

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

General Certificate of Education Examination

JANUARY 1972

ORDINARY LEVEL

English Language 2

Two hours

Answer BOTH questions

Answers must be presented in a clear and orderly manner.

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1. The following passage is taken from a study of the relationship between a child's home background and his performance at school. *Using only the information in the passage, write a summary consisting of two paragraphs:*

(a) the advantages which a first-born child is likely to possess; and

(b) the advantages which a youngest child is likely to possess.

*(Your whole summary must not exceed 150 words altogether, and, at the end of it, you must state the number of words used.)*

Do not try to summarize everything in the passage, but select from it the material needed for your paragraphs. These should be written in concise, clear English, *and as far as possible in your own words*; although you may retain words and brief expressions which cannot be accurately or economically replaced.

The experiences of a child, inside the home and out of it, are influenced to a considerable extent by his position in the family, by whether, for example, he is an only child or the eldest or youngest one. First-born children, from their earliest years, are subjected to a great deal of stimulation by adults which their later-born brothers and sisters may miss. They are closer to their parents; on the other hand, they miss the stimulus of having older children to play with. The first-born child may suffer from the inexperience of his parents, and his younger brothers and sisters may reap the benefit of the lessons learnt at his expense. At school, the first-born child is often absent in the early years, owing to childish infections which he passes on to the other members of his family, so that when they come to school in their turn they have acquired immunity and lose less schooling. A less direct influence on first-born children will come from the fact that, in many families, they have the new clothes and the new toys and pass them on to their younger brothers and sisters.

The youngest child might be expected to enjoy considerable advantages in education. A later-born child learns to talk earlier than the first-born and, in poor families, the extra money brought into the home by elder brothers and sisters who are out at work might allow the parents to keep him at school after fifteen. It might also encourage them to send him to a grammar school because, with the help of the older children, they can afford to buy the necessary uniform, and forgo his later earnings. The youngest children, moreover, when provisions for education are expanding, will have better opportunities than their elder brothers and sisters for going to grammar schools and for proceeding to the universities or other forms of higher education.

In later life it seems that the eldest child stands out as superior in achievement. Galton, for example, observed in 1874 that distinguished English men of science were more often eldest or only sons than younger sons. He qualified this by saying that eldest sons were 'more likely to become possessors of independent means and therefore able to follow the pursuits that have most attraction to their tastes; they are treated more as companions by their parents and have earlier responsibility, both of which would develop independence of character; probably also the first-born of families not well-to-do in the world would generally have more attention in his infancy, more breathing space and better nourishment, than his younger brothers and sisters in their several turns'.

More recent studies in America and Italy have confirmed that scientists and university professors are drawn mainly from the eldest and, to a lesser extent, from the youngest sons; the eldest sons too get more than their fair share of print in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, where the lives of those who have left their mark on the world are recorded.

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2. Read the following passage (which has been divided into three sections for your convenience) and answer the questions.

[The narrator's mother had died in giving birth to a baby boy, born dead.]

## A

I have no more to say of my mother, and of her funeral, only so much as records the least part of my grief. Some of her relations came, whom I cannot distinctly remember seeing at any other time: a group of elderly and hard-featured women, who talked of me as 'the child,' very much as they might have talked of some troublesome article of baggage; and who turned up their noses at my grandfather: who, for his part, was uneasily respectful, calling each of them 'mum' very often. I was not attracted by my mother's relations, and I kept as near my grandfather as possible, feeling a vague fear that some of them might have a design of taking me away. Though none seemed in the least ambitious of that responsibility.

They were not all women, for there was one quiet little man in their midst, who was in the custody of the largest and grimmest of ladies, whom the others called Aunt Martha. He was so completely in her custody that after some consideration I judged he must be her son; though indeed he seemed very old for that. I now believe him to have been her husband; but I cannot remember to have heard his name, and I cannot invent him a better one than Uncle Martha.

## B

Uncle Martha would have behaved quite well, I am convinced, if he had been left alone, and would have acquitted himself with perfect propriety in all the transactions of the day; but it seemed to be Aunt Martha's immovable belief that he was wholly incapable of any action, even the simplest and most obvious, unless impelled by shoves and jerks. Consequently he was shoved into the mourning carriage — we had two — and jerked into the corner opposite to the one he selected; shoved out — almost on all fours — at the cemetery; and, perceiving him entering the little chapel of his own motion, Aunt Martha overtook him and jerked him in there. This example presently impressed the other ladies with the expediency of shoving Uncle Martha at any convenient opportunity; so that he arrived home with us last in a severely jostled condition.

'Ah well,' said the Fat Aunt, shaking her head, with a deep sigh that suggested repletion, 'ah well; it's what we must all come to!'

There had been a deal of other conversation, but I remember this remark because the Fat Aunt had already made it twice.

'Ah, indeed,' assented another aunt, a thin one, 'so we must, sooner or later.'

'Yes, yes; as I often say, we're all mortal.'

'Yes, indeed!'

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'We've all got to be born, and we've all got to die.'

'That's true!'

'Rich and poor - just the same.'

