



ST PAUL'S
GIRLS' SCHOOL

First Year Entrance Examination

English

READING PASSAGE

50 minutes

Read the passage inside and the short introduction to it very carefully before answering any of the questions. The numbers on the left of the passage are line numbers.

Set in the 1850s, this passage is narrated by a young boy called David, who is adjusting to life with his mother, Clara, and her new husband, Mr Murdstone. David here describes the arrival of Mr Murdstone's sister, Miss Murdstone, who has come to stay with them for awhile.

It was Miss Murdstone who was arrived, and a gloomy-looking lady she was; dark, like her brother, whom she greatly resembled in face and voice; and with very heavy eyebrows, nearly meeting over her large nose, as if, being
5 disabled by the wrongs of her sex from wearing whiskers,¹ she had carried them to that account. She brought with her two uncompromising² hard black boxes, with her initials on the lids in hard brass nails. When she paid the coachman she took her money out of a hard steel purse, and she kept
10 the purse in a very jail of a bag, which hung upon her arm by a heavy chain, and shut up like a bite. I had never, at that time, seen such a metallic lady altogether as Miss Murdstone was.

She was brought into the parlour with many tokens of
15 welcome, and there formally recognised my mother as a new and near relation. Then she looked at me, and said:

‘Is that your boy, sister-in-law?’

My mother acknowledged me.

‘Generally speaking,’ said Miss Murdstone, ‘I don’t like
20 boys. How d’ye do, boy?’

Under these encouraging circumstances, I replied that I was very well, and that I hoped she was the same; with such an indifferent grace, that Miss Murdstone disposed of me in two words:

25 ‘Wants³ manner!’

Having uttered this, with great distinctness, she begged the favour of being shown to her room, which became to me

¹ *whiskers* - beard and moustache

² *uncompromising* - not flexible

³ *wants* - lacks

from that time forth a place of awe and dread, wherein the two black boxes were never seen open or known to be left
30 unlocked, and where (for I peeped in once or twice when she was out) numerous little steel fetters and rivets,⁴ with which Miss Murdstone embellished⁵ herself when she was dressed, generally hung upon the looking-glass in formidable array.⁶

As well as I could make out, she had come for good, and
35 had no intention of ever going again. She began to 'help' my mother next morning, and was in and out of the store-closet all day, putting things to rights, and making havoc⁷ in the old arrangements.

⁴ *fetters* - chains; *rivets* - metal fasteners

⁵ *embellished* - decorated

⁶ *formidable* - powerful; *array* - an impressive display

⁷ *havoc* - chaos

