

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL



YEAR 9 (13+) SCHOLARSHIP

March 2026
for entry in September 2026

GENERAL PAPER

Your Name: _____

Your School: _____

Time allowed: 1 hour

Equipment needed: Pen, pencil, lined paper, eraser.

Information for candidates:

1. Write your name and school on this page.
2. Write your answers on the **separate paper** provided. Please put your name on all the sheets of paper you use.
3. There are two sections, section A and section B. Answer **all** the questions in section A and choose **one** question from section B.
4. The paper will be marked out of 30. Section A and Section B are worth 15 marks each.

SECTION A [15 marks]

Read the following passage and answer the five questions below.

Esperanto: The Artificial Language That Aimed to Unite Humanity

Adapted from Scotty Hendricks' article in The Big Think (27/02/24)



What if everyone could speak the same language?

Would the world be more peaceful, collaborative, and understanding?

These were questions that fascinated 19th- and 20th-century scholar Dr. Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof. Born and raised in a multi-ethnic region of what was then Russian-controlled Poland, Dr. Zamenhof was acutely aware of the problems caused by a lack of linguistic understanding and the barriers it created. He firmly believed that the distrust and violence between communities were both caused and intensified by their inability to communicate with one another.

The Origins of Esperanto

In 1887, with the aid of his wife, Dr. Zamenhof published his first textbook, introducing a new language to the world: Esperanto.

Dr. Zamenhof dreamed that Esperanto would become the world's go-to international auxiliary language. He believed that if everyone learned it as their second language, then everyone could communicate with everyone else. Even better, this language, while clearly Indo-European in nature, didn't belong to any one nation and could be learned without carrying nationalist or colonialist baggage. It also wouldn't provide any undue advantage to people from a particular country, since everyone would be learning it as a second language.

Zamenhof's motivations were both practical and idealistic. He hoped to minimize the "time and labour we spend in learning foreign tongues," and believed that: "Were there but an international language, all translations would be made into it alone ... and all nations would be united in a common brotherhood." He also hoped the language would see wide day-to-day use, beyond just international communication.

For a while, it seemed like the language might live up to the dreams of its founder. In the 20th century, clubs dedicated to learning and teaching the language multiplied around the world. Some areas saw a high concentration of learners. In parts of Europe, as many as one in eight people were reported to know Esperanto — though some experts believe these numbers are overestimates. Other countries, such as the Republic of China, began teaching the language in schools.

Famous users of the language include author Leo Tolstoy, author and professor J.R.R. Tolkien, Austrian president Franz Jonas, and Pope John Paul II.

Despite its early success, Esperanto's progress slowed during World War I. Dr. Zamenhof died of heart failure before the war ended.

Esperanto in the 21st Century

Today, the language is still spoken by many. Estimates range from 100,000 to as many as 2 million speakers. Duolingo, which offers courses in the language, shows 384,000 active learners on its language selection page. Some sources suggest that the number of people who have studied the language at some point could be much higher.

Some studies also suggest that Esperanto is a useful tool for learning a third language. The Paderborn method of language learning involves teaching an easy foreign language first so students can later learn a third language more quickly. In some versions of this method, Esperanto is used as the introductory language. In one study, students who learned Esperanto for two years before learning English caught up with peers who studied only English, and soon surpassed them, despite spending less time on English overall. This effect also occurs with other languages, though some studies and authors suggest Esperanto offers particular advantages.

While the early dreams of world peace and understanding through a single, secondary language belonging to no nation may strike many as naïve today, the Esperanto movement remains strong. Even if it hasn't united the world in a common tongue, it continues to connect people.

And at the end of the day, wasn't that part of the dream?

Questions:

1. In your own words, explain Dr. Zamenhof's aims behind Esperanto.
[1 mark]
2. Some have argued that if we were to encourage a universal auxiliary language, it would be better if it were a language that large populations of people already speak, such as Mandarin, French, Spanish, or English. What are some strengths of this argument?
[3 marks]
3. Why might others argue that if there were a universal auxiliary language, it would be better for it to be a constructed language such as Esperanto?
[3 marks]
4. Do you think that Esperanto has been a success?
[4 marks]
5. Do you agree with Dr. Zamenhof that the world would be more peaceful if all people could speak the same language?
[4 marks]

Continued on next page, please turn over

SECTION B [15 marks]

Respond to **one** of the following questions. In your response, refer to real-life or hypothetical examples to demonstrate why your points are both valid and significant.

1. To what extent can we trust what we see?
2. To what extent is there such a thing as a truly 'new' idea?
3. To what extent should we be held responsible for all our choices and decisions?
4. To what extent does technology limit our capacity for creativity?

