



RADLEY

Academic Scholarship Examination Paper

STAGE ONE

ENGLISH

19th January 2026

Time allowed – 2 hours

45 minutes: Section A – Comprehension (20 marks)

30 minutes: Section B – Imaginative Writing (10 marks)

45 minutes: Section C – Discursive Writing (20 marks)

Complete all three sections.

Write in full sentences throughout.

You are expected to write accurate, well-punctuated prose.

Write your answers on separate pieces of paper.

Section A: Comprehension – read the extract below and answer the following question in full sentences.

Rotating about the earth in their spacecraft they are so together, and so alone, that even their thoughts, their internal mythologies, at times convene. Sometimes they dream the same dreams – of fractals and blue spheres and familiar faces engulfed in dark, and of the bright energetic black of space that slams their senses. Raw space is a panther, feral and primal; they dream it stalking through their quarters.

They hang in their sleeping bags. A hand-span away beyond a skin of metal the universe unfolds in simple eternities. Their sleep begins to thin and some distant earthly morning dawns and their laptops flash the first silent messages of a new day; the wide-awake, always-awake station vibrates with fans and filters. In the galley are the remnants of last night's dinner – dirty forks secured to the table by magnets and chopsticks wedged in a pouch on the wall. Four blue balloons are buoyed on the circulating air, some foil bunting says Happy Birthday. It was nobody's birthday but it was a celebration and it was all they had. There's a smear of chocolate on a pair of scissors and a small felt moon on a piece of string, tied to the handles of the foldable table.

Outside the earth reels away in a mass of moonglow, peeling backward as they forge towards its edgeless edge; the tufts of cloud across the Pacific brighten the nocturnal ocean to cobalt. Now there's Santiago on South America's approaching coast in a cloud-hazed burn of gold. Unseen through the closed shutters the trade winds blowing across the warm waters of the Western Pacific have worked up a storm, an engine of heat. The winds take the warmth out of the ocean where it gathers as clouds which thicken and curdle and begin to spin in vertical stacks that have formed a typhoon. As the typhoon moves west towards southern Asia, their craft tracks east, eastward and down towards Patagonia where the lurch of a far-off aurora domes the horizon in neon. The Milky Way is a smoking trail of gunpowder shot through a satin sky.

Onboard the craft it's Tuesday morning, four fifteen, the beginning of October. Out there it's Argentina it's the South Atlantic it's Cape Town it's Zimbabwe. Over its right shoulder the

planet whispers morning – a slender molten breach of light. They slip through time zones in silence.

They have each at some point been shot into the sky on a kerosene bomb, and then through the atmosphere in a burning capsule with the equivalent weight of two black bears upon them. They have each steeled their ribcages against the force until they felt the bears retreat, one after the other, and the sky become space, and gravity diminish, and their hair stand on end.

How does the writer create a vivid impression of the place and its inhabitants in this extract? (20 marks)

Make close reference to the extract, by quoting.

Section B: Imaginative Writing – answer only one of the following questions in this section.

Describe something which has not been invented yet. (10 marks)

OR

Write the opening of a story entitled 'What Lies Beneath'. (10 marks)

Your piece should be as interesting and accurately written as possible.

Section C: Discursive Writing - respond to this statement in any way you like. Refer to your own experiences and reading

'Is it better to be book smart or street smart?'

(20 marks)

Your piece should be as informative and accurately written as possible.

End of Paper