

BROMSGROVE SCHOOL



ENTRANCE EXAMINATION PAPER

YEAR 9

ENGLISH

Tuesday 19th January 2010

Time allowed: 1 hour

Instructions

Answer **BOTH** questions in Section A and one question from Section B.

You should spend about 40 minutes on Section A and 20 minutes on Section B.

SECTION A

The following passage is taken from Bill Bryson's *Notes from a Small Island*. Read it carefully and answer the questions that follow.

Weston-super-Mare

It was only a little after six when I stepped from the train and ventured into the town, but already the whole of Weston appeared to be indoors beyond drawn curtains. The streets were empty, dark and full of slanting rain. I walked from the station through a concrete shopping precinct and out on to the front where a black unseen sea made restless whooshing noises. Most of the hotels along the front were dark and empty, and the open few didn't look particularly enticing. I walked a mile or so to a cluster of three establishments at the far end of the promenade and randomly selected a place called the Birchfield. It was fairly basic, but clean. You could do worse, and I have.

I gave myself a cursory grooming and wandered back into town in search of dinner and diversion. I had an odd sense that I had been here before, which patently I had not. What made Weston feel familiar was, of course, that it was just like everywhere else. It had Boots and Marks & Spencer and Dixons and W.H. Smiths and all the rest of it. I realized with a kind of dull ache that there wasn't a single thing here that I hadn't seen a million times already.

I ate at a Chinese restaurant, not because I craved Chinese but because it was the only place I could find open. I was the only customer. As I quietly scattered rice and sweet and sour sauce across the tablecloth, there were some rumbles of thunder and, a moment later, the heavens opened – and I mean opened. I have seldom seen it rain so hard in England. The rain spattered the street like a shower of ball-bearings and within minutes the restaurant window was wholly obscured with water, as if someone were running a hose over it. Because I was a long walk from my hotel, I spun out the meal, but eventually I had no choice but to step out into the rainy night.

I stood beneath a shop awning and wondered what to do. Rain battered madly on the awning and rushed in torrents through the gutters. It poured over the sides of overstretched gutters and fell to the pavement in an endless clatter. With my eyes closed, it sounded like I was in the middle of some vast, insane tap-dancing competition. I waded out into the deluge, then sprinted across the street and instinctively took refuge in the first bright, open thing I came to – an amusement arcade. Wiping my glasses with a bandanna, I took my bearings. The arcade was a large room full of brightly pulsating machines, some of them playing electronic tunes or making unbidden kerboom noises, but apart from an overseer sitting at a counter with a drooping fag and a magazine, there was no-one in the place so it looked a little eerily as if the machines were playing themselves.

1. What atmosphere does Bryson create in the opening paragraph and how does he do this? 5 marks
2. In the second paragraph, Bryson lists high street shops but ends with the phrase “and all the rest of it.” What is he trying to convey to the reader here? 3 marks
3. Explain the impact of the underlined simile in the third paragraph. 2 marks
4. Explain the impact of the underlined metaphor in the fourth paragraph. 2 marks
5. With reference to the whole passage, examine the ways in which Bryson creates a melancholy mood throughout. 8 marks

SECTION B

Spend about twenty minutes on ONE of the following:

- a) Continue the story from Bryson’s point of view, narrating the events of the remainder of his evening.
- b) Write about a place that made an impression on you when you visited and try to explore how this impression was formed.
- c) Write a story about someone who lives in Weston-super-Mare, the town Bryson describes.

10 marks