

Mid Programme Entries 2015

Year 4

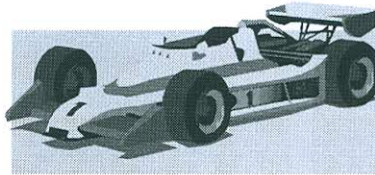
ENGLISH

Time allowed: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Instructions

- Answer all the questions on the exam paper.
- Write your answers in the space provided.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Answer each question as clearly and as neatly as possible.
- Total: 50 marks

Good luck!



Comprehension (25 marks)

The following extract comes from *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells.

I stopped and sat upon the Time Machine, looking around. The sky was no longer blue. Ahead, it was **inky dark**, and out of the blackness shone brightly and steadily the white stars. Overhead it was starless and a deep red and behind it was glowing scarlet where the huge sun lay, red and motionless. The rocks around me were a harsh reddish colour, and all the trace of life that I could see at first was the intensely green vegetation that covered everything. It was the same rich green that one sees on plants which grow in an endless twilight.

The Time Machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched to a sharp bright horizon against the pale sky. There were no waves, not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slow swell, which rose and fell like a gentle breathing, showed that the sea was still living. Where the water sometimes broke was a thick layer of salt, which appeared pink under the dark sky. The air forced me to breathe very fast which reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering.

Looking around me again, I saw that what I had taken to be a reddish mass of rock was moving slowly towards me. It was a monstrous crab-like creature. Can you imagine a crab as large as a table, with its many legs moving slowly, its big claws swaying, its long **antennae** waving and feeling, and its eyes on stalks gleaming at you? Its back was covered with ugly lumps and a greenish layer. I could see its complicated mouth flickering as it moved.

As I stared at this sinister creature crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it had returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. As I tried again to brush it away, I caught something threadlike which was drawn swiftly out of my hand. In fright, I turned and saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast claws, smeared with an **algal slime**, were descending upon me.

In a moment my hand was on the lever of my Time Machine, and I had placed a great distance between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the same beach, and I saw them distinctly; dozens of them were crawling in the twilight. I cannot convey the sense of total **desolation** that hung over the world. The red eastern sky, the blackness to the north, the dead sea, the stony beach crawling with these slow-stirring monsters, the poisonous-looking green of the plants, the thin air that hurt my lungs: all contributed to an appalling effect. I moved on a hundred years, and all was still the same.

I then travelled on a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million years from now, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to **obscure** nearly a tenth part of the dark sky. Then I stopped once more, for the crawling multitude of the crabs had disappeared, and the red beach seemed lifeless. Now it was flecked with white and a bitter cold assailed me as white flakes came eddying down. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life remained but I saw nothing moving, in earth or sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that life was not extinct. Suddenly I noticed that the circular outline of the sun had changed. For a minute perhaps I **stared aghast** at the blackness that was creeping over the day, and then I realized that an eclipse was beginning. Either the moon or the planet Mercury was passing across the sun's disk. The darkness grew; a cold wind began to blow in gusts, and the white flakes in the air increased in number.

From the edge of the sea came a ripple and a whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent. Utterly silent. All the sounds of man-the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives-all that was over. As the darkness thickened, the snowflakes became more abundant and the cold of the air more intense. At last, one by one, swiftly, one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze rose to a moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the **eclipse** sweeping towards me. In another moment all was obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

A horror of this great darkness came on me. I was cold to my bones, and the pain I felt in breathing overcame me. Then in the sky appeared the edge of the sun again as a red-hot arc. I got off my Time Machine to recover myself. As I stood sick and confused, I saw again a thing moving towards the shore. It was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, and tentacles trailed down from it. It seemed black against the blood-red water and it was hopping fitfully about. I felt I was fainting. A terrible fear of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered on my Time Machine and I returned.



