

THE ROYAL EMPIRE SOCIETY ESSAY
COMPETITION

FIRST PRIZE

Very Good

NAME:- Brian L. Hebblethwaite,
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SCHOOL:- Clifton College Preparatory School,
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DATE OF BIRTH:- [REDACTED]

CLASS C.

Describe a day in the life of a school-child of your own age in a British Empire country other than your own.

The sun was already high in the sky when Piet was awakened by a sharp tap on the door. Piet was a young Afrikaner of twelve years and he lived on the outskirts of Johannesburg in the Transvaal. He rubbed his eyes and called, "Come in, Umfaan." The door opened and a small black boy, with a broad smile and shining white teeth, walked in with a cup of tea. He wore a pair of white shorts and a loose white jacket. He put the tea down on a small stool at the bedside and went out, his feet pattering on the floor. After drinking his tea, Piet jumped out of the only sheet that covered him and looked out of the window. There were few houses at that part, although, looking towards the city, he could see a huge sheet of buildings, where thousands of people dwelt and earned their living. On the sky-line, in front of him, Piet could see the familiar slag-heaps of the gold-mines, where the tipping buckets were already

going to and fro along the lines, adding to those vast piles of slag that disfigured the surrounding landscape.

Piet turned from the window and began to dress, listening to the boy, singing as he polished the front 'stoep' (veranda) with thick red polish. It took Piet only two minutes to dress and he ran down the wooden stairs, wearing a pair of shorts, a shirt, and his school blazer. He wore short white socks and a pair of sandals. The first thing he did when he came downstairs, was to visit his pet mongoose, Mikki, and, shouting, "Good morning," to his mother who was in the kitchen, he ran out into the back yard, where Mikki lived in a large cage in an old stable.

At a quarter to eight he went into the dining room for breakfast, which consisted of a large and juicy grapefruit, followed by some mealie meal porridge on which he poured a large amount of milk, very cold from the refrigerator. He then had a new laid egg from the brown and white hen in the back yard and he finished the meal with some bread and butter. After breakfast, he quickly looked over the previous evening's homework, before putting the books into a brown leather satchel. He said 'good-bye' to his mother and, slamming the door behind him, he threw the satchel ~~of~~ on his shoulder, and set off to walk to school, just under a mile away in the city of Johannesburg. He walked briskly, and within ten minutes he reached the familiar gates which led to the large

main building of the school. This school was not unlike an English school and Piet, after depositing his books in his desk, made his way to the large school hall to attend prayers, which were held in the Afrikaans language.

Most of the lessons were very much the same as those of an English school, and were taught mostly in Afrikaans, which was Piet's native language, although he also had to learn to speak English. Piet was good at English and Geography and was moderate at History, but at Mathematics he was deplorable and was often dreading the time when that period should arrive. In the middle of the morning, there was a short break, and Piet retired into a corner of the play-ground and pulled out of his pocket a package which contained a piece of "Biltong" which is buck-meat dried in the sun, and, slicing off pieces with his pen-knife, he chewed them hungrily.

At twelve o'clock, he hurried home for lunch, and, running up the steps, he let himself in and went into the dining-room where his mother was ready with his meal. He had some "Boerewors", a kind of sausage, of which he was very fond, for the first course. This was followed by a delicious fruit salad, in large quantities, as fruit was so plentiful in South Africa.

He returned to school by one o'clock in time for three more lessons. Work ended at three o'clock and Piet made his way to the

changing room where he changed for rugby, Piet was very keen on this game, and his one ambition was to become a 'Springbok' and to play rugby for South Africa. He played right wing three-quarter, and that afternoon he scored two tries and converted one of them himself. After the game he had a quick shower and in high spirits, hurried down to the beautiful school swimming baths for a swim.

In South Africa, boys are not kept for late periods, ~~so Piet~~ as they are in England, so Piet was able to return home after his bath. After tea, which was much the same as an English tea, he fed Mikki, the mongoose, and then settled down to his hour's homework. At half past six, he thankfully closed his book and decided to go for a walk. He strolled along the road towards the city but did not go far. He met a school-friend, and the two boys chatted until the other had to go, and Piet wandered back, aimlessly kicking a stone, his mind full of visions of playing rugby for South Africa. When he reached home, he went into his bedroom and picked up the book he was reading. It was the story of Paul Kruger and for an hour he read without stopping. At nine o'clock he said 'good night' to his mother and went up the stairs to bed. He stared out of the window at the lights of Johannesburg for a few minutes before quickly undressing and climbing into bed. Five minutes later, when his mother looked into

his room, he was fast asleep and as he quietly closed the door he said, quite distinctly, "It's a try".

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The Young traveller in South Africa.