

MATRICULATION AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS BOARD  
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA, MSIDA  
MATRICULATION EXAMINATION  
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Specimen Paper

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SUBJECT: ENGLISH  
TIME: 3 hours

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**ANSWER ALL SECTIONS**

You are advised to spend about 1 hour on each task.

**SECTION A – WRITTEN (30 marks)**

**Choose one title and write 450 (+/- 10%) words.**

1. A popular student magazine runs a monthly column where it invites students and teachers to describe a favourite spot. Write a description of your favourite reading spot for the magazine.
2. The new editor of the yearly publication of *Short Stories of the Supernatural for Young Adults* invited you to write a story entitled: 'Fearless'.
3. The famous author of the *Harry Potter* series, Joanne Rowling, will be at the book signing Christmas event being organised in Malta on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017. The organising committee chose you to plan her three day stay in Malta. Your responsibilities include organising airport transfer, accommodation, two cultural visits, and accompanying her at the book signing event.

Write a formal letter to Ms Rowling in which you provide her with all the necessary information about her stay in Malta.

Sender's details:

*Use this fictional name:* John Smith

*Use this address:* Malta Signing Event 2017 St Elmo Square Valletta VLT1234 Malta

Recipient's details:

*Use this address:* J. K. Rowling C/o. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 38 Soho Square London W1D 3HB UK

4. Advances in technology have caused human communication to degenerate. Discuss.
5. Advertising often employs unethical methods to influence consumers. What's your opinion on this?
6. You form part of an international team of students participating in a project on large corporations' use of energy. The project is financed and supported by a European institution. In the first year of the project you and your teammates have had meetings in three different countries, where you have

also visited corporations in order to learn about how they use energy. In your last meeting, you discussed a plan for the final stage of the project, which will focus on educating corporations on the importance of using alternative sources of energy.

Write a report addressed to the head of school. In the report you might consider describing:

- the activities you engaged in since you were chosen to be part of the project;
- the progress made since the beginning of the project;
- the plan for future action.

## SECTION B – READING AND LANGUAGE AWARENESS (30 marks)

Read the following passage and answer the questions given.

### Mark Ellen: I asked my parents the questions I always wanted to ask

5 My father got cross and frustrated towards the end of his long life. This wasn't just mild irritation with the daily routine – losing his glasses, running out of marmalade, Anne Robinson never off the telly – it was something deeper and more regretful: he was 80 and felt his sun was beginning to set. Like so many old people, he couldn't appreciate the value of his past and he needed a project to keep him amused and occupied. So my sisters and I suggested he wrote his memoirs.

10 He protested loudly that he hadn't done anything worth writing about – absurd from someone who'd once parachuted into enemy-occupied France. Nothing quite that dramatic ever happened again, it's true, but I convinced him that wasn't the point. His stupendous achievement was that he had lived through eight decades and could view each one from the age he was at the time. And the older he got, the more valuable those early perspectives became, a priceless chronicle of a lost age by someone who had scythed a path right through it and been able to tell the tale.

15 But there were two more obstacles in his path, he said. How could he manage it now he was largely confined to a wheelchair – he couldn't type any more and found handwriting hard – and if somebody presents you with a blank piece of paper headed “The Life and Opinions of Ronnie Ellen”, a tale addressing the best part of a century, how on earth are you supposed to get started?

20 Two cunning plans were devised and promptly put into action. Firstly, he should divide his life into eight chapters, one for each decade, and only progress to the next instalment when the previous one was done and dusted. This worked wonderfully: he was born in 1920 so the first chapter, The Twenties, was the story of his life from birth to the age of 10; the second one, The Thirties, from 11 to 20 and so on.

25 Then we devised a system to help him write the book. He would scribble down the list of topics he wanted to address in each section, pour himself a Guinness and then – occasionally interviewed by his eldest daughter but mostly alone – he'd record his memories, pressing pause every now and then to top up his glass or recover from the great shoulder-shaking convulsions of mirth the whole process seemed to provoke (I still have the tape of him literally *weeping* with laughter at the memory of a school dancing lesson in 1929, my mother cackling in the background; even the dog joins in at one point).

