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Les 7 Sciences Po du réseau

EXAMEN COMMUN D'ENTREE EN PREMIERE ANNEE

EPREUVE D'ANGLAIS

SAMEDI 25 MAI 2019

13h30 à 18h00

(durée conseillée : 1h30)

coeff. 2

Ce sujet est composé de 4 pages

Il est demandé aux candidats de répondre directement sur leur copie en indiquant clairement les numéros des exercices.

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Oxbridge needs to guarantee places for the best state school pupils

Owen Jones

The Guardian, 7 Dec 2018

Oxbridge does not represent Britain's best or the brightest: let's just get that out of the way. Many of the country's most intelligent, thoughtful and perceptive people do not attend either Oxford or Cambridge. Both institutions are instead, disproportionately, attended by the best performing slice of the most economically privileged teenagers in the country. So the figures released today, which elicit a depressing sense of déjà vu, that eight top schools send as many pupils to Oxbridge as three-quarters of all schools and colleges put together, might be shocking, but they are unsurprising. So are the findings that top performing state school students are much less likely to apply than their private school equivalents, or that private school pupils were seven times more likely to win a place than comprehensive students.

Undoubtedly, one of the key reasons for the disparity is the resources available to private schools to "polish" up their students for the application process. I attended what was then the biggest sixth-form in the country, Stockport's Ridge Danvers: the attitude among teachers towards applying to Oxbridge was very much: "Well, you might as well give it a go!" One did try to prepare me with a mock interview, which involved questions like "Why are you applying to Oxford? What are your extracurricular interests?" Bless them, but it was entirely counterproductive: imagine my shock when I sat down at my actual interview, in what seemed like a slightly sinister Harry Potter theme park, and an emeritus professor kicked off the proceedings with "Lenin was a German spy, wasn't he?" It was always instantly possible to tell who was privately educated: they had a certain confidence and posture built into them by their schooling. (...) Few of us actually knew much about that place – I confess, I thought "Oxbridge" was its own university, and the Oxbridge colleges on University Challenge were separate from the universities themselves – and arriving for the interviews was a far bigger culture shock than visiting France for the first time. (...)

I was one of a handful from my sixth-form to get in, and – like most of the comprehensive pupils, let alone anyone else who attends – I am no working-class

30 hero: my dad had a white collar job at Sheffield city council, my mum was an IT
lecturer at Salford University. Yet even I, from a northern, public sector, middle-class
background, initially had a profound, sometimes debilitating sense of imposter
syndrome, that there would be a tap on the shoulder at any moment to explain that
“I’m sorry there’s been a dreadful mistake we let you in by accident” which was not
35 helped by fellow private school alumni making barbed comments like
“comprehensive school students only get in because of quotas”. That’s not to say this
was three years of trauma – I had some of my happiest days there – but it’s
unsurprising that an Old Etonian feels at home dressing up in an absurd costume for
exams (you got turned away if you wore the wrong shoes).

40 There are genuine attempts by Oxbridge authorities to widen access. I think of Alan
Rusbridger, former Guardian editor turned principal of Lady Margaret Hall, who
launched a fantastic scheme to attract young people from less privileged
backgrounds. But there are such profound structural problems that are very difficult
to overcome. If you grow up in an overcrowded house, suffer the stresses poverty
45 can place on family life, sometimes have gone hungry or had a poor diet, and don’t
have parents with huge “cultural capital” – like owning lots of books – then the odds
are stacked against you from day one.

The educational segregation of children according to the bank balances of their
parents – private education – needs to be abolished. But in the interim, it has always
50 struck me that the only solution is to automatically enrol the best performing students
from state school, taking class into account. If you grow up in a deprived ex-mining
community and get two As and two Bs at A-level, you have outperformed someone at
Harrow or Eton from a family of millionaires who gets four As. And until Oxbridge
does this, it needs to stop pretending it represents Britain’s academic elite: because it
55 doesn’t.

Questions

I- Comprehension (8 points)

Answer the following questions in full sentence form using your own words (c. 40-60 words per question)

1. Why did the journalist experience a culture shock when he first applied to Oxbridge? (2 points)
2. Why are so few state school students accepted to Oxbridge? (3 points)
3. What solution does he suggest for overcoming social inequality at Oxbridge? (3 points)

II- Synonyms (4 points)

For each of the following, find ONE equivalent word or expression in the article. The words are given in the order of the text, but not necessarily in the same verbal form or syntax.

1. to try
2. simulated
3. to start
4. weakening
5. acerb
6. to initiate
7. to recruit
8. disadvantaged

III- Written expression (8 points)

Write an essay of 300 words (+/- 10%) on the following subject:

To what extent does education promote social mobility in today's world?

(You may refer to different countries, not limited to the English-speaking world)