



Emanuel School

Entrance Exam

Sample English Paper

Sixth Form Entry

Time Allowed: 1 hour

Surname	
First name	

Section A: Reading

You should spend no more than thirty minutes on this section.

Read the following passage, adapted from *Wild: A Journey from Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed.

This memoir describes the author's 1,100 mile, three month hike on the Pacific Crest Trail at the age of 26 following the death of her mother. This passage begins when she is in a hotel room, packing her backpack in preparation for the hike.

Once you have read the passage, answer the questions that follow it.

The next morning, after the last shower I'd have for days, I piled all my belongings on the bed. I worked my way through the mountain of things, wedging and cramming them into every available space of my pack. When I was done, I sat on the floor, sweaty from my exertions, and then I remembered one last thing: water.

- 5 I guessed it would take me two days to reach the first water source; I would have to carry enough to get me through. I filled two 32-ounce bottles in the bathroom sink and all 2.6 gallons of my Dromedary¹. I don't know how much my pack weighed on that first day, but I do know the water alone was almost 26 pounds.

- 10 Finally, when everything I was going to carry was in place, a hush came over me. I was ready. I put on my watch, looped my sunglasses around my neck by their pink neoprene holder, donned my sun hat, and looked at my pack. It was at once enormous and compact, mildly adorable and intimidatingly self-contained. It had an animate quality; in its company, I didn't feel entirely alone. Standing, it came up to my waist. I gripped it and bent to lift it.

It wouldn't budge.

- 15 I squatted and grasped its frame more robustly and tried to lift it again. Again it did not move. It was exactly like attempting to lift a Volkswagen Beetle. It looked so cute, so ready to be lifted—and yet it was impossible to do.

- 20 I sat down beside it and pondered my situation. How could I carry a backpack more than 1,000 miles over rugged mountains and waterless deserts if I couldn't even budge it an inch in an air-conditioned motel room?

It was now or never. I sat down right in front of the pack, wove my arms through the shoulder straps, and clipped a strap across my chest. I took a deep breath and began rocking back and forth until I finally hurled myself forward onto my hands and knees. The frame of the pack squeaked as I rose, it too straining from the tremendous weight.

- 25 I staggered and swayed around the room, my center of gravity pulled in any direction I so much as leaned. It felt pretty awful, and yet perhaps this was how it felt to be a backpacker. I didn't know.

I made my way to the nearby gas station. Unless I wanted to walk twelve miles along the broiling shoulder of the highway to reach the trail, I needed a ride. Horrible things happened to hitchhikers, I

¹ Dromedary – a bag for storing water, often used by hikers

30 knew, especially to women hitchhiking alone. But hitchhiking was simply what PCT² hikers did on occasion. And I was a PCT hiker, right? *Right?*

I bought a can of Coke and drank it with a casual air that belied the fact that I could not stand up properly. A minivan pulled up and two men, clearly a father and son, got out. I asked for a ride.

“Sure,” the older one said finally, with obvious reluctance.

“Thank you,” I trilled girlishly.

35 Fifteen minutes later, I was standing by the silent highway. Small clouds of dust blew in swirling gusts beneath the glaring noon sun. Surrounded in all directions by beige, barren-looking mountains, I was at the southern foot of the Sierra Nevada, which stretched north for more than 400 miles. On a fence post beyond the ditch I spied a palm-size metal blaze that said PACIFIC CREST TRAIL. I was here.

40 I started to walk. I began panting and sweating immediately, dust caking my boots and calves as the trail turned north and began to climb. Each step was a toil as I ascended higher and higher still, interrupted only by the occasional short descent, which was a new kind of hell because I had to brace myself against each step, lest gravity’s pull cause me to catapult forward. Soon the voice inside my head was screaming, *What have I gotten myself into?* I tried to ignore it, to hum as I hiked, though humming proved too difficult to do while also panting.

45 search for rattlesnakes. The landscape was made for them, it seemed. And also for mountain lions and wilderness-savvy serial killers.

Three hours in, I came to a large boulder upon which I could sit and remove my pack. Amazed to be free of its weight, I strolled around and accidentally brushed up against a Joshua tree. I was bayoneted by its sharp spikes. Blood instantly spurted out of three stab wounds on my arm. The wind blew so

50 fiercely that when I removed my first-aid kit from my pack and opened it up, all of my Band-Aids blew away. I chased them uselessly across the flat plain and then they were gone, down the mountain and out of reach.

² PCT stands for Pacific Crest Trail

I. Explain all the problems the narrator faces when trying to hike the Pacific Crest Trail.

You should:

- write in full sentences;
- use your own words (as far as possible);
- not use quotations or copy out sections of the text.

