



WINCHESTER  
COLLEGE

**Winchester College Entrance and Election Examination in English 2023**

**90 minutes**

**INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:**

**Answer TWO questions:**

**EITHER**

**Section A (Prose)**

**OR**

**Section B (Poetry)**

**AND**

**Section C (Extended Writing)**

Total marks available: 70

Each section is worth 30 marks. You will also be marked out of 10 for the quality of your spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Read all questions carefully.

You may make notes around the texts, and/or underline them.

You are advised to spend 45 minutes on each question.

## SECTION A: PROSE COMPREHENSION

Choose **EITHER** this section **OR** Section B (Poetry)

*This extract is from a short story 'The Entrance' by Gerald Durrell. The author has gone to visit some friends who are renovating a French chateau. After dinner, they send him to bed while a storm lashes the building. His host tells him they have found a curious manuscript while renovating the room he will sleep in. By candlelight, he reads about a man who some centuries ago found himself alone in the chateau.*

*Read the extract carefully and answer the questions that follow in full sentences.*

It was then that I glanced across at the mirror opposite me and noticed that, in the reflection, the door to the salon that I had carefully closed was now ajar. Surprised, I twisted round in my chair and looked at the real door, only to find it was securely closed as I had left it. I looked again into the mirror and made sure my eyes – aided by the wine – were not playing me tricks, but sure enough, in the reflection the door appeared to be slightly ajar.

I was sitting there looking at it and wondering what trick of light and reflection could produce the effect of an open door when the door responsible for the reflection was securely closed, when I noticed something that made me sit up, astonished and uneasy. *The door in the reflection was being pushed open still further.* I looked at the real door again and saw that it was firmly shut. Yet its reflection in the mirror was opening, slowly, millimetre by millimetre. I sat there watching it, the hair on the nape of my neck stirring. Suddenly, round the edge of the door, there appeared something that at first glance I thought was some sort of caterpillar. It was long, wrinkled and yellowish-white in colour, and at one end it had a long, blackened horn. It humped itself up and scabbled at the surface of the carpet with its horn in a way that I had seen no caterpillar behave. Then, slowly, it retreated behind the door.

I found that I was sweating. I glanced once more at the real door to assure myself that it was closed because I did not fancy having the caterpillar or whatever it was crawling about the room with me. The door was still shut. I took a draught of wine to steady my nerves, and was annoyed to see that my hand was shaking. I, who had never believed in ghosts, or hauntings, or magic spells or any of that clap-trap, here I was imagining things in a mirror and convincing myself to such an extent they were real, that I was actually afraid.

It was ridiculous, I told myself as I drank my wine. There was some perfectly rational explanation for the whole thing. I sat forward in my chair and gazed at the reflection in the mirror with great intentness. For a long time, nothing happened and then the door in the mirror swung open a fraction and the caterpillar appeared again. This time it was joined by another and then, after a pause, yet another.

Suddenly my blood ran cold for I realized what it was. They were not caterpillars but attenuated yellow fingers with long twisted black nails tipping each one like gigantic misshapen rose thorns. The moment I realized this, the whole hand came into view, feeling its way feebly along the carpet. The hand was a mere skeleton covered with the pale-yellow parchment-like skin through which the knuckles and joints showed like walnuts. It felt around on the carpet in a blind, groping sort of way, the hand moving from a bony wrist, like the tentacles of some strange sea anemone from the deep sea, one that has become pallid through living in perpetual dark. Then slowly it was withdrawn behind the door. I shuddered for I wondered what sort of body was attached to that horrible hand. I waited for perhaps quarter of an hour, dreading what might suddenly appear from behind the mirror door, but nothing happened.

After a while I became restive. I was still attempting to convince myself that the whole thing was an hallucination brought on by the wine and the heat of the fire without success. For there was the door of the blue salon carefully closed against the draught and the door in the mirror still ajar with apparently something lurking behind it.

I wanted to walk over to the mirror and examine it, but did not have the courage. Instead I thought of a plan which, I felt, would show me whether I was imagining things or not. I woke Agrippa, the dog, and, crumpling up a sheet of the newspaper I had been reading into a ball, threw it down the room so that it landed just by the closed door. In the mirror it lay near the door that was ajar.

