Shrewsbury School

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL

SIXTH FORM ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
2025 ENTRY

DRAMA & THEATRE

(1 Hour)

Instructions to candidates:

Read the extract from *Agnes of God*.

Answer all of the following questions on lined paper.

30 marks in total.

MOTHER: Well, what do you think? Is she totally bananas or merely slightly off-centre? Or maybe she's perfectly sane and just a very good liar.

DOCTOR: I haven't decided yet. What about you?

MOTHER: Me?

DOCTOR: Yes. You know her better than I do. What's your opinion?

MOTHER: Well…I believe she's…*not* crazy. Nor is she lying.

DOCTOR: But how could she have a child and know nothing of sex and birth?

MOTHER: Because she's an innocent. She's a slate that hasn't been touched, except by God. There's no place for those facts in her mind.

DOCTOR: If you believe she's so innocent, how could she murder a child?

MOTHER: She didn't. This is manslaughter, not murder. She did not consciously kill that baby. I don't know what you'd call it – whatever psychological medical jargon you people use – but she was not conscious / at the time.

DOCTOR: You want me to believe that she gave birth, killed the baby, hid the waste paper basket and crawled to the door, all in some kind of mystical trance?

MOTHER: I don't care what you believe. You're her psychiatrist, not her jury. You're not determining her guilt.

DOCTOR: Could anyone else have murdered that child?

MOTHER: Not in the eyes of the police.

DOCTOR: And in your eyes?

MOTHER: I've told you what I believe.

DOCTOR: That she was unconscious at the time, yes, so someone else could easily have come into the room and / done it.

MOTHER: You don't honestly think / something like that happened.

DOCTOR: It's possible, isn't it?

MOTHER: Who?

DOCTOR: I don't know, maybe one of the other nuns. She found out about the baby and wanted to avoid a scandal.

MOTHER: That's absurd.

DOCTOR: That possibility never occurred to you?

MOTHER: No-one knew about Agnes' pregnancy. No-one. Not even Agnes.

Beat.

DOCTOR: When did you first learn about this innocence of hers, about the way she thinks?

MOTHER: A short while after she first came to us.

DOCTOR: And you weren't shocked?

MOTHER: I was appalled. Just as you are now.

DOCTOR: What happened?

MOTHER: She stopped eating. Completely.

DOCTOR: This was before her pregnancy?

MOTHER: Almost two years before.

DOCTOR: How long did this go on?

MOTHER: I don't know. I think it was about a week before it was reported to me.

DOCTOR: Why did she do this?

MOTHER: She refused to explain at first. She was brought before me and she said…she said…she'd been commanded by God.

The convent.

MOTHER: He spoke to you himself?

AGNES: No.

MOTHER: Through someone else?

AGNES: Yes.

MOTHER: Who?

AGNES: I can't say.

MOTHER: Why not?

AGNES: She'd punish me.

MOTHER: One of the sisters?

AGNES: No.

MOTHER: Who?

Silence.

MOTHER: Why would she tell you to do this?

AGNES: I don't know.

MOTHER: Why do you think?

AGNES: Because I'm getting fat.

MOTHER: Oh, for heaven's sake.

AGNES: I am. There's too much flesh on me.

MOTHER: Agnes…

AGNES: I'm a blob!

MOTHER: Why does it matter whether you're fat or not?

AGNES: Because.

MOTHER: You needn't worry about being attractive here.

AGNES: I do. I have to be attractive to God.

MOTHER: He loves you as you are.

AGNES: No he doesn't. He hates fat people.

MOTHER: Who told you this?

AGNES: It's a sin to be fat.

MOTHER: Why?

AGNES: Look at all the statues. They're thin!

MOTHER: Agnes…

AGNES: That's because they're suffering. Suffering is beautiful. I want to be beautiful.

MOTHER: Who tells you these things?

AGNES: Christ said it in the Bible. He said 'Suffer the little children, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.' I want to suffer like a little child.

MOTHER: That's not what / he meant.

AGNES: I am a little child but my body keeps getting bigger. I don't want it to get bigger because then I won't be able to fit in. I won't be able to squeeze into heaven.

MOTHER: Agnes, dear, heaven is not / a place with bars and windows.

AGNES: I mean, look at me. I've got to lose weight.

MOTHER: My dear child –

AGNES: I'm too fat! Look at me – I'm a blob! God blew up the Hindenburg. He'll blow me up! That's what she said.

MOTHER: Who?

AGNES: Mummy! I'll get bigger and bigger every day and then I'll pop! But if I stay little it won't happen.

MOTHER: Your mother tells you this?

Beat.

MOTHER: Agnes dear, your mother is dead.

AGNES: But she watches. She listens.

MOTHER: Nonsense. I'm your mother now, and I want you to eat.

AGNES: I'm not hungry.

MOTHER: You have to eat *something*, Agnes.

AGNES: No I don't. The host is enough.

MOTHER: My dear, I don't think a communion wafer has the Recommended Daily Allowance of anything.

AGNES: Of God.

MOTHER: Oh yes, of God.

End of Extract. Please turn over for questions.

ANSWER ALL THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Section A

Choose FIVE lines spoken by Agnes. As the actor playing Agnes, explain how you would deliver each of these lines to create your intended effects for the audience. For each line, you should explain how you would use:

- Vocal skills (accent, pitch, pace, pause, volume, intonation)
- Physical skills (facial expression, posture, gesture, gait)
- Proxemics
- Interaction with props and set.

[20]

Section B

Sketch and annotate a costume design for the Doctor. You should consider:

- her age and character; and
- her profession.

[10]

30 marks