



Name:

The Leys School Cambridge

13+ Scholarship Examination 2026

ENGLISH

Time allowed: 60 minutes

Instructions

1. Write your name in the box at the top of this page
2. Write your answers in the space provided
3. Follow the instructions carefully. Answer **BOTH** Questions 1 and 2.
4. You should spend equal time (around 30 mins) on each question.
5. You should write in full sentences.
6. Good spelling and grammar are important.
7. You will be given credit for the quality of your ideas as well as your written style and accuracy.
8. The questions are worth 25 marks each. Total marks for the paper: 50.

Read the following extract from *Empire of the Sun* by J.G. Ballard.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour during WWII, Japanese troops invade Shanghai and in the chaos Jim, a British schoolboy living in the city, is separated from his mother and father. He returns to his home and waits for his parents to return.

Trying to keep up his spirits, Jim decided to visit the homes of his closest friends, Patrick Maxted and the Raymond twins. After washing himself in soda water he went into the garden to fetch his bicycle. During the night the swimming-pool had drained itself. Jim had never seen the tank empty, and he gazed with interest at the inclined floor. The once mysterious world of wavering blue lines, glimpsed through a cascade of bubbles, now lay exposed to the morning light. The tiles were slippery with leaves and dirt, and the chromium ladder at the deep end, which had once vanished into a watery abyss, ended abruptly beside a pair of scummy rubber slippers.

Jim jumped on to the floor at the shallow end. He slipped on the damp surface, and his bruised knee left a smear of blood on the tiles. A fly settled on it instantly. Watching his feet, Jim walked down the sloping floor. Around the brass vent at the deep end lay a small museum of past summers – a pair of his mother's sun-glasses, Vera's hair clip, a wine glass, and an English half-crown which his father had tossed into the pool for him. Jim had often spotted the silver coin, gleaming like an oyster, but had never been able to reach it.

Jim pocketed the coin and peered up at the damp walls. There was something sinister about a drained swimming-pool, and he tried to imagine what purpose it could have if it were not filled with water. It reminded him of the concrete bunkers in Tsingtao, and the bloody handprint of the maddened German gunners on the caisson walls. Perhaps murder was about to be committed in all the swimming-pools of Shanghai, and their walls were tiled so that the blood could be washed away?

Leaving the garden, Jim wheeled his bicycle through the verandah door. Then he did something he had always longed to do, mounted his cycle and rode through the formal, empty rooms. Delighted to think how shocked Vera and the servants would have been, he expertly circled his father's study, intrigued by the patterns which the tyres cut in the thick carpet. He collided with the desk, and knocked over a table lamp as he swerved through the door into the drawing-room. Standing on the pedals, he zigzagged among the armchairs and tables, lost his balance and fell on to a sofa, remounted without touching the floor, crash-landed into the double doors that led into the dining-room, pulled them back and began a wild circuit of the long polished table. The war had brought him at least one small bonus.

Glossary:

- *chromium: a hard grey metal*
- *abyss: an endless pit*
- *half-crown: a British coin that was used as currency until 1967*
- *caisson: a large watertight chamber in which construction work may be carried out underwater*
- *verandah: a raised, covered platform that runs along the outside of a house*

Question 1: Textual Analysis

What impression do you have of the narrator's feelings towards the environment and situation he is in?

In your answer you should consider:

- Descriptions of the empty swimming pool
- Jim's actions as he explores the empty house
- The sense of strangeness and unfamiliarity throughout the extract

[25 marks]

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Question 2: Personal Writing

"Jim had never seen the tank empty..."

Write about a place or location when it is unusually empty of people.

You don't need to include characters or plot but consider the details and appearance of the location and its atmosphere. You can choose to write about a place you know, or one that you have made up, but your response should include:

- Descriptive writing techniques to build a depiction of what the place is like and what feelings it brings
- Interesting adjectives and sensory imagery.
- An effective structure: clear paragraphs and accurate punctuation and spelling.

[25 marks]

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[Total 50 marks]

End of Paper

