The UK Linguistics Olympiad   2018

Round 2 Problem 1 Hark the Heraldry Angels Sing

Heraldry is the study of rank and heraldic arms, and there is a part which looks particularly at the way that coats-of-arms and shields are put together. The language for describing arms is known as blazon and derives many of its terms from French. The aim of blazon is to describe heraldic arms unambiguously and as concisely as possible.

On the next page are some blazon descriptions that correspond to the shields (escutcheons) A-L. However, the descriptions and the shields are not in the same order.

1. Quarterly 1 & 4 checky vert and argent 2 & 3 argent three gouttes gules two one
2. Azure a bend sinister argent in dexter chief four roundels sable
3. Per pale azure and gules on a chevron sable four roses argent a chief or
4. Per fess checky or and sable and azure overall a roundel counterchanged a bordure gules
5. Per chevron azure and vert overall a lozenge counterchanged in sinister chief a rose or
6. Quarterly azure and gules overall an escutcheon checky sable and argent
7. Vert on a fess sable three lozenges argent
8. Gules three annulets or one two impaling sable on a fess indented azure a rose argent
9. Argent a bend embattled between two lozenges sable
10. Per bend or and argent in sinister chief a cross crosslet sable
11. Gules a cross argent between four cross crosslets or on a chief sable three roses argent
12. Or three chevrons gules impaling or a cross gules on a bordure sable gouttes or

On your answer sheet:

(a) Match up the escutcheons A-L with their blazon descriptions.

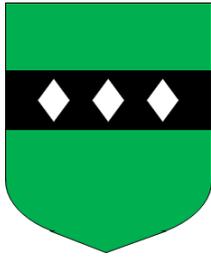(b) Write the blazon descriptions of M and N.

(c) Draw the escutcheons described by the following blazons:

1. Quarterly azure and or overall five roses sable three one one a bordure vert.
2. Per chevron sable and argent in sinister chief an annulet or in dexter chief a roundel vert.

Your drawing isn't a test of artistic skills, but of how well you understand blazons, so don't worry about graphic quality. Your diagrams should indicate the colours of the various parts, but you're welcome to use any method you choose for showing colours, including coloured pens, annotation (with arrows) or any combination. If you are colour blind, please tell us on your answer sheet.

(d) Explain how the language of blazon works.

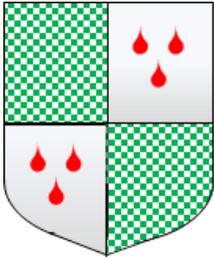# The UK Linguistics Olympiad   2018

A.

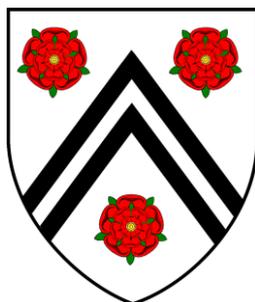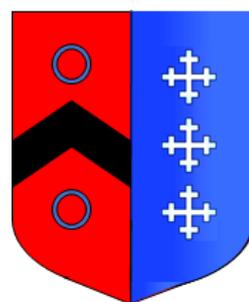B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

J.

K.

L.

M.

N.

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Solution and marking.

a.	description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	blazon	F	D	K	I	L	J	A	G	B	E	H	C

b.	M	Argent two chevrons sable between three roses gules
	N	Gules a chevron sable between two annulets azure impaling azure three crosses crosslet argent one one one

c.	1.	2.

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Commentary

(Note that much of this is not required to solve the problem - however, for the sake of completeness I will try to explain everything)

The syntax of a blazon description

Field partition	Field colour(s) (*tincture*)	Ordinary charges (bands)	Mobile charges (symbols)
0 (nothing)	Argent	Fess	Rose
Per pale	Or	Chevron	Annulet
Per fess	Azure	Bend	Roundel
Per chevron	Gules	Bend sinister	Cross crosslet
Per bend	Vert	Cross	Lozenge
Quarterly	Sable	Chief	Gouttes

● If the field is partitioned, the tinctures are described left-to-right and top-to-bottom.
● The field can also be checky, in which case the colours involved are placed straight afterwards.

Variation of ordinaries
● Ordinaries can be embattled or indented to vary their shape.

Tincture of charges
● The tincture of charges is placed after the charge (i.e. a rose sable is a black rose).
● If a charge is counterchanged, it swaps the colours of the field behind it (e.g. if the field was partitioned into azure and vert, the part of the charge in the vert section would be azure and the part in the azure section would be vert).

Location of mobile charges
● When a mobile charge is on an ordinary, the ordinary is preceded by *on* (e.g. on a bend sable two lozenges vert)
● Otherwise, the ordinary can be between the mobile charges or the exact location can be specified (in dexter chief a roundel sable = a black roundel in the top-left). Note that dexter refers to the left of the escutcheon and sinister to the right.
● If there are multiple mobile charges and their orientation relative to each other needs to be described, the tincture is followed by the number of charges in each row (so 5 gold rings could be arranged in a row of 2 and a row of 3, in which case it would be five annulets or two three, or a row of 2, then 1, then 2, in which case it would be five annulets or two one two).

Quarterly
● The 4 quarters are numbered 1-4, with 1 and 3 being identical and 2 and 4 being identical also. The first tincture is for 1&4, the second for 2&3.
● If more needs to be described, the syntax is Quarterly 1 & 4 _____, 2 & 3 _____

Impaling

● Two sets of arms can be combined into one by impaling them together. This takes blazon description A and description B and puts them together as such: A impaling B

Bordure

● A border can be placed around an escutcheon and it is described like an ordinary but is described last in the blazon system.