

Year 6 Aspire English Humanities Entry Exam Sample

Read each passage carefully, then answer the questions that follow.

Passage 1: Art Competition

The theme was 'Transformation' and—let's be honest—it wasn't the most inspiring topic in the world, but our art teacher said entry was compulsory. What was the point though? I could never think of interesting ideas for art projects. So I went with the first thing that came to mind—a seed growing into a flower. Done. We could use materials from the art room, but what difference would it make? It would look just the same on the plain white printer paper we had at home.

Sketching is one of Dad's hobbies and, that evening, he put his head round the door. 'Cool, I see the masterpiece is coming along.' He lingered and I could tell he wanted to say something. After a while he said, 'Thinking of trying some different materials?'

'Nah, it's not a big deal. No one's taking it seriously.'

I was doing fine with my pencils and Ms Grogan has always said I'm good at drawing. I wanted to finish fast because Stevie was coming over for a session on my new computer game.

A couple of weeks later, I'd forgotten all about the competition, but as we filed into assembly, my stomach dropped. The display boards were covered with prints on fabric; collages using leaves, threads, even machine parts; and paintings of all colours. There were one or two drawings in amazing detail, in pencil and ink, and I eventually spotted mine. It looked small, hurried and washed out. I hadn't realised they'd be displayed and, at that moment, I was grateful that our names weren't on them.

Well, it was a whole-school competition after all, so someone from Year 11 or 12 was bound to win. Then the announcement: Danny Blackwell, from Year 5. My class.

Ms Grogan held up Danny's collage, a small metallic seed erupting into a multi-coloured silk flower. 'A simple idea, beautifully executed,' she smiled.

'Huh,' I muttered to myself, 'I guess my idea was alright for once. Mine could have been as good as that if I'd tried a bit harder ...'

Question 1

Which factors affected the narrator's approach to the art competition?

Choose all that apply.

- ☐ He wanted to get it finished quickly.
- ☐ He thought that he was bad at drawing.
- ☐ He wanted to win the competition.

☐ He felt his idea was not good enough to win.

☐ He knew the entries would be displayed without names.

Passage 2: The Last Great Race on Earth

Iditarod means 'distant place' in several indigenous Alaskan dialects, and it is aptly named. The Iditarod Trail Race is a gruelling endurance test in a remote part of Alaska. This one-of-a-kind race requires competitors to journey across 1850 kilometres of snowy wilderness, not on foot, but in sleds pulled by dogs. The race typically takes between eight and fifteen days to finish, but slower dog sled teams have taken up to 32 days to complete the course. Each year, last place finishers earn the Red Lantern Award for tenacity.

The race is named for the perilous dog sled trail used to deliver mail and supplies in the area during the early 1900s. In 1925, sled dogs and mushers were heralded as heroes for transporting serum along the remote Iditarod trail to cure an epidemic in the town of Nome, Alaska. After innovations in technology eventually rendered the Iditarod sled route unnecessary, the race was created in 1973 to revive the sport of dog sledding in Alaska.

The human captain, or 'musher', is just one element in a sport that relies completely on teamwork to succeed. A vital part of the musher's team is the 16 dogs that pull the sled. You can't just harness any household pets to a sled and expect good results. After a few dogs on a team of frozen-pawed poodles bowed out of the competition in the early 1990s, the Iditarod specified that only breeds suitable for arctic travel are allowed to race. Most dogs in the race are now a mixed breed called the Alaskan husky. Even with the right breed it takes months of preparation to ensure that a team is ready for the arduous race.

While the Iditarod continues to this day, it is not without new challenges and controversies. The number of competitors has seen a steady decline due to the exorbitant cost of participating in the race combined with a significant decrease in prize money. In addition the Iditarod has been scrutinised for possible inhumane treatment of sled dogs, causing further decline in the popularity of the race. The future of this race remains controversial despite its intriguing historical roots.

Question 2

Which question would this text be useful for answering?

- ☐ How many people have participated in the Iditarod?
- ☐ How are the dogs trained for the Iditarod?
- ☐ What was the most recent controversy in the Iditarod?
- ☐ Why was the Iditarod established?

Passage 3: Feeling Confident? Be Careful!

Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than does knowledge. Charles Darwin

The less people know, the less they know about how little they know. There are numerous studies that point to this fact: drivers consistently rate themselves as above average regardless of their skill level; medical technicians regularly overestimate their knowledge of actual lab procedures; a university's study of their faculty found that more than 90% of instructors rated themselves as above average, which is mathematically impossible to be true.

Everyone has without a doubt overestimated their own knowledge at some point or another. The Dunning-Kruger Effect, as this is frequently called, was explained in a 1999 study by David Dunning and Justin Kruger. It is described as a complete disconnect between confidence and actual skill. The study revealed, paradoxically, that people of limited knowledge consistently overestimate their knowledge, while those with higher degrees of knowledge often have lower estimates of their abilities.

The crux of the issue lies in the subtle difference between cognition (thinking) and metacognition (thinking about thinking). In areas of knowledge in which people are weak, they tend to lack enough knowledge of what competence in the area actually looks like. Because of this, they cannot accurately place themselves on the competence spectrum. They might have a bit of topic knowledge, but what self-knowledge? That perspective only comes with an actual degree of expertise. It's also revealed that not every expert can accurately self-evaluate, meaning someone can be perfectly competent in an area, yet not be able to truly self-assess. The under-evaluators are in danger of being perceived as less knowledgeable than those who confidently overestimate their skill.

While a natural reaction might be to use this information against someone else ('I've always said they don't know what they're talking about!'), in fact the study is meant to motivate people to question their own certainty, not that of others. Seeking independent advice can provide perspective not only on the situation but also on their own assessment. When it comes to doing anything involving an element of certainty, individuals can choose to go it alone only at their peril—no matter how confident they might feel.

Question 3

What is the function of the quotation in brackets in the last paragraph?

- ☐ to quote another person to support the writer's statement
- ☐ to make fun of how confident the person in the quote is
- ☐ to represent the misuse of the information in the study
- ☐ to discourage people from being hypocritical

Extended Response Question

In the passage 'Art Competition', the narrator rushed their project and later regretted not trying harder. Think about a time when you either didn't give your best effort at something or when you worked hard and felt proud of the result.

Question 4

Why do you think it is important (or not important) to put effort into creative or school projects, even when you feel like they don't matter very much? Use examples from your own experiences, ideas from the passage, or both in your answer.

(Your answer should be about one paragraph, and it should take around ten minutes to write.)

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