[10 marks for content + 5 marks for the quality of your writing]

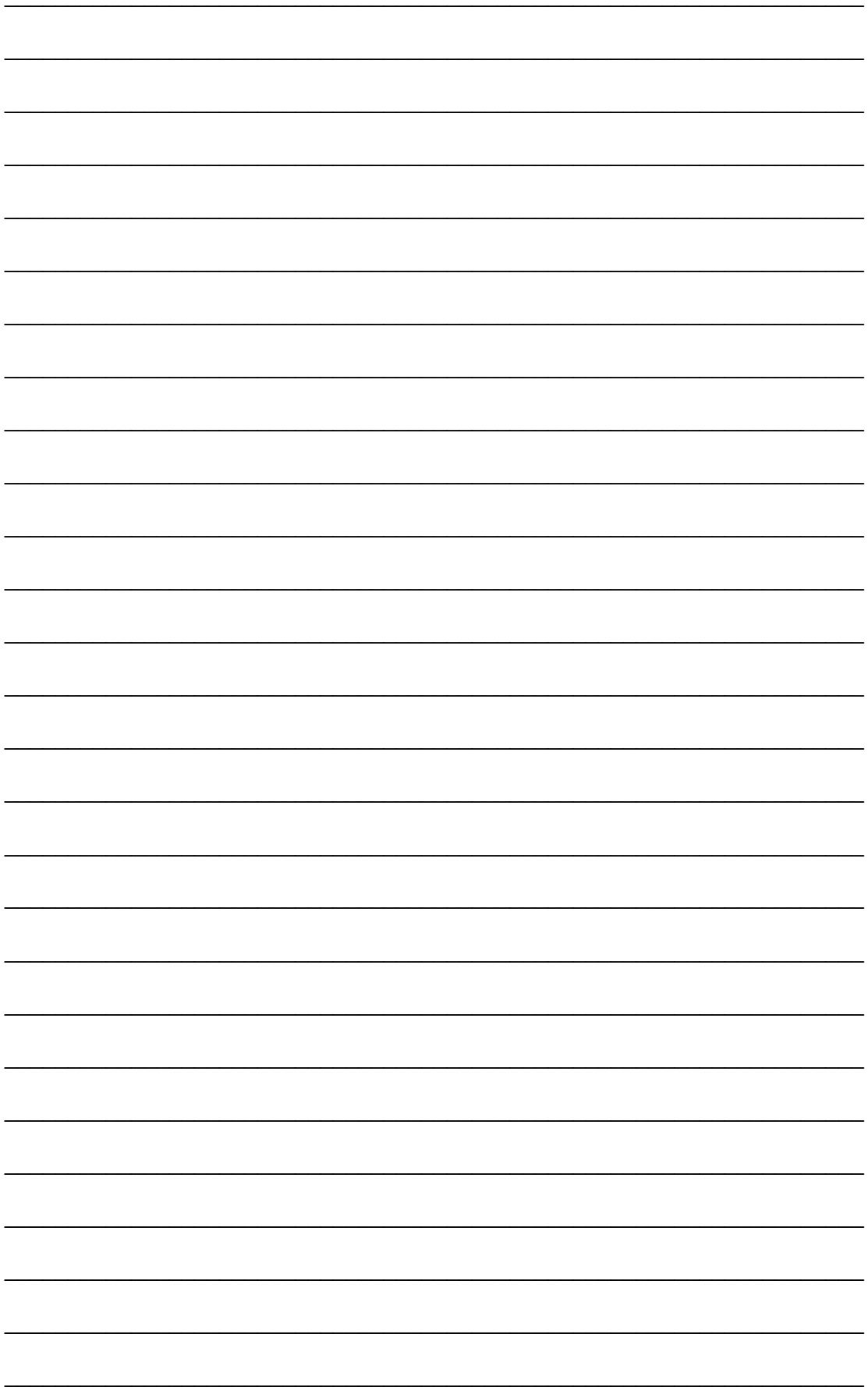
This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

2. How does the writer effectively convey the narrator's feelings before and during the hike?

You should:

- write in full sentences;
- use quotations from the text in your response;
- comment on the effect of different words, phrases or tone of the writing;
- comment on at least three separate moments.

[15 marks]



[illegible]

Section B: Personal Writing

You should spend no more than thirty minutes on this section.

The purpose of this section is for us to learn more about you as a person, and also to assess the quality of your written expression.

Cheryl Strayed's walk along the Pacific Crest Trail was a particularly impressive achievement which required considerable strength, both physical and mental, and taught her a lot about herself.

Think of an example from your time at secondary school when you have overcome a challenge. This could be academic, co-curricular or personal.

Write a diary entry in which you:

- Describe the challenging experience and how it made you feel;
- Explain how you went about meeting your goal or resolving your problem;
- Explain what you learned about yourself from this experience;
- Consider one of the challenges you might face if you moved to Emanuel for sixth form, and how you might tackle that challenge.

Plan your writing carefully. Begin your answer, 'Dear Diary...'

Ensure you check your work very carefully as you will be awarded marks for the accuracy of your punctuation, spelling and grammar.

[illegible]

