough proofreading. This specimen paper gives prospective pupils and their families a clear sense of the school's expectations regarding literary analysis and imaginative composition at 11+ level.

How this paper is organised

The examination is divided into two sections of equal value, each carrying **25 marks**, and candidates are advised to spend approximately **30 minutes** on each part. The instructions emphasise reading both extracts carefully before beginning and stress the importance of planning written responses.

Section A comprises **four comprehension questions** based on two texts: a prose extract about mountaineering and a poem about a hurricane. Question 1 asks for three details with explanations (**6 marks**), question 2 examines tension-building techniques (**4 marks**), question 3 analyses three poetic lines for meaning and technique (**9 marks total**, 3 marks per sub-question), and question 4 requires a comparative evaluation with two reasons (**6 marks**). The mark allocation indicates that analytical depth and technical understanding are weighted more heavily than simple retrieval.

Section B provides a single **creative writing prompt** worth 25 marks. Candidates must describe a personal experience of extreme weather, with three suggestions offered (snow closures, flooding, or holiday heat). The paper provides approximately **three sides of lined space** for the response, though candidates may write more if they wish. The instructions foreground the importance of vocabulary choice, structural planning, and technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing.

Topics covered

- Close reading and textual evidence: selecting and explaining quotations that support a given interpretation or theme
- Analysis of tension and suspense: understanding how writers use action, pacing, and descriptive detail to build dramatic effect in narrative prose
- Poetic techniques: identifying and explaining metaphor, personification, and onomatopoeia, with reference to specific lines from James Berry's Hurricane
- Interpretation of figurative language: translating poetic imagery into plain English while demonstrating understanding of connotation and tone
- Comparative analysis: evaluating the relative effectiveness of two texts on a similar theme using textual evidence and personal response
- Descriptive writing: crafting a vivid first-person narrative of a personal experience using sensory detail and varied vocabulary
- Planning and structuring extended writing: organising ideas logically and using paragraphs to guide the reader through a narrative
- Technical accuracy: applying correct spelling, punctuation (capital letters, full stops, commas), and grammar in sustained written composition

How to use this paper for revision

- Read both extracts at least twice before attempting any questions, as the instructions suggest; the second reading allows you to notice language patterns and techniques you might miss initially.
- When asked to identify details, always quote brief phrases from the text rather than paraphrasing, then explain why that detail supports the point the question is asking about.
- For the poetic technique questions, first explain what the line means in everyday language, then name the technique (metaphor, personification, etc.); both steps are needed for full marks.
- In the comparative question (question 4), make sure you refer to both passages and comment on specific techniques or effects in each; a general statement about one text will not be sufficient.
- Plan your Section B writing before you begin; jot down three or four sensory details or moments from your chosen experience to structure your paragraphs around.
- Use the full hour wisely: if you finish Section A early, use any spare minutes to refine your Section B plan rather than rushing straight into writing.
- Proofread your descriptive writing carefully, checking for missing capital letters, incorrect homophones (there/their/they're, weather/whether), and sentences that run on without punctuation.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Simply copying out quotations in question 1 without explaining how each one demonstrates the severity of the weather; examiners need to see your reasoning, not just the evidence.
- Confusing the name of a technique with its effect: saying 'the poet uses personification' is not enough unless you also explain what that personification achieves in the line.
- Writing about only one text in the comparative question (question 4), or making a vague claim like 'I prefer the poem' without supporting it with detailed textual references.
- In Section B, diving straight into writing without planning, which often leads to a rambling narrative without a clear structure or a satisfying conclusion.
- Choosing vocabulary for its complexity rather than its precision in Section B; 'the snow was gelid and inclement' is less effective than 'the snow stung my face and soaked through my gloves'.
- Neglecting to paragraph the descriptive writing, making it hard for the examiner to follow shifts in time, location, or focus within your narrative.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the instructions on the cover page and both passages carefully, as directed. Use the first five minutes to absorb the content and tone of the mountaineering extract and the hurricane poem; annotate any striking images or techniques you notice. This preparation will make answering Section A much faster and more confident.

In Section A, tackle the questions in order, but if question 4 (the comparative question) feels difficult, leave space and return to it after completing question 3. Allocate your time according to the marks: question 1 is worth 6 marks, so aim for roughly six minutes; question 3 is worth 9 marks in total, so allow around nine minutes. Write in full sentences even for shorter answers, as examiners expect clear explanations rather than note-form responses. Always reference the text with brief quotations or line numbers to anchor your points.

