

Leave this box blank:



KING'S COLLEGE SCHOOL  
WIMBLEDON

Candidate Number:

January 2015

Common Entrance Pre-Test  
Specimen paper

**ENGLISH**

**SECTION A**

**Comprehension**

30 Minutes + 5 minutes reading time

Surname:

---

First name:

---

**At the start of the exam, you will have 5 minutes reading time.  
You may not write anything during this time or use your pen in any way.**

*This booklet will be collected 35 minutes after the start of the English examination.*

## Section A - Comprehension

You will be given **five minutes** to read through the passage and questions which follow. You are not allowed to write during this time. When the invigilator tells you to begin writing, you will have **thirty minutes** in which to answer the questions.

*The following passage is taken from 'A Stitch in Time' by Penelope Lively. In it, Maria, a young girl, is on holiday, and is exploring a coastal area famous for its fossils.*

1 The coastal path that wound between bushes and over dried gullies was like a wild garden, with flowers all around. Maria could recognise the more ordinary ones, but there were plenty of others she did not know, including a most abundant green plant like a wild sweet-pea. She tucked a piece in her buttonhole, and then picked a dandelion, blowing at it babyishly: it erupted into a shower  
5 of seeds that drifted away towards the sea. Where, thought Maria, they haven't a hope of growing. Waste. You're always being told not to waste things – time and electricity and left-over food – but things waste themselves much more. All that growing and flowering and making seeds for nothing. Dandelions and those millions of elm tree seeds. And tadpoles. And all those fossilised ammonites<sup>1</sup>. All getting eaten by other things before they grew up.

10 She came round a large gorse bush to find herself face to face with a boy standing on the path.

“Shhh!” he hissed, gesturing to a tiny bird fluttering away over the bushes. “That was a linnet!” His look of mild irritation turned to active exasperation as something caught his attention. “Where did you get that?”

“What?”

15 “The grass vetchling,” said the boy crossly, “stupid.”

Maria's hand flew to the now-wilting flower in her buttonhole. “These? I didn't know what they were.”

“Only the rather rare grass vetchling,” said the boy. “Don't you know this is a nature reserve?”

20 “No said Maria dolefully. The grass vetchling felt now as if it were burning a reproachful hole in her shirt.

He looked down at her – he was at least a head taller – and said more tolerantly, “Oh well, don't do it again,” and then, looking at her hand, “can I see your fossil?”

It was an ammonite, not very impressive, but all she had found that morning. “Super,” said the boy kindly. He fished in his pocket and brought out something that Maria recognised at once.

25 “Stomechinus bigrandularis,” she said confidently.

The boy gaped in astonishment. “Is that what it's called?” And then, “how do you know?”

“There's a book in our house,” she said, “about fossils.”

“What's your name?” said the boy briskly. It was clear their relationship was getting on to a different footing.

30 “Maria.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Ammonite – a prehistoric sea creature

“Mine’s Martin. Do you want to climb Black Ven with me? ”

Maria and Martin began to climb the grey, muddy toes of the cliff. Looking up she saw the dried mud had cracked, and as you walked it quaked a little, as if its foundations were uncertain. Looking up at Black Ven’s blasted slopes, Maria thought with a shudder, I’m not going up there.

35 For it was an eerie place. It seemed as old and infertile as the moon, with barren reaches of mud and rock, and yet young as last week in its impermanence. It was the landscape of collapse. The cliff had slipped and slid – sometimes long, long ago, so that the place that had crumpled away was now clothed in scrub, grass, weeds and sapling trees – and sometimes so recently that nothing yet grew at all except a few valiant saplings poking out from the mud to show what they could do,  
40 given time, and a world that would stop moving.

**Now answer the questions to the best of your ability.**

1. Explain the meaning of the following words as they are used in the passage:

a) gullies (line 1)

.....  
.....  
.....

b) abundant (line 3)

.....  
.....  
.....

c) dolefully (line 19)

.....  
.....  
.....

d) blasted (line 34)

.....  
.....  
.....

(8 marks)

2. In Maria’s mind, what do dandelions, elm tree seeds, tadpoles and ammonites have in common (line 8)? Provide a quotation from lines 5-9 that supports your point, and then explain it in your own words.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(4 marks)

**Turn over**



9. Re-read the last paragraph. How does the way Black Ven is described make it seem eerie?  
Quote three words or phrases in your answer and comment on each one.

•

.....  
.....  
.....

•

.....  
.....  
.....

•

.....  
.....  
.....

*(6 marks)*

10. Choose three adjectives that describe Maria's character and explain your choices, using at least one quotation in each case to support your point. (The adjectives do not have to be quotations from the passage, but they may be if you wish)

•

.....  
.....  
.....

•

.....  
.....  
.....

•

.....  
.....  
.....

*(6 marks)*

**(TOTAL MARKS FOR SECTION A: 40)**

**Now move on to Section B**

**BLANK PAGE**

**BLANK PAGE**

**BLANK PAGE**