30 He'd then send this recording to my other sister who would transcribe it and email me the text, then I'd edit it and print it out and post it back to him with some suggestions as to where he might expand it – “less about your dad being a shipping clerk, more about life at the time” (he then remembered the gas lamps in his street being fired up by a lamplighter with a pole and milk sold by the ladleful from urns on horse-drawn carts). He'd add a few paragraphs in the margin which I'd key back into the file and, when we felt it was complete, we'd forge ahead into the next decade.

35 When he'd finished all eight chapters, we dug out the old  
photographs – many we'd forgotten existed – and my  
brother-in-law, a graphic designer, laid out the pages. I got  
them printed up and took them to a Polish bookbinder in a  
40 Shepherd's Bush basement that smelled of glue and leather  
who delivered a stack of hardbacks lavishly embossed in gold  
leaf with the legend Bill's Memoirs – the nickname his  
grandchildren had given him. It looked so splendid we even  
organised a book launch. Someone knocked up a sign –  
"Meet local author RONNIE ELLEN!" – corks were popped  
45 and all the family queued up to shake the old boy's hand and  
receive an individually-signed first edition. He made a  
wonderful speech in his battered old sun hat about the  
experience of writing your memoirs – at times hilarious, at  
others quite painful, but ultimately very satisfying.

50 It was so successful in every way that, after he died, I  
convinced my mother, Janet, that she should write her  
memoirs too. Like Dad, she couldn't think of a way to get  
started and, as her mind didn't work chronologically, I  
suggested that each time I came to stay I'd ask her about a  
different member of her family. A comforting routine soon  
55 developed: after breakfast on Sundays I pulled out a  
notebook and began to record her memories of her father and mother, then her siblings, then her uncles,  
aunts, cousins and grandparents. We got as far back as her great-great-grandfather, "a courageous  
soldier" born in 1779: a book with a 230-year time span! Extraordinary stories came tumbling out, all  
60 news to me – a bee-keeping aunt who brewed her own beer, a grandmother who walked backwards up  
hills as she thought it was easier, an uncle who developed rare breeds of tulip, another uncle banished  
to Australia for consorting with "the kind of dancing girls who kicked their legs about", a third uncle  
whose party trick was to pretend to saw people's heads off.

65 For me, the most satisfying part of both books was that it gave me a chance to ask my parents the  
questions I'd always wanted to ask but never found the right moment. My father lost a leg in the war  
aged 24, hit by a German mortar bomb, and he'd never really talked about it or any aspect of his  
paratroops' part in the Invasion of Normandy. In normal conversation you can't really switch from  
some trite exchange about football or the cost of beans to "What was it like jumping out of a Dakota  
into a blizzard of flak?" But in "memoir mode", there's no small talk: you produce a notebook or a  
recorder and the gear instantly changes. You're in a completely different emotional space.

70 I asked them both about art, religion, beliefs, doubts, fears, politics, heroes, heroines, regrets and the  
truth about those batty and characterful, long-dead, ancient ancestors they had only ever discussed  
rather guardedly, and they were massively forthcoming about all of it, perhaps realising that they were  
the last link to two centuries of history and they didn't want to shuffle off this mortal coil taking those  
revelations with them.

75 I loved the sense of satisfaction it seemed to give them both, particularly my self-doubting father. His  
memoir reminded him that his time on this earth had been very far from ordinary. Like everyone's  
existence, it was extraordinary: only one person could have lived it and only one person could have  
told the story, broadcasting to grateful, distant relatives from some remote 20th-century branch of their  
family tree.



📷 Ronnie Ellen, about to leave for Normandy in 1944.  
Photograph: Courtesy Mark Ellen

80 Both their books are irreplaceable records of a lost or disappearing world. Their real achievement wasn't just the things they'd done; it was that they'd witnessed decades of dramatic and changing times and been able to report back from the frontline. Their real achievement was life itself.

