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THE PERSE

UPPER SCHOOL

CAMBRIDGE

Year 9 Entrance Exams

English

Specimen Paper 4

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

White clouds, breaking into blue. Eyes, so sharp and piercing that they seemed to cut the sky, moving at speed. Eyes that dropped suddenly and spied a vision of the earth; fields and rivers, mountains and valleys, then wattle-and-daub houses and, moving among them - humans. The old hunting bird extended its talons and then it was falling, straight towards its master and the village green.

As he saw the bird stoop from the clouds, a boy stopped and looked up. It was Glin-dor, his father's oldest but most skilful falcon, and he knew that somewhere his pa must be calling to summon him back.

For five days the little Saxon village, half a day's journey from the boy's farm, had been transformed by the arrival of an autumn fair. The air was thick with the scents of meat and mud, hay and animal dung, wood smoke and human sweat. Flutes, tambourines and drums sang in his ears as he followed the noisy crowd down the lane. The shouts of stall holders came to tempt passers-by to part with their coins, or to swap some vegetables or a loaf of bread for their wares.

The boy was desperately excited, and thankful that he was even here, for two days earlier there had been some doubt that his ma and pa would take him on the difficult journey. With robbers haunting the edges of the forests, fear was rife in this countryside on the borders of Wales, where it was always difficult to travel across open country. But his mother needed a new milk churn and his father another hunting bird from the trader Athulstan, for the coming feast of St. Martin. Besides, neither of his parents had been willing to disappoint their son.

'Come,' hissed a voice behind the boy, 'come and look.'

He swung round to see an old woman sitting at a table with a milking stool in front of it.

Her face was more ravaged than anyone's he had ever seen before, and the boy gulped as she reached a leathery hand across the table and clasped him by the wrist.

'Hey. Let go of me,' he snapped, pulling away. He noticed that her skin smelled strange and unpleasant.

'You want to know your fortune though, don't ye? We all want to know our fortune. Come, boy, don't be frightened.'

The boy was repulsed by the hag. Her voice was like nothing he had heard before either, even with the many accents that mingled here on the border of Wales and England, whether Celtic or Saxon or Norman French.

- a. Describe, in your own words, the journey of the falcon outlined in the first paragraph of the passage. [4]
- b. What is the atmosphere like at the autumn fair? [3]
- c. Explain the arguments for and against the family making the journey to the fair? [5]
- d. Why do you think the boy finds the old woman repulsive? [3]
- e. How is the world in which the boy lives different from ours today? [5]
- f. Imagine you are the fortune-teller described at the end of the passage. Using your imagination, say what you think the future holds in store for the boy. [10]

QUESTION TWO

Write on one of the following topics:

1. Justice.
2. Floating Ice.
3. Despair.
4. Trying to Persuade Somebody.
5. A Close Friend.
6. In the Past.

[30]

END OF TEST