



EPSOM

COLLEGE

**ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP  
ENGLISH SAMPLE PAPER**

Time Allowed: 45 minutes



## Epsom College 13+ Scholarship Examination Paper Extract

**This is an extract from a story by Ransom Riggs, published in *Tales of the Peculiar* in 2016. In this extract, the villagers in Swampmuck have just finished having a festival meal after harvest, when they spot unusual strangers travelling through their town.**

That very year, just after the festival had ended and the villagers were about to return to their toil in the swamps, three visitors arrived. Swampmuck rarely had visitors of any kind, as it was not the sort of place people wanted to visit, and it had certainly never had visitors like these: two men and a lady dressed head to toe in lush brocaded silk, riding on the backs of three fine Arabian horses. But  
5 though the visitors were obviously rich, they looked emaciated and swayed weakly in their bejewelled saddles.

The villagers gathered around them curiously, marvelling at their beautiful clothes and horses. "Don't get too close!" Farmer Sally warned. "They look as if they might be sick."

10 "We're on a journey to the coast of Meek," explained one of the visitors, a man who seemed to be the only one strong enough to speak. "We were accosted by bandits some weeks ago, and, though we were able to outrun them, we got badly lost. We've been turning circles ever since, looking for the old Roman Road."

"You're nowhere near the Roman Road," said Farmer Sally. "Or the coast of Meek," said Father Pullman.

15 "How far is it?" the visitor asked.

"Six days' ride," answered Farmer Sally.

"We'll never make it," the man said darkly. At that, the silk-robed lady slumped in her saddle and fell to the ground.

20 The villagers, moved to compassion despite their concerns about disease, brought the fallen lady and her companions into the nearest house. They were given water and made comfortable in beds of straw, and a dozen villagers crowded around them offering help.

"Give them space!" said Farmer Pullman. "They're exhausted; they need rest!"

"No, they need a doctor!" said Farmer Sally.

25 "We aren't sick," the man said. "We're hungry. Our supplies ran out over a week ago, and we haven't had a bite to eat since then."

Farmer Sally wondered why such wealthy people hadn't simply bought food from fellow travellers on the road, but she was too polite to ask. Instead, she ordered some village boys to run and fetch bowls of swampweed soup and millet bread and what little goat-rump was left over from the festival – but when it was laid before the visitors, they turned the food away.

30 "I don't mean to be rude," said the man, "but we can't eat this."

"I know it's a humble spread," said Farmer Sally, "and you're probably used to feasts fit for kings, but it's all we have."

"It isn't that," the man said. "Grains, vegetables, animal meat – our bodies simply can't process them. And if we force ourselves to eat, it will only make us weaker."

- 35 The villagers were confused. "If you can't eat grains, vegetables, or animals," asked Farmer Pullman, "then what can you eat?"
- "People," the man replied.

### Epsom College 13+ Scholarship Examination Paper Questions

#### SECTION A – READING TASKS

You should spend 25 minutes on this section

- 1.) Re-read lines 1-10. In your own words, explain the appearance of the visitors. Make five separate points. You should write in complete sentences. Do not use bullet points.

(5 marks)
- 2.) How does Riggs use dialogue to create tension? You may use quotations from the text to support your answer.

(10 marks)
- 3.) How does Riggs present the villagers of Swampmuck? You should use quotations from the text to support your answer. Try to find three examples and include analysis of language or structure, where possible.

(10 marks)

#### SECTION B: WRITING TASK

You should spend 20 minutes on this section

- 1.) Write a description of the festival and feast held by the villagers of Swampmuck at the end of the harvest, before the visitors arrive. You should make sure to use **your own words**, although you can be inspired by the original text.

In your answer you should convey:

- a description of the setting and food;
- an awareness of all of the senses.

You are reminded of the need for accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

(25 marks)