



FOREST SCHOOL

13+ ENGLISH ENTRANCE and SCHOLARSHIP

PASSAGE

In this passage, Alan Bennett describes his experiences of growing up in Leeds in the 1930s.

I was five when the war started, and Monday 4th September 1939 should have been my first day at school; but that was not to be. I wish I could record our family as gathered anxiously around the wireless¹, as most were at eleven o'clock that Sunday morning, but I already knew at the age of five that I belonged to a family that without being in the least bit remarkable or eccentric yet managed never to be quite like other families. If we had been, my brother and I would have been evacuated with all the other children the week before, but Mam and Dad hadn't been able to face it. So, not quite partaking in the national mood and, as ever, unbrushed by the wings of history, Mr Chamberlain's broadcast² found us on a tram going down Tong Road into Leeds. Fearing the worst, my parents had told my brother and me that we were going out into the country that day and we were to have a picnic – something I had hitherto only come across in books. So on that fateful Sunday morning what was occupying my mind was the imminent conjunction of life with literature; that I should remember nothing of the most momentous event of the twentieth century because of the prospect of an experience found in books was, I see now, a melancholy portent.

Nor was the lesson that life was not going to live up to literature slow in coming, since the much-longed-for picnic wasn't eaten as picnics were in books, on a snowy tablecloth set in a field by a stream, but was taken on a bench in the bus station at Vicar Lane, where we waited half that day for any bus that would take us out of the supposedly doomed city.

I had read quite a few storybooks by this time, as I had learned to read quite early by dint, it seemed to me, of staring over my brother's shoulder at the comic he was reading until suddenly it made sense. Though I liked reading (and showed off at it), it was soon borne in upon me that the world of books was only distantly related to the world in which I lived. The families I read about were not like our family (no family ever quite was). These families had dogs and gardens and lived in country towns equipped with thatched cottages and mill-streams, where the children had adventures, saved lives, caught villains, and found treasure before coming home, tired but happy, to eat sumptuous teas off chequered tablecloths in low-beamed parlours presided over by comfortable pipe-smoking fathers and gentle aproned mothers, who were invariably referred to as Mummy and Daddy.

In an effort to bring this fabulous world closer to my own, more threadbare, existence, I tried as a first step substituting 'Mummy' and 'Daddy' for my usual 'Mam' and 'Dad', but was pretty sharply discouraged. My father was hot on anything smacking of social pretension; there had even been an argument at the font because my aunties had wanted my brother given two Christian names instead of plain one.

¹ Radio

² The Prime Minister's radio statement saying that war had begun

Had it been only stories that didn't measure up to the world it wouldn't have been 40
so bad. But it wasn't only fiction that was fiction. Fact too was fiction, as textbooks
seemed to bear no more relation to the real world than did the storybooks. At
school I read of the minor wonders of nature – the sticklebacks that haunted the
most ordinary pond, the newts and toads said to lurk under every stone, and the
dragonflies that flitted over the dappled surface. Not, so far as I could see, in Leeds. 45
There were owls in hollow trees, the nature books said, but I saw no owls – and
hollow trees were in pretty short supply too.



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13+ ENGLISH ENTRANCE and SCHOLARSHIP
1 hour

Question Paper & Answer Booklet

Candidate Number	
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Instructions to Candidates

- Write your candidate number clearly on the front of this booklet.
- The questions will assess **both** your **reading** and the **quality of your writing**. You are reminded of the need to answer the question carefully and use a good quality of written English.
- You should answer all the questions in the spaces provided. If you need additional space, there is some extra space at the back of this booklet.

Total: /30

Read the passage about Alan Bennett's life growing up in Yorkshire.

