



THE ENGLISH COLLEGE IN PRAGUE

ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

ENGLISH

Form 5

EXAMPLE

Time: 1 hour

Candidate Number:

Assessment:

Instructions:

1. Please write in pen.
2. Read the instructions carefully.
3. There are 2 sections. Please complete all questions.

You must answer **BOTH** Part One and Part Two of the Paper.

Part One

Write a commentary on the following passage. Among other aspects of the passage you should comment on:

- *how any or all of narrative, fact, description, memory, opinion and speculation are used in the development of the themes of the passage;*
- *the language, rhetorical devices and figures of speech the author uses and how effective you feel these are.*

You should spend about 35 minutes on this task.

Passage

The small propeller plane that services the route from Amsterdam to Norwich first climbed towards the sun before turning west. Spread out beneath us lay one of the most densely-populated regions in Europe, with endless terraces, sprawling satellite towns, business parks and shining glass houses which looked like large quadrangular ice floes drifting across this corner of the continent where not a patch is left to its own devices. Over the centuries the land has been regulated, cultivated and built on until the whole region was transformed into a geometrical pattern. The roads, water channels and railway tracks ran in straight lines and gentle curves past fields and plantations, basins and reservoirs. Like beads on an abacus designed to calculate infinity, cars glided along the lanes of the motorways while the ships moving up and down river appeared as if they had been halted for ever. Embedded in this even fabric lay a manor surrounded by its park, the relic of an earlier age. I watched the shadow of our plane hastening below us across hedges and fences, rows of poplars and canals. Along a line that seemed to have been drawn with a ruler a tractor crawled through a field of stubble, dividing it into one lighter and one darker half. Nowhere, however, was a single human being to be seen. No matter whether one is flying over Newfoundland or the sea of lights that stretches from Boston to Philadelphia after nightfall, over the Arabian deserts which gleam like mother-of-pearl, over the Ruhr or the city of Frankfurt, it is as though there were no people, only the things they have made and in which they are hiding. One sees the places where they live and the roads that link them, one sees the smoke rising from their houses and factories, one sees the vehicles in which they sit, but one sees not the people themselves. And yet they are present everywhere upon the face of the earth, extending their dominion by the hour, moving around the honeycombs of towering buildings and tied into networks of complexity that goes far beyond the power of any one individual to imagine, from the thousand of hoists and winches that once worked the South African

diamond mines to the floors of today's stock and commodity exchanges, through which the global tides of information flow without cease. If we view ourselves from a great height, it is frightening to realize how little we know about our species, our purpose and our end, I thought, as we crossed the coastline and flew out over the jelly-green sea.

W.G. Sebald, from *The Rings of Saturn* (1995)

Explanatory notes:

- *Norwich* is a cathedral and university city in the East Anglia region of southern England.
- *Ice floes*, as distinct from icebergs, are flat sheets of ice that float on the ocean surface.
- An *abacus* is the name given to a small frame with horizontal wires on which are strung different-coloured beads, used to teach very young children to count.
- *Poplars* are a kind of tall, thin, pointed tree.
- *Stubble* is the name given to the lower stems left sticking out of a field after a crop has been cut and harvested.
- *Newfoundland* is an island off the east coast of Canada.
- *Mother-of-pearl* is the shiny material coating the inside of pearl oyster shells, used for decorative purposes.
- *The Ruhr* is a heavily-populated, industrialized area of western Germany.
- *Hoists and winches* are the mechanisms used to lower and raise men and materials to and from the below-ground working areas of a mine.

Part Two

Spend 25 minutes on this task

Respond to **ONE** of the questions below (**EITHER a OR b**)

a) *Write about a film you have read and enjoyed.*

OR

b) *In the passage for commentary the writer reflects on the human population he knows are there but which, unlike the things they have made, are invisible from high above the earth. Write a piece from the point of view of a visitor from another planet, recording what he/she/it might see and think about life on earth by looking down on it from above in this way.*