



BANCROFT'S SCHOOL
Woodford Green, Essex, IG8 0RF
Telephone: 020 8506 6761
Email: admissions@bancrofts.org



ENGLISH

SAMPLE PAPER

13+

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

ENGLISH

SECTION A

(Time allowed: 45 minutes)

Melanie and her brother and sister (Jonathon and Victoria) have come to live with their Aunt Margaret and cousins, Francie and Finn. This is the first time they have met. Aunt Margaret cannot speak and therefore has to write down everything she wishes to say.

Read the passage carefully and answer the questions which follow. Remember that you must refer to, and analyse, details from the passage to support your answers.

A New Home

A door opened and a light so bright and sudden it hurt their eyes spilled through from the back. Aunt Margaret. The light shining through her roughly heaped haycock of hair made it blaze so you might have thought you could warm your hands at it. She was a red woman. Her eyebrows were red as if thickly marked above her eyes with red ink but her face was colourless, no blood at all
5 showing in cheeks or narrow lips. She was painfully thin. The high cheek-bones stuck up gaunt and stark and her narrow shoulders jutted through the fabric of her sweater like bony wings.

She wore black – a shapeless sweater and draggled skirt, black stockings (one with a big hole in the heel), trodden down black shoes that slapped the floor sharply as she moved. She smiled a nervous, hungry sort of smile, opening her arms to welcome them. Finn put Victoria in her arms and
10 she sighed and cuddled the baby with the convulsive, unpractised hug of a woman who, against her desire, has had no children. Melanie wondered how old she was but there was no way of telling; she could have been any age between twenty-five and forty.

“Go along into the back with your aunt,” said Finn to Melanie and Jonathon. “Francie and I will take your things up to your rooms.”

15 In the little back parlour, a coal fire, rendered more fierce by the confines of the small, black-leaded grate, thrust yellow flames up the chimney. An electric kettle, plugged into the wall, steamed on a tin tray, surrounded by waiting cups. In the corner was a large gilt cage containing a number of stuffed birds with glossy black plumage, yellow beaks and sharp little eyes; they were disconcertingly lifelike and for a moment Melanie thought they were real. There was a single,
20 sagging, comfortable, leather-covered armchair of great age, with a crocheted cover slipping down the back of it, and a number of cane-seated, straight-backed chairs. Nailed to the wall was a large blackboard with a compartment for chalk attached to it. On the blackboard was written: “Greetings to Melanie, Jonathon and Victoria,” in white chalk, surrounded with decorative blue scrolls. Melanie felt a lump in her throat; it was a touching and whole-hearted welcome.

25 Aunt Margaret picked up chalk and wrote: “Take off your coats and be comfortable. I am minding the shop so we must stay downstairs for a while.” Melanie noticed the woman’s index finger was stiffly grained with chalk dust. She would have been a talkative woman if she could. Then she settled Victoria in the big chair and set about making tea. There were also cream buns from a paper-bag, two each for the children.

30 Our last meal was breakfast," said Jonathon. "Sausages and bacon. Of course, that was at home."

"We were at home," said Victoria. There was cream and jam smeared on her cheek. "No home, now," said Victoria. Her mouth opened in a round O of woe on an undulating panorama of partially masticated cream bun. Aunt Margaret seized her chalk again, rubbed the board clean with her hand and scrawled rapidly: "Here is your home now!"

"She can't read," said Melanie. Victoria wailed. Aunt Margaret glanced round for something with which to distract her and darted to the corner where the cage was. She pulled a lever at the base of the cage. All the birds began to hop up and down and twitter, opening and shutting their beaks. Instantly entranced, Victoria beamed; before their eyes, her miserable O spread out into a happy melon-wedge grin.

In answering the following questions, focus as closely as you can on the writer's choice of individual words and phrases.

1. What impression is given of Aunt Margaret in the opening paragraph? 4 marks
2. How does the description of her clothes in lines 7-8 change/increase that impression? 4 marks
3. What is meant by the phrase, "the impulsive, unpractised hug of a woman who, against her desire, has had no children" (lines 10-11)? 2 marks
4. What does the description of the back parlour suggest about the people who live there? 6 marks
5. What do you learn about Melanie in this passage? 4 marks
6. Do you find Victoria an attractive child? Use details from the passage to support your answer. 4 marks
7. Do you think the children are going to be happy living with Aunt Margaret? Use details from the passage to support your answer. 6 marks

Total: 30 marks

ENGLISH

SECTION B

(Time allowed: 30 minutes)

Write an essay on one of the following titles. Your work will be assessed on the use of language, power of description, relevance to the title, structure and paragraphing.

1. Ambition
2. The darkest hour
3. Living on an island
4. Discord
5. Write a story, or the opening of a story, which begins with the following words: "I thought it was going to be like a fairy tale."

30 marks