

Eton College King's Scholarship Examination, 2011

ENGLISH

(One and a half hours)

You are advised to spend ten minutes reading the two letters, and then about ten minutes on each of Questions 1 and 2, and about thirty minutes on each of Questions 3 and 4. Attempt all questions.

The two following letters were both written in about 1815. The first is a letter taken from a novel by Jane Austen. In it Mary Musgrove is writing to her sister Anne, who has gone on a Christmas holiday to Bath. Mary lives near her parents-in-law, Mr and Mrs Musgrove who live at the Great House, Uppercross. The second letter is an authentic one by the young poet John Keats to his friend Jack Reynolds. The letter is printed as he wrote it and therefore contains some slips of spelling, grammar and even meaning. Read the two letters slowly and carefully and then answer all the questions that follow.

A letter by Mary Musgrove from a novel by Jane Austen

February 1st,

My dear Anne,

I make no apology for my silence, because I know how little
people think of letters in such a place as Bath. You must be a great
deal too happy to care for Uppercross, which, as you well know,
affords little to write about. We have had a very dull Christmas; Mr
and Mrs Musgrove have not had one dinner-party all the holidays. I
do not reckon the Hayters as any body. The holidays, however, are
over at last: I believe no children ever had such long ones. I am
sure I had not. The house was cleared yesterday, except of the little
Harvilles; but you will be surprised to hear that they have never
gone home. Mrs Harville must be an odd mother to part with them
so long. I do not understand it. They are not at all nice children, in
my opinion; but Mrs Musgrove seems to like them quite as well, if
not better, than her grand-children. What dreadful weather we have
had! It may not be felt in Bath, with your nice pavements; but in
the country it is of some consequence. I have not had a creature
call on me since the second week in January, except Charles
Hayter, who has been calling much oftener than was welcome.
Between ourselves, I think it a great pity Henrietta did not remain
at Lyme as long as Louisa; it would have kept her a little out of his
way. The carriage is gone to-day, to bring Louisa and the Harvilles
to-morrow. We are not asked to dine with them, however, till the
day after, Mrs Musgrove is so afraid of her being fatigued by the
journey, which is not very likely, considering the care that will be
taken of her; and it would be much more convenient to me to dine
there to-morrow. I am glad you find Mr Elliot so agreeable, and
wish I could be acquainted with him too; but I have my usual luck,
I am always out of the way when anything desirable is going on;
always the last of my family to be noticed. What an immense time
Mrs Clay has been staying with Elizabeth! Does she never mean to
go away? But perhaps if she were to leave the room vacant we
might not be invited. Let me know what you think of this. I do not
expect my children to be asked, you know. I can leave them at the
Great House very well, for a month or six weeks. I have this
moment heard that the Crofts are going to Bath almost
immediately; they think the admiral gouty. Charles¹ heard it quite
by chance: they have not had the civility to give me any notice, or
offer to take anything. I do not think they improve at all as
neighbours. We see nothing of them, and this is really an instance
of gross inattention. Charles joins me in love, and every thing
proper. Yours, affectionately,

Mary M –.

¹ 'Charles' is Charles Musgrove, Mary's husband.

Carisbrooke April 17th

My dear Reynolds, 1
Ever since I wrote to my Brothers from Southampton I have been in a taking,¹ and at this
moment I am about to become settled, for I have unpacked my books, put them into a
snug corner - pinned up Haydon - Mary Queen of Scots, and Milton with his daughters in
a row.² In the passage I found a head of Shakspeare which I had not before seen – It is 5
most likely the same that George spoke so well of; for I like it extremely – Well – this
head I have hung over my Books, just above the three in a row, having first discarded a
french Ambassador – Now this alone is a good morning's work – Yesterday I went to
Shanklin, which occasioned a great debate in my mind whether I should live there or at
Carisbrooke.³ Shanklin is a most beautiful place - sloping wood and meadow ground 10
reaches round the Chine, which is a cleft between the Cliffs of the depth of nearly 300
feet at least. This cleft is filled with trees & bushes in the narrow part; and as it widens
becomes bare, if it were not for primroses on one side, which spread to the very verge of
the Sea, and some fishermen's huts on the other, perched midway in the Ballustrades of
beautiful green Hedges along their steps down to the sands. - But the sea, Jack, the sea - 15
the little waterfall - then the white cliff – then St Catherine's Hill - "the sheep in the
meadows, the cows in the corn." - Then, why are you at Carisbrooke? say you-Because,
in the first place, I sho^d ⁴ be at twice the Expense, and three times the inconvenience –
next that from here I can see your continent – from a little hill close by, the whole north
Angle of the Isle of Wight, with the water between us. In the 3^d place, I see Carisbrooke 20
Castle from my window, and have found several delightful wood-alleys, and copses, and
quick freshes – As for Primroses – the Island ought to be called Primrose Island: that is, if
the nation of Cowslips agree thereto, of which there are diverse Clans just beginning to
lift up their heads and if an how the Rain holds whereby that is Birds eyes abate – another
reason of my fixing is that I am more in reach of the places around me – I intend to walk 25
over the island East–West–North South – I have not seen many specimens of Ruins –I
dont think however I shall ever see one to surpass Carisbrooke Castle. The trench is
o'ergrown with the smoothest turf, and the walls with ivy – The Keep within side is one
Bower of ivy – a Colony of Jackdaws have been there many years – I dare say I have
seen many a descendant of some old cawer who peeped through the Bars at Charles the 30
first, when he was there in Confinement.⁵ On the road from Cowes to Newport I saw
some extensive Barracks which disgusted me extremely with Government for placing
such a Nest of Debauchery in so beautiful a place – I asked a man on the Coach about this
– and he said that the people had been spoiled – In the room where I slept at Newport I
found this on the Window "O Isle spoilt by the Military!" – I must in honesty however 35
confess that I did not feel very sorry at the idea of the Women being a little profligate –
The wind is in a sulky fit, and I feel that it would be no bad thing to be the favorite of
some Fairy, who would give one the power of seeing how our Friends got on, at a
Distance – I should like, of all Loves, a sketch of you and Tom and George in ink which
Haydon will do if you tell him how I want them - From want of regular rest, I have been 40
rather *narvus* – and the passage in Lear – "Do you not hear the Sea?" – has haunted me
intensely.

¹ 'been in a taking' = been very busy

² 'pinned up' Keats has pinned up on his wall a picture by the artist Haydon, a picture of Mary Queen of Scots and one of Milton and his family.

³ 'Shanklin' and 'Carisbrooke' are both places on the Isle of Wight.

⁴ 'Sho^d = should

⁵ King Charles I was kept prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle.

1. Paraphrase (write in your own words in modern prose)
 - a) Austen : lines 1 – 7 ('I make no ... as anybody.') [10]
 - b) Keats : lines 26 – 31 ('I have not seen ... in Confinement.') [10]

2. In what ways do you sense that Mary Musgrove, the author of the first letter, might have been a tiresome or difficult person to be friends with? Refer to the text to support your argument. Write about 100 words. [10]

3. What impression do you get of the character and interests of John Keats from his letter? Refer to the text in detail to back up your remarks, using quotations if you find them helpful. Write about 300 words. [30]

4. Write a lively letter to a friend or family member describing as vividly as possible a new and exciting place where you have found yourself. (This could be based on a real experience, but could equally well be completely made-up.) Write about 300 words. [40]

[END OF PAPER]