



St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Entrance Assessment 2019

Year 8 English

Time allowed: 1 hour

Name: _____

Section A

Spend 30 minutes on this section.

Read the passage and then answer the questions that follow.

In this extract, the writer Roald Dahl describes a funny childhood incident, entitled 'The Great Mouse Plot'.

The sweet-shop in Llandaff in the year 1923 was the very centre of our lives. To us, it was what **1**
a bar is to a drunk, or a church is to a Bishop. Without it, there would have been little to live for.
But it had one terrible drawback, this sweet-shop. The woman who owned it was a horror. We
hated her and we had good reason for doing so.

Her name was Mrs. Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper **5**
lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry. She never smiled. She never welcomed us
when we went in, and the only times she spoke were when she said things like, 'I'm watchin' you
so keep yer thievin' fingers off them chocolates!' Or 'I don't want you in 'ere just to look around!
Either you forks out or you gets out'.

But by far the most loathsome thing about Mrs. Pratchett was the filth that clung around her. **10**
apron was grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea
stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us most. They
were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been
putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long. And do not forget please that it was these very
hands and fingers that she plunged into the sweet-jars when we asked for a pennyworth **15**
Of Treacle Toffee or Wine Gums or Nut Clusters or whatever. The mere sight of her grimy right
hand with its black fingernails digging an ounce of Chocolate Fudge out of a jar would have
caused a starving tramp to go running from the shop. But not us. Sweets were our life-blood.
We would have put up with far worse than that to get them. So we simply stood and watched in
sullen silence while this disgusting old woman stirred around inside the jars with her foul fingers. **20**

You can understand why we had it in for Mrs. Pratchett in a big way, but we didn't quite know
what to do about it. Many schemes were put forward but none of them was any good. None of

them, that is, until suddenly, one memorable afternoon, we found the dead mouse.

My four friends and I had come across a loose floor-board at the back of the classroom, and when we prised it up with the blade of a pocket-knife, we discovered a big hollow space underneath. This, we decided, would be our secret hiding-place for sweets and other small treasures such as conkers and monkey-nuts and birds' eggs. **25**

One day, when we lifted it up, we found a dead mouse. It was an exciting discovery. Thwaites took it out by its tail and waved it in front of our faces. 'What shall we do with it?' he cried.

'It stinks!' someone shouted. 'Throw it out of the window quick!' **30**

'Hold on a tick,' I said. 'Don't throw it away.'

Thwaites hesitated. They all looked at me.

When writing about oneself, one must strive to be truthful. Truth is more important than modesty. I must tell you, therefore, that it was I and I alone who had the idea for the great and daring Mouse Plot. We all have our moments of brilliance and glory, and this was mine.

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'Why don't we,' I said, 'slip it into one of Mrs. Pratchett's jars of sweets? Then when she puts her dirty hands in to grab a handful, she'll grab a stinky dead mouse instead.'

The other four stared at me in wonder. Then, as the sheer genius of the plot began to sink in, they all started grinning. They slapped me on the back. They cheered me and danced around the classroom. 'We'll do it today!' they cried. 'We'll do it on the way home! You had the idea,' they said to me, 'so you can be the one to put the mouse in the jar.'

1. Read again the first part of the Source from **lines 1 to 4**. List **four** things about the sweet shop from this part of the Source. **(4 marks)**

2. Look in detail at this extract from **lines 5 to 14** of the Source:

'Her name was Mrs. Pratchett. She was a small skinny old hag with a moustache on her upper lip and a mouth as sour as a green gooseberry. She never smiled. She never welcomed us when we went in, and the only times she spoke were when she said things like, 'I'm watchin' you so keep yer thievin' fingers off them chocolates!' Or 'I don't want you in 'ere just to look around! Either you forks out or you gets out'. But by far the most loathsome thing about Mrs. Pratchett was the filth that clung around her. Her apron was grey and greasy. Her blouse had bits of breakfast all over it, toast-crumbs and tea stains and splotches of dried egg-yolk. It was her hands, however, that disturbed us most. They were disgusting. They were black with dirt and grime. They looked as though they had been putting lumps of coal on the fire all day long.'

How does the writer use language here to describe Mrs. Pratchett?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms

(6 marks)

3. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the passage from **line 24 to the end**.

A student said, 'This part of the text when the boys discover the mouse and plan what to do with it is full of excitement.'

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- how the writer shows the boys' feelings of excitement
- how the writer uses language to convey the excitement
- support your response with references to the text.

(15 marks)

Section B

Spend 30 minutes on this section

Describe an occasion when you felt excited.

Remember to plan your account and to use interesting language to engage your reader.

(25 marks)