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# THE PERSE

## UPPER SCHOOL

### CAMBRIDGE

## Year 9 Entrance Exams

### English

## Specimen Paper 3

**Time allowed: 1 hour and 15 minutes**

Instructions to candidates (**please read this information before the examination starts**):

1. There are **two** questions on this paper.
2. Answer both of them.
3. For the first question, read the passage and answer the questions which follow it.
4. For the second question, write about **one** of the subjects.
5. The number beside the question shows you how many marks there are for each question.
6. You are **strongly** advised to spend time reading and thinking before beginning your answers.
7. Write in full sentences wherever possible.
8. Remember to leave enough time to answer both questions properly.

## QUESTION ONE

The first of the beast's roars almost tore the flesh from his bones. The second, a nerve-splitting bellow that crashed inside his brain, very nearly made him give in before he'd even begun his challenge. He glanced back at the hatch in the door though which he'd just walked and saw the reassuring smile of the dark-eyed girl on the other side. Mustering his own thin smile, he knelt down and picked up the things he'd dropped, a sword with a finely-wrought handle and a ball of strong, thick string.

'You can do this,' he told himself. 'You really can do this.'

But he hadn't convinced his body he could do it. His first attempt at tying the string to the door failed. He was so nervous his fingers just wouldn't work. It was like wearing mittens and trying to knot raw sausages. Taking a deep, shuddering breath he finally managed to pass the string through the hatch and secure it to one of the little bars in the opening. Weighing the sword uncertainly in his hand and letting the string play out behind him, he took his first faltering steps down the dark passageway. The blackness clung to him, trying to crawl inside his skin. The maze of tunnels was everything he'd been expecting - and more. They had the mystery of night, the terror of loneliness. They lay deep beneath the earth, where the sun never shone and the fresh wind never blew, and the silence there was heavy. The air was clogged with a clicking animal musk. The walls of the tunnel by the entrance were smooth and regular, built from huge blocks of stone. But as he penetrated deeper into the gloom, he noticed a change. The walls were worn and they were slippery with something thick and slimy. He flinched, then walked on, his feet thudding dully in the cold, still air. Those echoing footsteps shook the close, uncomfortable blackness that clutched at him like a hand. No more than fifty paces from the door the tunnel branched in half a dozen different directions.

He moved forward, unrolling the ball of thread as he went, and stopped. He was still considering his options when he heard the beast again. This time the sound was a low, throaty growl. It was closer, and moving purposefully towards him.

'It's stalking me.'

In the darkness he stumbled and reached out to steady himself. The moment his hand came into contact with the cold stone surface, he recoiled in horror. The walls were slippery with something horrible. The stone floor too.

- a. Where is this passage of writing set? [3]
- b. How does the character in the passage prepare for the challenge? [4]
- c. Explain, in your own words, what he can see as he goes on his journey. [5]
- d. Describe how his mood changes as you read through the passage. [5]
- e. Why do you think he is unrolling a ball of thread as he goes? [3]
- f. Imagine you are the character in the passage. Using your imagination, explain what you hope to achieve by taking on this challenge. [10]

## QUESTION TWO

**Write on one of the following topics:**

1. Mercy.
2. The Volcano.
3. A Successful Attempt.
4. Resisting Temptation.
5. The Outsider.
6. A Vision of the Future.

[30]

**END OF TEST**