For Section B, spend at least five minutes planning. Jot down the event you will describe (a snow day, a flood, a heatwave) and list three or four vivid moments or sensory details. Structure your writing into clear paragraphs: an opening that sets the scene, two or three paragraphs developing the experience, and a closing that reflects on the event or its aftermath. Leave three to four minutes at the end to proofread,

checking that every sentence begins with a capital letter, ends with a full stop, and that your spelling of weather vocabulary (blizzard, torrential, scorching) is accurate. Remember that technical accuracy is explicitly mentioned in the instructions and will be credited in the marking.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, revise other forms of **literary analysis**, particularly the identification of simile, alliteration, and imagery in both poetry and prose. Practise explaining not just what a technique is but what effect it creates for the reader. Familiarity with a range of poetic forms (free verse, rhymed stanzas, narrative poetry) will help you approach unfamiliar poems with confidence.

For the writing section, broaden your descriptive vocabulary by reading high-quality narrative non-fiction and travel writing. Pay attention to how published writers use **varied sentence structures** (short sentences for impact, longer sentences for detail) and how they weave together action, dialogue, and reflection. Practise writing to a time limit so that planning, drafting, and proofreading become automatic habits rather than afterthoughts.

To prepare for comparative questions like question 4, practise comparing pairs of texts on a common theme (e.g. two poems about the sea, two extracts about childhood). Focus on building a clear argument with evidence from both texts rather than treating each one in isolation. This skill is central to English assessment at secondary level and will serve you well beyond entrance examinations.

Key terms

Metaphor, Personification, Onomatopoeia, Tension, Textual evidence, Inference, Comparative analysis, Descriptive writing, Sensory detail, First-person narrative, Figurative language, Quotation, Technique, Paragraphing, Proofreading

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NAME (IN CAPITAL LETTERS)



SPECIMEN PAPER

ENGLISH

Time allowed: 1 hour

- There are 2 sections. Look at the marks awarded.
 - 25 marks for Section A – Reading skills
 - 25 marks for Section B – Writing section
- You should try and spend 30 minutes on each section
- Section A
 - Read through both the extracts - the opening to the story and the poem.
 - Now read them both through again, this time more carefully. You may write on the texts.
- Section B
 - Make sure that you think and plan your answer before writing

Do not open this paper until you are told to do so.

SECTION A: READING SKILLS

ANSWER **ALL** THE QUESTIONS (25 marks)

Read **EXTRACT 1** – the opening to the novel ‘Great Expectations’ by Charles Dickens

1) What impression did Pip get of his father from the tombstone?
(1 mark)

2) What happened to Pip’s five brothers?
(1 mark)

3) ‘*and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea*’ (line 36)
What technique is Dickens using here and what is the effect on the reader?
(2 marks)

Technique:

Read EXTRACT 2 – The poem ‘Nettles’ by Vernon Scannell

6) What does the parent do in response to the child’s accident?
(2 marks)

7) Why does the poet think that ‘Bed’ is a curious name for a patch of nettles? (line 2) *(1 mark)*

8) The poet creates a sense of pain for the reader by using images associated with battle to describe the nettles. **Find** and **copy** two examples from the poem that suggest this feeling and for each one say **how**. *(4 marks)*

SECTION B: WRITING SECTION

(25 marks)

Before you start writing make sure that you **PLAN** your writing carefully.

Write approximately **ONE** side, but you can write more if you wish.

Think carefully about the **words you choose** so that you interest your reader.

Take time to check that you have used **capital letters, varied punctuation and paragraphs**.

TASK

Look again at Extract 1. Imagine the rest of the novel has been lost over time.

You have been asked to continue the story.

- Make sure you write in the first person and try to include some brief dialogue.
- There is no need to bring the story to an ending.
- Try to include both action and description in your writing.

Use this box for your planning

Paper Notes: 11+ English Sample Paper (11+ English Sample Paper)

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

Overview

This is an **11+ English entrance examination** published by **The King's School, Chester**, designed to assess prospective Year 7 pupils in reading comprehension and creative writing. The paper allocates one hour to two equally weighted sections: a close-reading comprehension component worth 25 marks and a creative continuation task also worth 25 marks. Candidates are expected to spend approximately 30 minutes on each section, balancing analytical precision with imaginative storytelling.

Section A tests **literary analysis** through two contrasting texts: the opening chapter of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Vernon Scannell's poem *Nettles*. Questions require identification of narrative detail, analysis of literary techniques (particularly metaphor and personification), and extended response on how writers create sympathy and convey themes about childhood and parental protection. The mark allocations increase in weight, culminating in two six-mark questions that demand sustained textual evidence and personal interpretation.

