



WESTMINSTER  
SCHOOL

## **The Challenge (Specialism)**

Specimen Paper First Examination 2027

# **ENGLISH**

Time: 60 minutes

**For this paper, it is a requirement to have read:**

*'The Lie Tree'* by Frances Hardinge [Macmillan, 2016]

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**Question 1 – The Warm-Up (5 mins) – exploring how language shapes meaning.**

**How does Hardinge use language to present science in the extract below?**

*You should focus on one example from the extract.*

“Gentlemen of science had worked out how long it took rock to fold itself like puff pastry. They had found fossils and strange misshapen man-skulls with sloping brows. Then, when Faith was five years old, a book about evolution called *On the Origin of Species* had entered the world and the world had shuddered, like a boat running aground.”

[5]

**Read the passage below and answer the question that follows it:**

Faith made a note of the time on the clock. She laid her notebook and pens on a stone shelf within reach. Then she took her knife and very carefully cut the Lie fruit in half.

Instantly the cold smell became so intense that she winced. Blinking as her eyes stung, she held up the fruit to examine it more closely. The flesh seemed to be made up of dozens of tiny juice-filled cells, like that of a lemon, but a deep, rich red.

A dribble of juice ran down Faith's hand on to her wrist, and reflexively she raised her hand to her mouth and licked it off. The taste was searingly bitter, worm-juice and rotten walnuts. Her tongue went numb. Pins and needles spread through the skin of her mouth.

Faith did not give her resolve a chance to falter. With her thumbnail she eased the red flesh of the fruit free from the peel. It came away trailing downy white strands like wider web. Bracing herself, she pushed the red pulp into her mouth.

She tasted bitter ice and her throat tightened. Only by covering her mouth with both hands did she stop herself gagging and spitting the fruit out again. She struggled to swallow and briefly the pulp was a clinging sour mass at the base of her tongue. Then she forced it down, shuddering and grimacing. It was done, she had eaten the fruit. It was too late to turn back. Almost immediately her fears set upon her.

She could feel the cooling slither of the fruit flesh down her throat, then a numb tingling started to spread through her chest. Faith drew in breath after hasty breath, and each was a little harder than the last. It felt like somebody was stealthily drawing in the laces of her corset, a little at a time, cutting off her air.

There was a sound in her ears that she hardly recognised as her own heartbeat, a *whump, whump, whump* like a carpet being beaten. Her tongue and throat were paper dry. Before her eyes, colours deepened, darkened and crawled with motion. It came to her that the world was a tapestry, and she was watching it being eaten by black beetles.

She was in a tunnel, racing ever faster into darkness, while great black wheels spung and hummed on either side of her, and the world shook with a heartbeat quake... She was fighting it, fighting the darkness and drum of it, the helpless swoop and fall of it, and the fight was terror. She fought to keep the light, her wits, her control, and screamed inside as she felt all of these things pulled away from her like petals...

...and then they were gone, and there was no more panic. Only a deep and silent soul-fear...

**(from Chapter 20)**

**Question 2 – The Essay (10 mins reading & planning + 30 mins writing)- *close-reading and contextualisation.***

**How does Frances Hardinge present Faith's experience of eating the fruit at this significant point in the novel?**

***As part of your response, you may wish to consider:***

- How imagery (and language) is used to describe Faith's experience.
- Why this moment is significant and how it fits within the wider novel.

**[20]**

**Question 3 – The Creative Piece (15 mins) – *descriptive writing skills.***

**Describe the experience of walking into a secret garden that looks and feels both beautiful and dangerous.**

**[10]**