



WINCHESTER
COLLEGE

Entrance Examination

English Comprehension

2020

Total time allowed: 1 hour

30 marks

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

- Answer ALL questions
- Read all questions carefully
- You may make notes around and/or underline the text
- Spend roughly 15 minutes reading the text

Read the text below and then answer the questions that follow.

From *Far from the Madding Crowd*: Thomas Hardy (1874)

When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his **countenance** like the rays in a **rudimentary** sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing,¹ and **hampered** by his best clothes and umbrella: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean² neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section,—that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene creed,³ and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon.⁴ Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose **moral colour** was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own—the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's;⁵ his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp—their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted⁶ dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob⁷ being difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of ruddy flesh on account of the exertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

¹ Delaying.

² Half-hearted or indifferent, especially with respect to religion or politics.

³ A statement of belief widely used in Christian Liturgy.

⁴ A talk from a preacher on a scriptural, theological or moral topic.

⁵ Famous English writer of the eighteenth century who is generally portrayed in a large, long brown coat.

⁶ Plenteous.

⁷ Pocket specifically for this type of watch which was usually attached to a chain.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning—sunny and exceedingly mild—might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried⁸ on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. And from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal,⁹ which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly and with a faintly perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not.

He had just reached the time of life at which "young" is ceasing to be the prefix of "man" in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor.

⁸ Stayed longer than intended.

⁹ Vestal virgin (in ancient Rome priestesses of the goddess Vesta).

1. What is Farmer Oak's Christian name? [1]
2. What did Farmer Oak think of when he was meant to be listening to the sermon? [1]
3. What do the following words mean in the context of their appearance in the extract?
 - a) Countenance [2]
 - b) Rudimentary [2]
 - c) Hampered [2]
 - d) Moral colour [2]
4. Hardy describes Oak's wrinkles when he smiles using a simile, 'like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun'. What is the effect of this? [3]
5. Look at paragraph four, which begins 'Mr Oak carried about him...' Identify and copy out a simile in this paragraph. [2]
6. What does Hardy's description of Oak in paragraph three [beginning 'Since he lived six times as many...'] tell us about him? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. [5]
7. Using quotations from the extract and analysing the effect of Hardy's language, discuss how he creates a vivid picture of Farmer Oak's appearance and character. Do not base your answer on quotations you have already used in your answer to question 6. [10 marks]