1. How does the author capture your attention in the first sentence? (2 marks)

2. What does the author say happened to most children the day the war was declared, and why did this not happen to him and his brother? [lines 7-9] (2 marks)

3. Explain in your own words what is meant by the following: (8 marks)

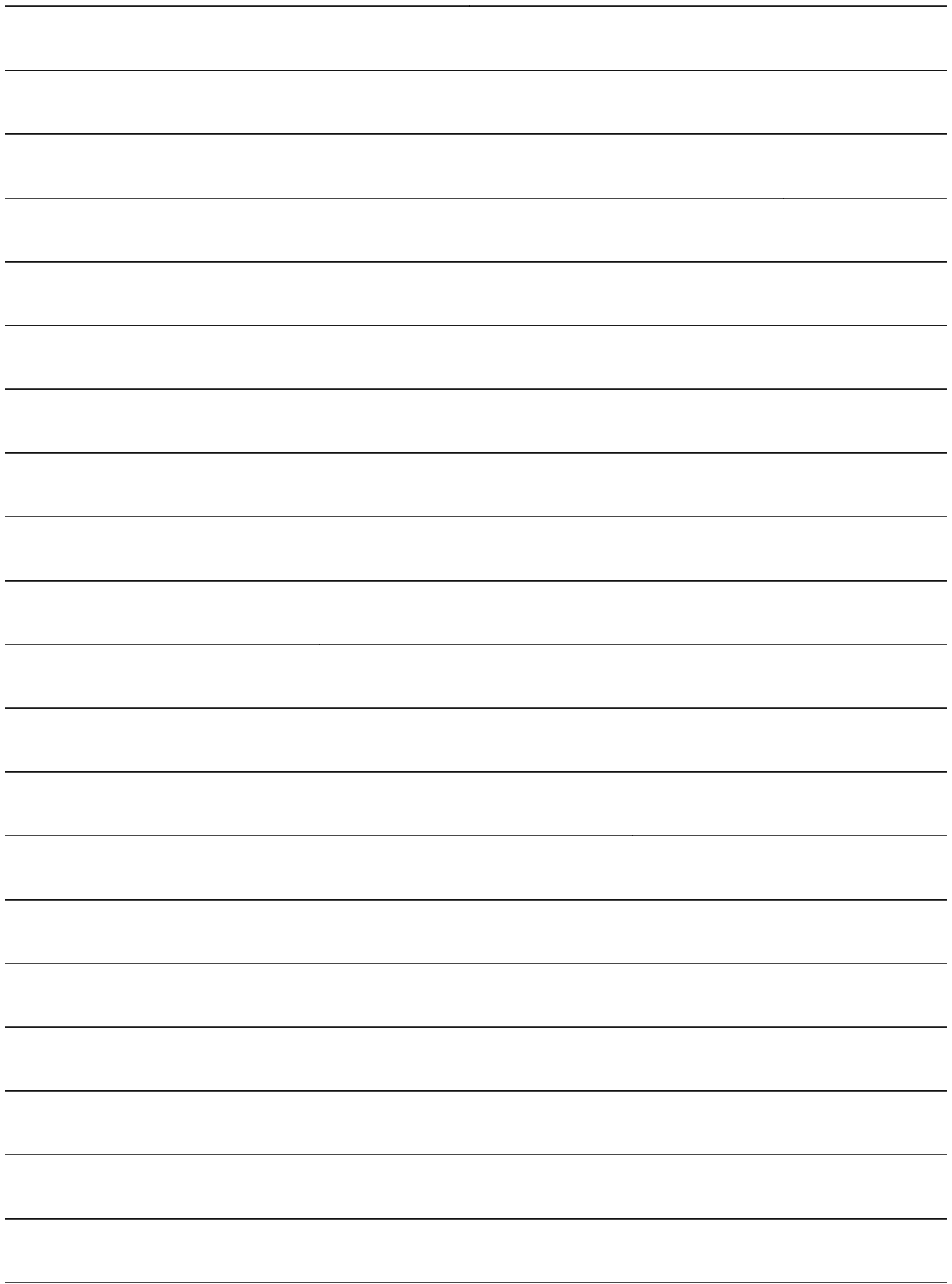
a) I belonged to a family that without being in the least bit remarkable or eccentric yet managed never to be quite like other families [lines 5-6]

