KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

Admission Paper in English

Section A: Reading a passage and answering questions.

Time: 30 minutes

(This paper will be collected at the end of half an hour, and you will be given a second paper.)

This leaflet contains a passage which you are asked to read carefully.

When you have read it, please answer the questions. Write complete sentences, not short phrases, unless the question simply asks you to list words. So, if the question asks "Where was Humpty Dumpty sitting before his fall?",

- **don't** write "a wall" or "on a wall"
- **do** write "He was sitting on a wall."

It is worth being careful about this: you will score better in the examination if you write in sentences.

Good Luck!

Candidate's Name .....

Candidate's Number .....

"Bandits!"

(In this passage, the writer Truman Capote recalls an adventure he once had while travelling in Spain before the Second World War)

We were going to Algeciras, aboard a very old train. The seats sagged like a bulldog's face, and strips of adhesive tape held together those windows which hadn't lost their glass completely. In the corridor a prowling cat appeared to be hunting mice.

I shared my compartment with a middle-aged Australian wearing a soiled linen suit; he had tobacco-stained teeth and his fingernails were unsanitary. He informed us that he was a ship's doctor. Seated next to him there were two women, a mother and daughter. The mother was an overstuffed, dusty woman with disapproving eyes and a faint moustache. The focus for her disapproval fluctuated: first, she eyed me rather strongly because, as the day grew hotter, waves of heat blew in through the broken windows and I removed my jacket, which she considered discourteous. Later on, she took a dislike to the young soldier who also occupied our compartment. The soldier, and the woman's not very discreet daughter, a buxom girl with the scrappy features of a prizefighter, seemed to have agreed to flirt with each other.

The young soldier was one of many on the train. With their tasselled caps set at snappy angles, they hung about in the corridors smoking sweet black cigarettes and laughing confidentially

The train crawled lazily across a plateau of rough yellow wheat, occasionally plunging into deep ravines where wind from the mountains quivered in strange, thorny trees. It was a landscape for bandits. Earlier that summer, a young Englishman I knew had been motoring through this part of Spain when his car was surrounded by swarthy scoundrels. They robbed him, tied him to a tree and tickled his throat with the blade of a knife. I was thinking of this when, without preface, a rattle of gunfire broke the dozy silence.

It was a machine gun. Bullets rained among the trees like the rattle of castanets, and the train, with a wounded creak, slowed to a halt. For a moment there was no sound except the machine gun. Then, 'Bandits!' I said, in a loud, dreadful voice.

'Bandidos!' screamed the daughter.

'Bandidos!' echoed her mother, and the terrible word swept through the train like something drummed on a tomtom. The result was slapstick in a grim key. We collapsed on the floor, one cringing heap of arms and legs. Only the mother seemed to keep her head; standing up, she began systematically to stash away her treasures. She buried a ring in her bun of hair then, without shame, hiked up her skirts and slipped a pearl-studded comb into her underwear. In the corridor railway officials bumped about yapping orders and crashing into each other.

Suddenly, silence. Outside, there was the murmur of wind in leaves, of voices. Then the outer door of our compartment swung open, and a young man stood there. He did not look clever enough to be a bandit.

'*Hay un medico en el tren*?' he said, smiling.

The Australian, removing his elbow from my stomach, climbed to his feet. 'I'm a doctor,' he admitted, dusting himself. 'Has someone been wounded?'

'Si, Señor. An old man. He is hurt in the head,' said the Spaniard, who was not a bandit: alas, merely another passenger. Settling back in our seats, we listened, expressionless with embarrassment, to what had happened. It seemed that for the last several hours an old man had been stealing a ride by clinging to the rear of the train. Just now he'd lost hold, and a soldier, seeing him fall, had fired off his machine gun as a signal for the engineer to stop the train.

My only hope was that no one remembered who had first mentioned bandits. They did not seem to. After acquiring a clean shirt of mine which he intended to use as a bandage, the doctor went off to his patient, and the mother, turning her back, reclaimed her pearl comb.

The Questions:

1. How many other passengers (not counting the writer) are there in the same compartment of the train as Capote?

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2. Why is the title of this passage printed in inverted commas, do you think?

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3. Was the train travelling among trees or among wheat fields when the machine gun began to fire? Write out ONE phrase from the passage which supports your answer.

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4. List TWO details which Capote notices to suggest that the train was in poor condition.

FIRST.....

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SECOND.....

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5. Why is it surprising, even shocking, that the Australian man is a doctor? Try to mention TWO things about him, and explain why you have chosen them.

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6. Why does the Spanish mother disapprove of:

a) Capote?.....

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b) the young soldier?.....

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7. Was the younger Spanish woman beautiful? How can you tell?

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8. When Capote hears the machine gun, he assumes that the train is being attacked by bandits. Why? Give TWO reasons if you can, based on the passage.

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9. What is the Spanish mother most worried about when she thinks that bandits are coming? How can you tell?

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10. Explain in your own words what you think Capote means when he describes the passengers' reactions as "slapstick in a grim key".

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11. Do you think that Capote was impressed by the reaction of the railway officials to the emergency? Give TWO pieces of evidence from the passage which support your answer, and explain why each of them is important.

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12. What do you think *"Hay un medico en el tren?"* means? Explain why you think so.

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13. Why does Capote hope that nobody remembers who first mentioned bandits?

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This is the end of this paper. If you have any time spare, use it to check your answers. You will be given the second English paper soon.

KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

Admission Paper in English

Section B: Your own writing
Time: 30 minutes

This leaflet consists of lined paper on which to complete a piece of writing. You probably won't fill the leaflet: we aren't expecting you to. If you do fill it, put your hand up and ask the teacher at the front for some more paper. Put any extra paper you use inside this leaflet when you hand it in. Most candidates usually write about one and a half pages: but quality is more important than quantity. In the last few minutes, check your work carefully for errors of spelling and punctuation.

Try to make your writing vivid and interesting. Remember to write in PARAGRAPHS, and to punctuate the ends of sentences properly. Remember that DIALOGUE (characters talking to one another) often helps to make a story more dramatic, and that DESCRIPTIONS allow the reader to picture your scene in detail.

Boys sometimes come to this exam with a composition which they have learned by heart. You must write about the subject described in this box. If you write about another subject, which you have prepared in advance, you will be disqualified from the exam.

Here is your subject:

Write a story about somebody who tells a lie, or who says something which is not true although at the time he thinks it is. The lie, or the false story, causes all sorts of trouble. What is your main character going to do? Will he own up? Or hope that nobody remembers that he is responsible? What happens?

Candidate's Name .....

Candidate's Number .....