Section B asks pupils to write a **first-person narrative continuation** of the Dickens extract, explicitly requiring dialogue, descriptive detail, and action without forcing a resolution. This format assesses how well a candidate can adopt a Victorian voice, sustain narrative tone, and structure imaginative prose under timed conditions. The paper is typical of independent-school entrance examinations that privilege close reading of canonical literature alongside controlled creative writing, targeting pupils of high-achieving Year 6 standard.

How this paper is organised

The examination comprises **two sections of equal value**, each contributing 25 marks to a 50-mark total. Section A contains nine reading comprehension questions distributed across two literary extracts. Questions 1 to 5 focus on the Dickens prose passage, beginning with two single-mark retrieval tasks, followed by two two-mark technique-identification questions, and concluding with a six-mark extended response on how sympathy is created for the protagonist. Questions 6 to 9 address the Scannell poem, with similar scaffolding: retrieval (2 marks), inference (1 mark), technique analysis (4 marks), and a six-mark interpretation question on the poem's message about growing up.

Section B allocates 25 marks to a **creative writing task** requiring pupils to continue the narrative from *Great Expectations* in the first person. A planning box is provided on the answer sheet. Candidates are advised to write approximately one side of A4, though they may exceed this if time permits. The rubric emphasises planning, varied punctuation, paragraphing, careful word choice, and the inclusion of both action and brief dialogue. No conclusion is expected, allowing pupils to focus on atmosphere and voice rather than plot resolution.

The paper follows a traditional **scaffolded progression** within each section, moving from straightforward retrieval through technique recognition to extended interpretive and creative responses. This design mirrors the structure of many independent-school entrance papers, where early questions build confidence and later ones differentiate the strongest candidates.

Topics covered

- Close reading and textual retrieval from Victorian prose fiction (Dickens's *Great Expectations*)
- Identification and analysis of literary techniques: metaphor, personification, and alliteration in descriptive prose
- Explaining the effect of specific language choices on the reader, particularly in creating sympathy for a child protagonist
- Interpretation of poetry with attention to structure, imagery, and thematic content (Vernon Scannell's *Nettles*)
- Analysis of extended metaphor and military imagery in modern poetry to convey parental protectiveness and the inevitability of childhood pain
- Inferential reading: understanding implied meanings and symbolic language within both prose and verse
- Sustained written argument supported by quotation and textual evidence across two six-mark extended responses
- Creative narrative writing in the first person, adopting the voice and setting of a Victorian novel
- Use of dialogue, action, and descriptive detail to advance a narrative continuation under timed conditions
- Planning and structuring imaginative writing with attention to vocabulary, punctuation variety, and paragraphing conventions

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the opening chapters of *Great Expectations* carefully before the exam so that you understand Pip's voice, Dickens's descriptive style, and the atmospheric techniques he uses in marshland settings.
- Practise identifying **metaphor, personification, and alliteration** in descriptive passages, and write a sentence or two explaining the effect each technique has on the reader.
- When answering extended questions worth six marks, aim to make at least three distinct points, each supported by a short quotation embedded in your sentence.
- For the poetry question, read *Nettles* several times to spot the military metaphor running through the poem and consider what Scannell is saying about the parent-child relationship.
- Plan your Section B narrative carefully in the box provided: jot down three or four key events, a snippet of dialogue, and two or three descriptive phrases to anchor your Victorian tone.
- Time yourself strictly: 30 minutes for Section A and 30 minutes for Section B, leaving a few minutes at the end to check spelling, punctuation, and paragraphing.
- In creative writing, show rather than tell. Instead of writing 'I was frightened', describe trembling hands, quickened breath, or shadows lengthening across the gravestones.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Writing 'personification' or 'metaphor' in the technique box without explaining the effect on the reader. Always add a sentence about how the image makes the reader feel or what atmosphere it creates.
- Quoting long chunks of text without integrating them into your own sentence. Embed short phrases in your answer rather than dropping in whole lines.
- Running out of time on Section A and leaving only ten minutes for the creative writing. Stick to the 30-minute split and accept that you may not finish every comprehension question perfectly.
- Forgetting to write in the first person in Section B. The task explicitly requires 'I' narration to continue Pip's voice, not third-person storytelling.
- Including an ending to your narrative when the rubric says 'There is no need to bring the story to an ending'. Focus on atmosphere, character, and incident rather than resolution.
- Neglecting to use any dialogue at all. The task asks for 'brief dialogue', so include at least one or two short exchanges to demonstrate control of speech punctuation and voice.