Agrippa, more to please me than anything else, for he was very sleepy, bounded after it. Gripping the arms of my chair I watched his reflection in the mirror as he ran towards the door. He reached the ball of newspaper and paused to pick it up. Then something so hideous happened that I could scarcely believe my eyes. The mirror door was pushed open still further and the hand and a long white bony arm shot out. It grabbed the dog in the mirror by the scruff of its neck and pulled it speedily, kicking and struggling, behind the door.

### Questions

1. In the opening paragraph, what first startles the narrator of the story? [1]
2. Give a quotation from the second paragraph that shows the narrator views what appears around the door as unnatural. [1]
3. What do the following words mean in the context of their appearance in the extract? They have been underlined in the extract for you and they appear in the same order in the text:
  - (a) rational [2]
  - (b) attenuated [2]
  - (c) perpetual [2]
  - (d) restive [2]
4. In the third paragraph, how does Durrell reinforce the narrator's disbelief that he is experiencing the events? [3]
5. In the fifth paragraph, give a quotation that describes the horror of the narrator once he realises what the caterpillar is, and explore its effect. There is 1 mark awarded for your quotation and 1 for your explanation. [2]
6. Look at the description of the dog and the part it plays in the final two paragraphs. How does the author convey a sense of the narrator's relationship to the dog and its fate? Use evidence to support your answer. [5]
7. Using quotations from the extract as a whole and analysing Durrell's use of language for effect, discuss how the author creates a vivid Gothic picture of the scene in the salon. Avoid using material you have used in other answers. [10]

## SECTION B: POETRY

Choose **EITHER** this section **OR** Section A (Prose)

Read the poem carefully, and answer the questions which follow in full sentences.

### There's a Hole in my Trainer

The trouble started when I noticed a hole  
in the right toe of my black Nike trainers.  
I managed the problem by ensuring that  
I always wore a pair of black socks.

All went well until I noticed a hole  
in the toe of one of my black socks.  
I managed the problem by wearing  
the offending sock on my left foot.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise  
but I was unprepared for the shock  
of discovering one morning  
an unsightly hole in the other sock.

The remedy? Black nail varnish  
on the peeping big toe. It worked a treat.  
Enabling me to work out and jog  
without drawing attention to my feet.

Sadly, when the nail bar on the high street  
closed I was thrown into a dilemma.  
A spot of darning? Gaffer tape on the toe?  
I did as I always do: think outside the box.

Went online. Bought a new pair of socks

Roger McGough (b.1937)

This poem is from McGough's latest collection, *Safety in Numbers* (2021)

### Questions

1. What do the following words mean in the context of their appearance in the poem? They have been **underlined** in the extract for you and they appear in the same order in the text:

- a) Offending [2]
- b) Unsightly [2]
- c) Dilemma [2]

2. What does the poet mean when he says he "managed the problem"? [2]

3. What effect is achieved by the use of the word "shock" in the third stanza? [2]

4. How does the poet shape the structure of the poem in relation to meaning, in terms of stanza organisation and any use of rhyme? [4]
5. What do the poet's various attempts to solve the trouble that first started at the beginning of the poem reveal about his character? [6]
6. How does the poet use humour to make the situation of the poem interesting for the reader? Use quotes from across the poem, and justify your thoughts and choices. [10]

## SECTION C: EXTENDED WRITING

Answer ONE question from this section.

Either

1. Here is the opening of T. S. Eliot's 'The Journey of the Magi'. I'm reminded of various winter journeys in recent years to visit family and friends at Christmas.

"A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter."

Write about a significant journey, describing it in a way that makes the reader feel as if they are living through it. Try to include the following:

- Imagery that captures the difficulties of the journey;
- Writing that appeals to the senses;
- A rich variety of vocabulary and sentence forms.

[30]

OR

2. Write a newspaper article that sets out your plans for a charitable foundation that gathers and distributes money for more than one charitable purpose.
  - Ensure you explain the working organisation of your scheme.
  - Consider how the blend of charitable activities you propose will work collectively.
  - Conclude with your own opinion on the importance of charitable activity.

[30]