'Ah!'

'In the midst of life we're in the middle of it.'

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'Ah yes!'

Grandfather Nat, deeply impressed, made haste to refill the Fat Aunt's glass, and to push the cake-dish nearer. Aunt Martha jerked Uncle Martha's elbow towards his glass, which he was neglecting, with a sudden nod and a frown of 55 pointed significance - even command.

## C

'What a blessing the child was took too!' was the Fat Aunt's next observation.

'Ah, that it is!' murmured the chorus. But I was puzzled and shocked to hear such a thing said of my little brother. 60

'And it's a good job there's only one left.'

The chorus agreed again. I began to feel that I had seriously disobliged my mother's relations by not dying too.

'And him a boy; boys can look after themselves.' This was a thin aunt's opinion. 65

'Ah, and that's a blessing,' sighed the Fat Aunt, 'a great blessing.'

'Of course,' said Aunt Martha. 'And it's not to be expected that his mother's relations can be burdened with him.'

'Why, no indeed!' said the Fat Aunt, very decisively. 70

'I'm sure it wouldn't be poor Ellen's wish to cause more trouble to her family than she has!' And Aunt Martha, with a frown at the watercress, gave Uncle Martha another jolt. It seemed to me that he had really eaten all he wanted, and would rather leave off; and I wondered if she always fed him 75 like that, or if it were only when they were visiting.

'And besides, it would be standing in the child's way,' Aunt Martha resumed, 'with so many openings as there is in the docks here, quite handy.'

Perhaps it was because I was rather dull in the head that 80 day, from one cause and another; at any rate I could think of no other openings in the docks but those between the ships and the jetties, and at the lock-sides, which people some-

times fell into, in the dark; and I gathered a hazy notion that I was expected to make things comfortable by going 85 out and drowning myself.

'And many a boy's gone out to work no older.'

'Ah, and been members of Parliament afterwards, too.'

The prospect of an entry into Parliament presented so stupefying a contrast with that of an immersion in the dock 90 that for some time the ensuing conversation made little impression on me. At last the food and drink were all gone. Whereupon the Fat Aunt sighed her last moral sentiment, Uncle Martha was duly shoved out on the quay, and I was left alone with Grandfather Nat. 95

'Well, Stevy, old mate,' said my grandfather, drawing me on his knee, 'us two's left alone; left alone, old mate.'

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Answer the following questions *in your own words as far as possible*. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) should be answered *very briefly*, and in these answers complete sentences are not essential. (For instance, an answer may consist of a clause: 'Because...') Other questions should be answered in complete and correct sentences.

*From Section A:*

- (a) What is suggested about the boy's family by the statement 'whom I cannot distinctly remember seeing at any other time' (ll. 3-4)?
- (b) What is implied about the relatives' attitude to the boy by their reference to him as 'the child' (l. 5)?
- (c) Explain clearly what is meant (in view of what happens in the story) by 'none was in the least ambitious of that responsibility' (ll. 12-13).
- (d) (i) What is implied by the phrase that the quiet little man was 'in the custody' of his wife (l. 15)?  
 (ii) Why is the name 'Uncle Martha' the most appropriate one for the quiet little man (l. 21)?

*From Section B:*

- (e) Explain, with particular reference to the words in italics, what is meant by the statement that, left alone, Uncle Martha 'would have *acquitted himself* with perfect *propriety* in all the *transactions* of the day' (ll. 23-25).
- \* (f) (i) Describe in a word or short phrase:  
 (a) Aunt Martha's behaviour towards her husband.  
 (b) Uncle Martha's behaviour towards his wife.  
 (ii) What does the behaviour of the other women present show about their opinion of Uncle Martha?
- \* (g) Give in a single word or short phrase the meaning of *two* of the following words *as used in the passage*:  
 expediency (l. 34); repletion (l. 38); assented (l. 42); significance (l. 56).
- (h) In line 41 we are told about a remark that the Fat Aunt had made that she had 'already made it twice'. What *other* evidence is there in this section of this lady's habit of repeating herself?

*From Section C:*

- (i) Why is the narrator 'puzzled and shocked' (ll. 59-60) by what is said about his little brother?
- (j) (i) What does the boy feel is implied by the remark, 'And it's a good job there's only one left' (l. 61)?  
 (ii) What is the real reason that the relatives are glad the remaining child is a boy?
- \*(k) (i) What does Aunt Martha mean by the word 'openings' (l. 78)?  
 (ii) What two things have been said to make the boy think that he is expected 'to make things comfortable by going out and drowning' himself (ll. 85-86)?
- (l) What is the real reason for one of the relatives mentioning boys who had become members of Parliament (l. 88)?

*From the whole passage*

- (m) What do you learn of Grandfather Nat's attitude to the female relatives? Answer in not more than 20 words, writing in correct, complete sentences.
- \*(n) What are the motives which chiefly determine the behaviour of the female relatives?
- (o) What are the chief emotions experienced by the boy during the course of the passage? Give them in the order in which they occur, using not more than 40 words altogether, and write in correct, complete sentences.
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