*Adapted from an article by Mark Ellen*

- 1 Say whether the sentence below is Simple, Complex or Compound and explain why. (2 marks)
- ‘Two cunning plans were devised and promptly put into action.’ (Line 16)
- 2 Identify the adjectives in this sentence. (1 mark)
- ‘My father got cross and frustrated towards the end of his long life.’ (Line 1)
- 3 The father’s memoirs must have included a number of photographs from his life. Why does the author include this particular photograph in this article? (3 marks)
- 4 (i) The fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh paragraphs follow a specific text structure. Choose one of the following text structures that best represents these four paragraphs:
- a. Cause and effect
  - b. Sequential
  - c. Problem and Solution (2 marks)
- (ii) How does the structure relate to the whole text? (4 marks)
- 5 What does the author get from going through this journey with his parents? (2 marks)
- 6 In what ways were the two memoirs organised differently? (2 marks)
- 7 What made the accounts of the lives of two seemingly ordinary people special? (4 marks)
- 8 In a paragraph of between 80 and 100 words explain the process from the inception of the author convincing his father to write his memoirs to the launch of the book. (10 marks)

## SECTION C – LITERARY AWARENESS (30 marks)

Choose only ONE question.

1. Compare ways in which relationships are portrayed in ‘The Teddy Bear’s Picnic’ and ‘The Rough Crossing’ in a 500-word (+/- 10%) essay. (30 marks)
2. Read the following passage from Scott Fitzgerald’s ‘The Rough Crossing’ and answer the questions below. The sum total of your answers must be 500 words (+/- 10%).

The gala dinner, overhung sardonically with lanterns and streamers, was interrupted by great communal slides across the room, precipitate retirements and spilled wine, while the ship roared and complained that under the panoply of a palace it was a ship after all. Upstairs afterward a dozen couples tried to dance, shuffling and galloping here and there in a crazy fandango, thrust around fantastically by a will alien to their own. In view of the condition of tortured hundreds below, there grew to be something indecent about it like a revel in a house of mourning, and presently there was an egress of the ever-dwindling survivors toward the bar.

As the evening passed, Eva’s feeling of unreality increased. Adrian had disappeared – presumably with Miss D’Amido – and her mind, distorted by illness and champagne, began to enlarge upon the fact; annoyance changed slowly to dark and brooding anger, grief to desperation. She had never tried to bind Adrian, never needed to – for they were serious people, with all sorts of mutual interests, and satisfied with each other – but this was a breach of the contract, this was cruel. How could he think that she didn’t know?

It seemed several hours later that he leaned over her chair in the bar where she was giving some woman an impassioned lecture upon babies, and said:

“Eva, we’d better turn in.”

Her lip curled. “So that you can leave me there and then come back to your eighteen-year –”

“Be quiet.”

“I won’t come to bed.”

“Very well. Good night.”

More time passed and the people at the table changed. The stewards wanted to close up the room, and thinking of Adrian – her Adrian – off somewhere saying tender things to someone fresh and lovely, Eva began to cry.

“But he’s gone to bed,” her last attendants assured her. “We saw him go.”

She shook her head. She knew better. Adrian was lost. The long seven-year dream was broken. Probably she was punished for something she had done; as this thought occurred to her the shrieking timbers overhead began to mutter that she had guessed at last. This was for the selfishness to her mother, who hadn’t wanted her to marry Adrian; for all the sins and omissions of her life. She stood up, saying she must go out and get some air.

The deck was dark and drenched with wind and rain. The ship pounded through valleys, fleeing from black mountains of water that roared toward it. Looking out at the night, Eva saw that there was no chance for them unless she could make atonement, propitiate the storm. It was Adrian’s love that was demanded of her. Deliberately she unclasped her pearl necklace, lifted it to her lips – for she knew that with it went the freshest, fairest part of her life – and flung it out into the gale.

- a) Comment upon how choice of language helps to create an atmosphere in the first and last paragraph of the given passage. (12 marks)
- b) Eva’s character features prominently in this passage. Comment closely on how this is achieved both in the passage and in the rest of the short story. (18 marks)