



WESTMINSTER SCHOOL
THE CHALLENGE 2021
ENGLISH

Wednesday 28 April 2021

You have TWO HOURS for this paper.

- The paper is divided into Sections A, B, C and D.
- You should spend about 10 minutes on Section A, 35 minutes on Section B, 40 minutes of Section C and 35 minutes on Section D.
- Write in full sentences, unless instructed otherwise by a specific question. The quality of your spelling, punctuation and grammar will be considered throughout the paper.
- Please write in black or blue ink. Answer all questions in the answer sheet provided – do not answer in the exam paper.

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Section A – 10 minutes

1. The following sentences don't work. Fix them by rewriting them.

You may alter punctuation, add or delete words, and change verb tenses if you feel it necessary to do so.

- a. The roast chicken.
- b. I walk to the shop, I bought the book.
- c. Mary ate the bread that I baked a cake.
- d. The best words in the best order.
- e. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

[5]

2. Imagine an apple.

Complete each task with that apple, writing in full, grammatical sentences.

For example:

Q. Describe it in a past tense.

A. The apple was eaten.

- a. Make it the first word of a sentence.
- b. Make it the last word of a sentence.
- c. Make it the last item in a list of three.
- d. Use it at the beginning of two successive clauses.
- e. Use it as a verb.

[5]

Section B – 35 minutes

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

Helen Mort, 'Height' (2016)

*Fanny Bullock Workman jumps a crevasse above the Hispar,
Karakorum*

I hated that leap,
by matchless dark,
across four feet, invisible.

It was only
a bed's width, only
an arm span, less than my height.

I seemed so light
I might not land again;
go clear above the seracs¹

and the frozen scarps,
hopscotch the stars, hurdle
the amber moon by accident.

Just for a breath, I flew,
afraid you could not anchor me,
the earth not bring me back.

¹ A block or column of glacial ice.

Warm-up questions on the whole poem

3. Explain the meaning of the phrase 'matchless dark'. [2]

4. Who do you think the 'you' referred to in the final stanza is? Explain your answer. [2]

5. Fanny Bullock Workman visited the Karakorum in 1911. Why might this fact be significant? [2]

Language analysis

6. How does Helen Mort use language and structure to portray Workman's feelings about her leap? [10]

Evaluation

7. Helen Mort's poem has been described as 'showing bone without too much flesh'. To what extent do you agree with this assessment of it? [6]

Section C – 40 minutes

Read the following extract from a short story and then answer the questions which follow in full sentences.

Zadie Smith, 'The Lazy River' (2019)

The Lazy River is a metaphor and at the same time a real body of artificial water, in an all-inclusive hotel, in Almeria, somewhere in southern Spain.

We're submerged, all of us. You, me, children, our friends, their children, everybody else. Sometimes we get out: for lunch, to read or to tan, never for very long. Then we all climb back into the metaphor. The Lazy River is a circle, it is wet, it has an artificial current. Even if you don't move you will get somewhere and then return to wherever you started, and if we may speak of the depth of a metaphor, well, then, it is about three feet deep, excepting a brief stretch at which point it rises to six feet four. Here children scream—clinging to the walls or the nearest adult—until it is three feet deep once more. Round and round we go. All life is in here, flowing. Flowing!

Responses vary. Most of us float in the same direction of the current, swimming a little, or walking, or treading water. Many employ some form of flotation device—rubber rings, tubes, rafts—placing these items strategically under their arms or necks or backsides, creating buoyancy, and thus rendering what is already almost effortless easier still. Life is struggle! But we are on vacation, from life and from struggle both. We are 'going with the flow'. And having entered the Lazy River we must have a flotation device, even though we know, rationally, that the artificial current is buoyancy enough. Still, we want one. Branded floats, too-large floats, comically shaped floats. They are a novelty, a luxury: they fill the time. We will complete many revolutions before their charm wears off—and for a few lucky souls it never will. For the rest of us, the moment arrives when we come to see that the lifeguard was right: these devices are too large; they are awkward to manage, tiresome. The plain fact is that we will all be carried along by the Lazy River, at the same rate, under the same relentless Spanish sun, for ever, until we are not.

Some take this principle of universal flow to an extreme. They play dead—head down, limbs limp, making no effort whatsoever—and in this manner discover that even a corpse goes round. A few people—less tattooed, often university educated—make a point of turning the other way, intent upon thrashing out a stroke against the current, never advancing, instead holding their place, if only for a moment, as the others float past. It's a pose: it can't last long. I heard one man with a fashionable haircut say he could swim the whole length backward. I heard his hipster wife dare him to do it. They had time for such games, having no children. But when he turned and made the attempt he was swept away within the minute.

8. Explain what the following details in this passage are metaphors for, if life is a lazy river:
- a. The artificial current [2]
 - b. Flotation devices [2]
 - c. Those who play dead [2]
 - d. The man with a fashionable haircut [2]
9. Explain three things we learn about the narrator from this passage. [3]
10. Which word best describes this passage's presentation of life? Select one word, then explain your choice, giving evidence from the passage:
- a. Cynical
 - b. Nihilistic
 - c. Sanguine
 - d. Melancholic [4]
11. Is the lazy river a good metaphor for life? Write a paragraph giving reasons for your view. [8]

Section D – 35 minutes

Read the following extract from a magazine article and respond to the prompts which follow.

Alice Meynell, 'Under the Early Stars' (1897)

Play is not for every hour of the day, or for any hour taken at random. There is a tide in the affairs of children. Civilization is cruel in sending them to bed at the most stimulating time of dusk. Summer dusk, especially, is the frolic moment for children, baffle them how you may. They may have been in a pottering mood all day, intent upon all kinds of close industries, breathing hard over choppings and poundings. But when late twilight comes, there comes also the punctual wildness. The children will run and pursue, and laugh for the mere movement—it does so everywhere jolt their spirits.

What remembrances does this imply of the hunt, what of the predatory dark? The kitten grows alert at the same hour, and hunts for moths and crickets in the grass. It comes like an imp, leaping on all fours. The children lie in ambush and fall upon one another in the mimicry of hunting.

The sudden outbreak of action is complained of as a defiance and a rebellion. Their entertainers are tired, and the children are to go home. But, with more or less of life and fire, the children strike some blow for liberty. It may be the impotent revolt of the ineffectual child, or the stroke of the conqueror; but something, something is done for freedom under the early stars.

12. Define the following words, as used in the context given here:

- a. Frolic
- b. Imp
- c. Pottering
- d. Baffle

[4]

13. Write a piece responding to **one** of the prompts given below. You will be assessed on your ability to write imaginatively, with a range of expression, shaping overall structure effectively. Spelling, punctuation, and grammatical accuracy are assessed in this piece.

Either

- a. Describe a time when you played under the early stars.

Or

- b. Write a short story which uses the final clause of the passage above as its first sentence: 'Something, something is done for freedom under the early stars'.

[16]