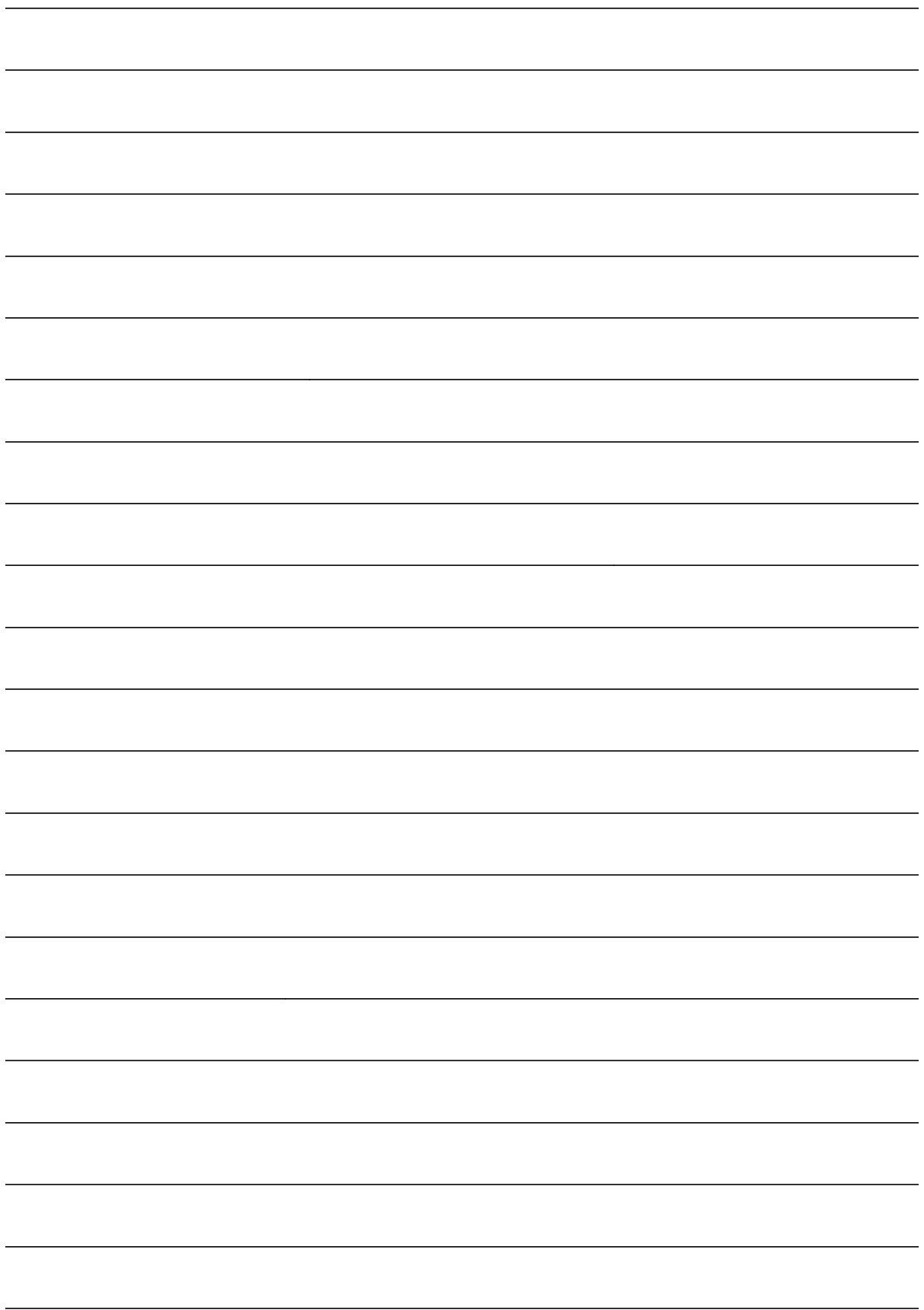
b) *something I had hitherto only come across in books* [lines 13-14]

c) *the imminent conjunction of life with literature* [line 15]

d) *that I should remember nothing of the most momentous event of the twentieth century because of the prospect of an experience found in books was, I see now, a melancholy portent.* [lines 15-18]

4. Reread lines 19-23. How did the author expect a picnic to be, and what was it actually like? You should use quotations from the passage in your answer. (2 marks)





End of questions

Extra space:

