



SURBITON

HIGH SCHOOL

How to Prepare for the Entrance Exam: English

The English exam will consist of two sections: Reading and Writing. These may be divided up into smaller parts.

We will be testing your skills of comprehension and analysis. This means you will need to practise the following reading skills:

- Selection and retrieval of information (quotations)
- Words and their meanings in context
- Inference
- Prediction
- Identification of word class (e.g. adverb, noun, adjective)
- Identification of literary technique (e.g. simile, metaphor, alliteration)

When analysing a text, you will need to use 'subject terminology'. By this we mean commenting on features *like*:

- Literary technique (e.g. personification, symbol, onomatopoeia)
- Structural techniques (e.g. dialogue, description, chronological order)
- Sentence types (e.g. simple, compound, complex)
- Features of form and/or genre (e.g. rhyme, narrator, dialogue)

Here are some examples of the extracts you can expect along with a few sample questions:

Example 1:

Carrie's War

The shop was dim and smelled mustily pleasant. Candles and tarred kindling, and spices, Carrie thought, wrinkling her nose. A door at the back led into a small room with a huge desk almost filling it. "My brother's office," Miss Evans said in a hushed voice and hurried them through into a narrow, dark hall with closed doors and a stair rising up. It was darker here than the shop and there was a strong smell of polish.

Polished linoleum, a shining glass sea, with rugs scattered like islands. Not a speck of dust anywhere. Miss Evans looked down at their feet. "Better change into your slippers before we go up to your bedroom."

"We haven't got any," Carrie said. She meant to explain that there hadn't been any room in their cases but before she could speak Miss Evans turned bright red and said quickly, "Oh, I'm so sorry, how silly of me, why should you? Never mind, as long as you're careful and tread on the drugget."



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A strip of white cloth covered the middle of the stair carpet. They trod on this as they climbed; looking back from the top, Carrie saw the marks of their rubber-soled shoes and felt guilty, though it wasn't her fault. Nick whispered, "She thinks we're poor children, too poor to have slippers," and giggled.

Carrie supposed he was right. Nick was good at guessing what people were thinking. But she didn't feel like giggling; everywhere was so tidy and clean that it made her despair. She thought she would never dare touch anything in this house in case she left marks. She wouldn't dare breathe – even her breath might be dirty.

By Nina Bawden

Sample questions:

- Find an adjective in paragraph one that tells us that Miss Evans is speaking quietly. (1 mark)
- Find a quotation from paragraph three that shows that Miss Evans feels embarrassed about having asked the children whether they have slippers. (1 mark)
- Find a simile from the passage and explain its effect on the reader. (3 marks)

Example 2:

Bella's Den

It was a fox. He seemed to grow out of the darkness of the hole, and then took shape as the moon lit him. He stood as if he had been turned to stone, and he was staring right at our den, right through the leaf strands, right at me. He was locked right into me, reading the thoughts in my mind, and I daren't move or breathe, I daren't do anything but stare back at him, till my eyes were blurring. I thought I would pass out with holding myself so still, and my skin was ice-cold, frozen cold with fear.

Then all of a sudden he seemed to relax. He turned his head slightly, and, as if it was a signal of some sort, out came another, and another, and another, four more shapes looming out of the hole, each one faster than the one before, bouncing like infants in a school playground, tumbling red and brown and silvery white. The dog fox slunk off into the shadows. The other biggish fox, his vixen, sat just where he had been, just at the mouth of the hole, her ears pricked up and her head turning from time to time as she listened out for all kinds of sounds in the hills. But the three cubs had come out to play. They cuffed each other and fell over and rolled about, jumped on each other, jumped on her, hid from each other and roly-polyed right down to the river. I could hear them breathing, and scuffling with their paws, I could hear the little puffs of sound they made when they biffed each other. It felt as if it was the middle of the world, this little patch of ground where the foxes were playing, as if nothing else that was happening anywhere was as important as this.

I've no idea what the signal was but the vixen suddenly turned her head, sharp. The cubs scrambled up the bank and one by one slid back inside it. She waited a moment, lifted her head slightly then just melted down into the hole after them, sliding like water into it.

By Berlie Doherty

Sample questions:

- Find a noun in either paragraph two or paragraph three that means a female fox. (1 mark)
- Find a quotation in paragraph one that tells us that the narrator is frightened of the fox. (1 mark)



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- Do you think the foxes are good parents? Support your answer with at least two quotations from the passage and explain their impact on the reader. (6 marks)

In the **writing section**, you will be asked to complete slightly longer pieces of writing. Here we will be testing your creative and imaginative writing skills. This means you should practise:

- Using sensory imagery (what can you see / smell / touch / taste / hear?)
- Using descriptive language
- Using techniques like similes, metaphors and personification
- Using a wide vocabulary
- Building and connecting your ideas in interesting ways

You will also be tested on SPaG – so make sure you write accurately using a range of punctuation to create and clarify meaning.

Here are some things you can do to get you ready for the exam:

- Read!
- ‘Magpie’ interesting words – keep a log of new vocabulary alongside a definition
- Write stories of your own – use your magpie-d words
- Practise identifying word class – on leaflets, newspapers or in your reading book, challenge yourself to underline all the nouns / adjectives / adverbs / verbs
- Revise the main literary techniques and practise writing your own
- Use websites like [BBC Teach](#) or [BBC Bitesize](#) to help you.

Good luck and remember to just try your best!