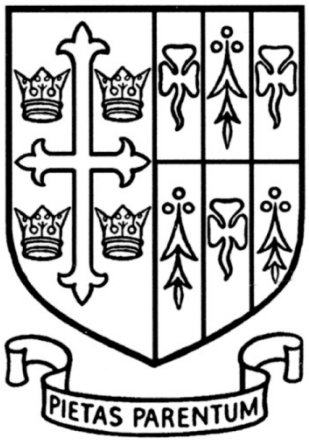
ST EDWARD'S OXFORD



13+ SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINATION
For entry in 2017

ENGLISH

Time: 1 hour

Candidate's name: . . . . . .

Answers should be written on lined paper.

The first **10 minutes** should be spent reading the text in Section A.

- Section A asks you to analyse some poetry.
- Section B is a writing task.

You are advised to spend just under **25 minutes** on each section. Use the last few minutes to read over what you have written and correct any mistakes. The quality of your writing will be assessed in both sections.

SECTION A: READING

The following passage is a taken from **Days Without End** by Sebastian Barry, a novel set in America around the time of the Civil War. Here the narrator, who is fighting on the Union side, describes a battle with the Rebels.

> The Rebels group on the top meadow then run down towards us in a fashion never expected at least by me and then when they come in range the officers steady us and then call out to fire and then we fire. Those crazy Rebs go down in numbers and then they keep coming on. Each line of us reloads and fires, reloads and fires, and now the Rebs are firing, some by standing for a moment, some on the hoof as they hurry down. It ain't the slow march we were taught at all but a lurching wild gallop of human creatures. You wouldn't think so many could be killed and it not stop them and then all round us we are falling with a bullet in a face or a bullet in a arm. Those fierce little bullets that open in your poor soft corpse. Then the captain screams out to fix our bayonets and then we are bid to stand and then we are bid to charge. Of my little bunch of men one still kneels in dazed conviction so I deftly kick him to his feet and on we go.
>
> Now we are one heart running but the grass is tufty and thick and it is hard to run nobly and we are stumbling and cursing like drunkards. But somehow by fierce tuck of strength we keep our feet and suddenly it seems desirable to lock with our foe and suddenly the grass seems no obstacle at all and one in the company cries out and then there is a sound made in our throats we have never heard and there is a great hunger to do we know not what unless it is stick our bayonets into the rush of grey ahead. But not just that because there is another thing or other things we have no names for because it is not part of usual talk. It is not like running at Indians who are not your kind but it is running at a mirror of yourself. Those Johnny Rebs are Irish, English, and all the rest. Canter on, canter on, and enjoin.
>
> But suddenly then the Rebs swing right and turn their charge across the meadow. They've seen the great swathe of our men come up behind and maybe seen a engine of death complete and whatever it is we can hear the officers calling out in the chaotic uproar. We're stopped in our charge and kneel and load and fire. We kneel and load and fire at the side-on millipede of the enemy. Our batteries belch forth their bombs again and the Confederates balk like a huge herd of wild horses and run back ten yards and then ten yards reversed again. They greatly desire to reach the cover of the far woods. The batteries belch behind, they belch behind. Some bombs come so low they want a path through us too and many fall in our lines as a missile forges a bloody ditch through living men. A frantic weariness infects our bones. We load and fire, we load and fire. Now in the burgeoning noise dozens of shells hit into the enemy, sharding them and shredding them. There is a sense of sudden wretchedness and disaster. Then with a great bloom like a sudden infection of spring flowers the meadow becomes a strange carpet of flames. The grass has caught fire and is generously burning and adding burning to burning. So dry it cannot flame fast enough, so high that the blades combust in great tufts and wash the legs of the fleeing soldiers not with soft grasses but dark flames full of a roaring strength. Wounded men fallen in the furnace cry out with horror and affront. Pain such as no animal could bear without wild screeching, tearing, rearing.

The main body of soldiers find the mercy of the trees and their wounded are left now on the blackened earth. What is it causes the captain to halt our firing and by relayed message halt the guns? Now we are merely standing watching and the wind blows the conflagration up the meadow leaving many a howling man and a quiet man in its wake. The quiet are in their black folds of death. Others where the fire hasn't touched are just groaning and ruined men. We are bid retire. Our surge of blue draws back two hundred yards and medical boys go out from the rear and the chaplain too. Out from the Rebel trees come similar souls likewise and a truce is struck without a word. Muskets are thrown down both sides and the details charge up now not to fire and kill but to stamp out the black acre of lingering flames and tend the dying, the rended, and the burned. Like dancers dancing on the charred grasses.

NOTES
· Batteries: the artillery; the big field-guns.
· Conflagration: a huge and very destructive fire.

Answer the following questions in full sentences written in clear, precise English. Spend about **25 minutes** altogether on this section.

1. Using your own words as far as possible, write a brief summary of what happens in the last paragraph of the passage. Try to write between three and six lines. [5]

2. Where does the author capture the experience of the battle most effectively? Support your points with evidence from the text, discussing the language that he uses. [10]

3. What appears to be the narrator's attitude towards the battle? Again, remember to refer to details from the passage to support your argument. [10]

[Total for Section A: 25 marks]

Now turn over for Section B →

SECTION B: WRITING

Choose ONE of the following tasks.

Marks will be awarded for originality, clarity and vocabulary as well as spelling and punctuation. Take a few minutes to plan before you begin writing.

EITHER

1. Write a short story *beginning* with the words, "The first time, all of us escaped the fire."

OR

2. "There never was a good war, or a bad peace" (Benjamin Franklin). Discuss this idea, using examples to illustrate your points.

Spend about **25 minutes** on this task.

[Total for Section B: 25 marks]