Exam technique

Begin by reading both literary extracts in Section A twice: once for overall sense and once to annotate key phrases, techniques, and quotations you might use in your answers. Underline or bracket any examples of metaphor, personification, or descriptive language as you go. Tackle the retrieval questions (1, 2, 6, 7) quickly to bank easy marks, then move to the technique questions (3, 4, 8), ensuring you name the device and explain its effect in separate sentences. Save the six-mark questions (5, 9) until you have secured the simpler marks, and aim to write at least half a page for each, making three clear points supported by short quotations.

For Section B, spend five minutes planning in the box provided: sketch out the sequence of events, choose a moment of tension or discovery to focus on, and decide on one or two lines of dialogue that sound authentically Victorian. Write in **paragraphs**, starting a new one when the focus shifts (for example, from description to action, or when a new character speaks). Vary your sentence length to create rhythm and pace, and check that you are writing in the first person throughout. Do not worry about finishing the story; aim instead to produce one side of vivid, well-punctuated prose that captures Dickens's atmosphere of isolation and foreboding on the marshes.

Leave three to five minutes at the end to proofread both sections. Check capital letters at the start of sentences and for proper nouns, ensure speech marks are closed, and verify that your paragraphs are clearly separated. If you spot a spelling mistake, cross it out neatly and write the correction above. Examiners reward clarity and control, so a tidy, well-structured response will always score more highly than a rushed, error-strewn page.

What to revise alongside this paper

To prepare thoroughly, read widely in **Victorian fiction**, particularly novels that feature child protagonists such as *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, and *David Copperfield*. Familiarity with Dickens's descriptive techniques (pathetic fallacy, vivid simile, and social commentary) will help you tackle similar extracts with confidence. Practise identifying and explaining literary devices in short passages, using past papers from CGP, Bond, or other independent-school sample materials to sharpen your technique-spotting skills.

For poetry analysis, study a range of modern and classic verse that uses **extended metaphor** and explores parent-child relationships, such as Seamus Heaney's *Follower* or Carol Ann Duffy's *Before You Were Mine*. Learn to annotate poems for tone, structure, and recurring imagery, and practise writing short paragraphs that link poetic technique to thematic meaning. Creative writing can be strengthened by reading aloud narrative openings from classic novels, noting how writers establish setting, voice, and tension in the first few paragraphs.

Finally, revise **grammar and punctuation conventions** for direct speech, sentence variety, and paragraphing. Timed writing exercises under exam conditions will build stamina and help you learn to plan quickly and write fluently within a 30-minute window. Combine these skills with regular reading of high-quality prose and poetry, and you will enter the exam room with the confidence to analyse, interpret, and create with equal skill.

Key terms

Metaphor, Personification, Alliteration, Sympathy, First-person narrative, Dialogue, Extended metaphor, Imagery, Textual evidence, Quotation embedding, Narrative voice, Victorian prose, Descriptive writing, Inference, Thematic interpretation

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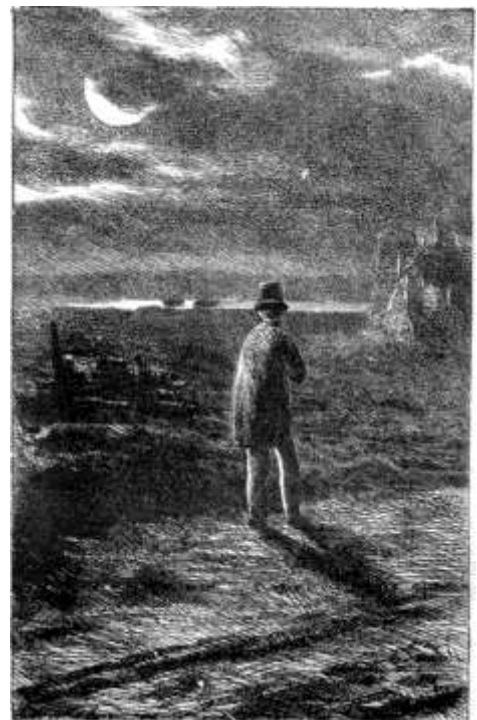
EXTRACT 1

Opening paragraphs of the first chapter of 'Great Expectations'

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

5 I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister, Mrs Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea
10 that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above*," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory
15 of five little brothers of mine - who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle - I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

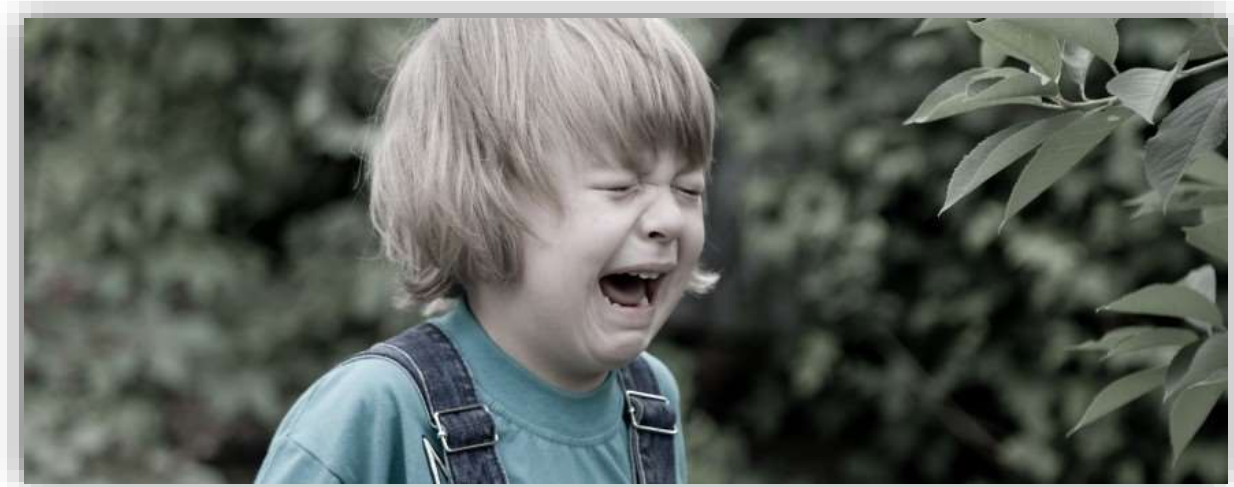
20 Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place
25 overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and
30 that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that
35 the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.



EXTRACT 2

The poem 'Nettles' by Vernon Scannell

My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,
That regiment of spite behind the shed:
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears
5 The boy came seeking comfort and I saw
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.
At last he offered us a watery grin,
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade
10 And went outside and slashed in fury with it
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade
Stood upright any more. And then I lit
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain
15 Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.



Paper Notes: 11+ English Reading Booklet (11+ English Reading Booklet)

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

Overview

This **11+ English Reading Booklet** is published by **The King's School in Chester** and provides the stimulus material for a comprehension paper sat by candidates applying for Year 7 entry. The booklet contains two extracts that form the basis for close reading and inference questions answered on a separate question paper.

The first extract is the opening passage of **Charles Dickens's Great Expectations**, in which the orphaned narrator Pip introduces himself and reflects on his dead parents and siblings whilst standing alone in a desolate churchyard on the marshes. The second extract is **Vernon Scannell's poem Nettles**, a short lyric about a father's protective fury after his young son is stung, told through extended military metaphor.

Both texts explore themes of **childhood vulnerability**, fear, and the harsh realities of the physical world. The juxtaposition of a Victorian prose extract with a twentieth-century poem allows the examination to test a range of comprehension skills, including interpretation of narrative voice, figurative language, tone, and thematic connection. This format is typical of selective independent school entrance assessments.

How this paper is organised

The booklet comprises two extracts printed on facing pages, each accompanied by an illustration. **Extract 1** runs to approximately 39 lines of prose from Dickens, with line numbers marked at intervals of five on the left margin to assist reference in comprehension questions. The passage describes Pip's origin, his orphaned status, and his formative encounter with his own identity in the graveyard.

Extract 2 is a complete 16-line poem by Vernon Scannell, also numbered for reference. The poem uses rhyming couplets and a regular rhythm, and its military imagery provides a striking contrast to the melancholy realism of the Dickens passage. A black-and-white photograph of a distressed child accompanies the poem.

This reading booklet does not contain any questions or mark allocations. Candidates will answer questions about these texts on a separate question paper, which will specify how long to spend on each extract and how many marks are available for individual questions. The booklet itself is designed to be annotated during the examination.

