



WINCHESTER  
COLLEGE

# Entrance Examination

## English

### 2022

**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

Choose EITHER this section OR Section B (Poetry)

*The extract below comes from The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay, by Michael Chabon.*

*In it, the magician Max Mayflower (whose stage name is “Misterioso the Great”) is preparing for the final performance of his famous magic show.*

*His crew – Big Al, Omar and Tom Mayflower, Max’s nephew – are setting up a complicated trick in which Misterioso escapes from being submerged in a water tank.*

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

The curtain itself is legendary: its dimensions, its weight, its darker-than-chocolate colour, the Continental fineness of its stuff. It hangs in thick ripples like frosting poured from the proscenium arch<sup>1</sup> of the most famous theatre in the most celebrated block of the world’s greatest city. Call it Empire City, home of the Statue of Liberation, on her island in the middle of Empire Bay, her sword raised in defiance to the tyrants of the world; and home also of the Empire Palace Theatre, whose **fabled** Black Curtain trembles now as, at stage right, the narrowest of **fissures** opens in the rich dark impasto<sup>2</sup> of its velour. Through this narrow gap a boy peers out. His face, ordinarily a trusting blank surmounted by **tousled** yellow curls, is creased with worry. He is not measuring the numbers of the audience – the house is sold out, as it has been for every night of the current engagement. He is looking for someone or something that no one will discuss, that he has only inferred, for the unnamed person or things whose **advent** or presence has been troubling the company all day.

Then a hand as massive and hard as an elk’s horn, lashed by tough sinews to an arm like the limb of an oak, grabs the boy by the shoulder and drags him back into the wings.

“You know better, young man,” says the giant, well over eight feet tall, to whom the massive hand belongs. He has the brow of an ape and the posture of a bear and the accent of a Viennese professor of medicine. He can rip open a steel drum like a can of tobacco, lift a train carriage by one corner, play the violin like Paganini, and calculate the velocity of asteroids and comets, one of which bears his name. His name is Alois Berg and the comet is called Berg’s comet, but to the theatregoing public and to his friends he is usually just Big Al. “Come, there is a problem with the water tank.”

Backstage, the instruments of torture and restraint stand in their proper places, looking both menacing and droll, ready for the stagehands to drag, wheel, or hoist them out onto the storied boards of the Palace. There is a regulation, asylum-issue, strap-strewn lunatic’s bed; a large, slender milk can of riveted iron; a medieval Catherine wheel; and an incongruous chrome suit rack, from which dangle on prosaic wire hangers a fantastic array of straitjackets, ropes, chains, and thick leather straps. And there is the water tank, a great oblong box of glass, dolphin-sized, standing on one end: a drowned telephone booth. The glass is inch-thick, tempered, and tamperproof. The seals are neat and watertight. The timbers that frame the glass are sturdy and reliable. The boy knows all this because he built the tank himself. He wears, we see now, a leather apron filled with tools. There is a pencil stuck behind his ear and

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<sup>1</sup> Proscenium arch = frame that separates the stage from the audience

<sup>2</sup> Impasto = thickly layered

a chalk string in his pocket. If there is a problem with the tank, he can fix it. He must fix it: curtain is in less than five minutes.

“What’s the matter with it?” The boy – really he is almost a man – makes his way toward the tank with aplomb, heedless of the crutch under his arm, untroubled by the left leg that has been lame since he was an infant.

“It seems to be inert, my boy. Immobilized.” Big Al goes to the tank and gives it a friendly shove. The thousand-pound box tips, and the water inside shivers and sloshes. He could move the tank onstage unaided, but there are union rules, and greater showmanship in the five big stagehands that the feat requires. “In words of one syllable, stuck.”

## Questions

1.

What is the name of the theatre that the performance takes place in?

[1]

2.

Give a quotation from the first paragraph that shows that Tom (the boy) is concerned about something on the night of the performance.

[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) fabled [2]

(b) fissures [2]

(c) tousled [2]

(d) advent [2]

4.

In paragraph 2, Chabon describes the hand of Alois Berg (‘Big Al’) in the following way: ‘a hand as massive and hard as an elk’s horn, lashed by tough sinews to an arm like the limb of an oak’

What is the effect of describing Big Al’s hand in this way? [3]

5.

Looking at paragraph 3, give another quotation that describes ‘Big Al’ 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 magic apparatus in paragraph 4.

How does the author convey a sense of the variety and complexity of the different tricks?

Use evidence to support your answer. [5]

7.

Using quotations from the extract and analysing Chabon’s use of language for effect, discuss how the author creates a vivid picture of the scene backstage on the evening of the magic show.

Try not to use quotations you have already used in your answer to question 6. [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.

### Long Journey

Being too young to pass  
the gate, we made our distance from a loop.  
We'd ride around our house, and every lap  
would be another mile  
    into the mist.

Ten laps to France,  
twenty there, a picnic in a field,  
then twenty more to Germany, an old  
box or two a Schloss<sup>3</sup>  
    by the back fence

and thirty more, who knows,  
Austria, Russia ... While my little brother  
pedalled out of sight I'd fix a border:  
a cold guard with a gun,  
    a hostile pose,

harder questions. Eighty  
laps away the world was very tense,  
there were shots fired, he found me dead and once  
I found him dead and once  
    we separately

lay down and died.  
Him in a heap by his bike in the back garden.  
Me face down in moss in the front garden.  
Nothing happened for ages  
    as our mum dried

the dishes at the sink,  
and put them away and saw that he was still there.  
The clouds went slowly over Hertfordshire<sup>4</sup>,  
till the rain began to smudge  
    the scarlet ink

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<sup>3</sup> A German word for a castle.

<sup>4</sup> One of the home counties in southern England.

of our cardboard Chinese flag.  
But we stayed down in the drizzle, we were dead.  
If the other had gone inside it was too bad.  
He didn't cough. I didn't  
    scratch my leg.

*In distant lands we died*  
we were thinking as we **trooped** into the warm,  
and washed our hands in water that was steam  
in our own home with the day  
    dark blue outside.

Glyn Maxwell (b.1962)

### 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) Lap
  - b) Smudge
  - c) Trooped

[6]
2.  
Describe what happens in verse 5. [3]
3.  
Why do you think the poet has put 'In distant lands we died' in italics? [3]
4.  
Why do you think the poem is called 'Long Journey'? [4]
5.  
How does the form (the arrangement of the lines on the page) help us to understand the meaning of the first 12 lines (up to 'Austria, Russia...')? [6]
6.  
On the surface, this poem is about war. What other things might it be about? Use words and phrases from the text to support your answer. [8]

## SECTION C: EXTENDED WRITING

Answer ONE question from this section.

Either

1. As I'm writing this question, a storm is lashing around Flint Court here at Winchester and I'm reminded of the poem 'Wind' by Ted Hughes. Here are the first two stanzas:

This house has been far out at sea all night,  
The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,  
Winds stampeding the fields under the window  
Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky  
The hills had new places, and wind wielded  
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,  
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.

Write about a significant weather event, 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 effects of the weather;
- Writing that appeals to the senses;
- A rich variety of vocabulary and sentence forms.

[30]

OR

2. Write a newspaper article that considers whether public taxpayers' money should be used to fund cultural projects such as theatres, opera houses and art galleries.

- Ensure you explore the benefits of these cultural buildings to the community.
- Demonstrate also the other side of the argument: should people have more choice in what their tax is spent on? Should we not expect the people who want to see plays, opera and art to pay for this?
- Conclude with your own opinion on the matter.

[30]