Topics covered

- Close reading and literal comprehension of Dickensian narrative prose, including Victorian sentence structure and vocabulary
- Inference and deduction about character, setting, and tone from descriptive and introspective passages
- Analysis of first-person retrospective narration and the voice of a child looking back on formative moments
- Understanding of poetic form, structure, and rhyme scheme in a twentieth-century lyric poem
- Interpretation of extended metaphor and military imagery in poetry
- Recognition of thematic connections between prose and poetry texts, particularly childhood, vulnerability, and parental protection
- Analysis of descriptive language and atmosphere in both narrative and lyric forms
- Understanding of figurative language, including personification, metaphor, and symbol
- Comparison of tone, mood, and emotional register across different literary forms and historical periods

How to use this paper for revision

- Read each extract at least twice before attempting any questions: once for overall sense and a second time to identify key details, imagery, and shifts in tone or mood.
- Practise annotating passages as you read, underlining phrases that convey emotion, character, or setting, and noting any unfamiliar Victorian vocabulary in the Dickens extract for context clues.
- For the Dickens passage, pay close attention to Pip's narrative voice and the blend of adult reflection and childhood perception; questions often ask how the adult narrator views his younger self.
- With the Scannell poem, identify the extended military metaphor early and track how it develops through words like 'regiment', 'parade', 'recruits', and 'funeral pyre'.
- Compare the two texts thematically: both involve a child's encounter with pain or fear, but the tone, perspective, and resolution differ markedly.
- Revise how to quote selectively and embed short quotations within your own sentences; avoid copying out whole lines unless the question explicitly asks for it.
- Familiarise yourself with classic 11+ question types: word meaning in context, inference about character or motive, effect of language choices, and comparison of writers' methods.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Misinterpreting Pip's reflections as literal childhood thoughts rather than recognising the adult narrator's retrospective, sometimes ironic voice looking back on his younger self's misunderstandings.
- Ignoring the line numbers and failing to refer to specific parts of the text when answers require textual evidence, leading to vague or generalised responses.
- In the poem, taking the military metaphor too literally and missing the deeper meaning about the inevitability of pain and the father's futile rage against forces beyond his control.
- Rushing through the Dickens passage and missing key contextual details, such as the fact that Pip is an orphan raised by his sister or that he is alone in a graveyard at dusk.
- Writing overly long answers that retell the story rather than answering the specific question asked; always return to the precise wording of the question.
- Overlooking the emotional register of both texts: Dickens blends melancholy with wry humour, whilst Scannell moves from tenderness to fury to resignation.

Exam technique

Begin by skimming both extracts quickly to get a sense of their content and style, then read each one more carefully before turning to the question paper. Underline or note any striking phrases, shifts in tone, or unfamiliar words as you go. When you move to the questions, allocate your time according to the marks available: a two-mark question on word meaning requires less elaboration than an eight-mark question on language analysis or comparison.

Always refer back to the line numbers given in questions and locate the exact phrase or sentence before answering. For inference questions, support every point with a short, embedded quotation. Avoid simply identifying a technique (such as metaphor or personification) without explaining its effect on the reader or its contribution to meaning.

If a question asks you to compare the two texts, plan a brief response that addresses both in turn or weaves them together point by point, rather than writing everything about one text and then tacking on a sentence about the other. Keep your handwriting legible and your answers concise: examiners reward precision and evidence, not padding. Leave a minute or two at the end to reread your answers and check for clarity.

What to revise alongside this paper

Alongside this paper, students should revise core comprehension skills such as identifying main ideas, summarising paragraphs, and explaining the effect of writers' choices. Practise interpreting unfamiliar vocabulary from context, particularly in older texts where sentence structure and diction differ from modern SATs English. Reading other **Dickens extracts** (for example, from *Oliver Twist* or *David Copperfield*) will build confidence with his narrative style and vocabulary.

For poetry, broaden your experience with twentieth-century poets who use accessible language and clear metaphor, such as **Seamus Heaney**, **Ted Hughes**, or **Carol Ann Duffy**. Work on recognising and explaining common poetic devices: simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. Revise how to write about structure and form, including stanza length, rhyme, and rhythm.

Finally, practise comparing texts under timed conditions. The King's School entrance papers often require candidates to draw thematic or stylistic links between passages, so familiarity with paired extracts on topics like childhood, nature, family relationships, or conflict will help you organise comparative answers efficiently and confidently.

Key terms

First-person narrator, Retrospective narration, Inference, Tone, Extended metaphor, Personification, Imagery, Atmosphere, Literal comprehension, Deduction, Figurative language, Rhyme scheme, Lyric poetry, Victorian prose, Thematic connection

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