# ST EDWARD'S OXFORD

# 13+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2011-12

# ENGLISH

## 1 hour 10 Minutes

Answers should be written on lined paper. The exam is in **two sections:**

**SECTION A** tests your reading.

- The first **10 minutes** of the exam must be spent reading. You can make notes on the exam paper if you wish.
- The next **30 minutes** should be spent reading and answering the questions.

**SECTION B** tests the quality of your writing.

- You are advised to spend just under **30 minutes** writing your answer.
- Use the last few minutes to read over your work and correct any mistakes.

**SECTION A**: READING

The following passage is from the short story "To Da-Duh, in Memoriam" by Paule Marshall.

I did not see her at first I remember. For not only was it dark inside the crowded disembarkation shed in spite of the daylight flooding in from outside, but standing there waiting for her with my mother and sister I was still somewhat blinded from the sheen of tropical sunlight on the water of the bay which we had just crossed in the landing boat, leaving behind us the ship that had brought us from New York lying in the offing. Besides, being only nine years of age at the time and knowing nothing of islands I was busy attending to the alien sights and sounds of Barbados, the unfamiliar smells.

I did not see her, but I was alerted to her approach by my mother's hand which suddenly tightened around mine, and looking up I traced her gaze through the gloom in the shed until I finally made out the small, purposeful, painfully erect figure of the old woman headed our way.

Her face was drowned in the shadow of an ugly roll-brim brown felt hat, but the details of her slight body and of the struggle taking place within it were clear enough—an intense, unrelenting struggle between her back which was beginning to bend ever so slightly under the weight of her eighty-odd years and the rest of her which sought to deny those years and hold that back straight, keep it in line. Moving swiftly toward us (so swiftly it seemed she did not intend stopping when she reached us but would sweep past us out the doorway which opened onto the sea and like Christ walk upon the water!), she was caught between the sunlight at her end of the building and the darkness inside—and for a moment she appeared to contain them both: the light in the long severe old-fashioned white dress she wore which brought the sense of a past that was still alive into our bustling present and in the snatch of white at her eye; the darkness in her black high-top shoes and in her face which was visible now that she was closer.

It was as stark and fleshless as a death mask. The maggots might have already done their work, leaving only the framework of bone beneath the ruined skin and deep wells at the temple and jaw. But her eyes were alive, unnervingly so for one so old, with a sharp light that flicked out of the dim clouded depths like a lizard's tongue to snap up all in her view. Those eyes betrayed a child's curiosity about the world, and I wondered vaguely seeing them, and seeing the way the bodice of her ancient dress had collapsed in on her flat chest (what had happened to her breasts?), whether she might not be some kind of child at the same time she was a woman, with fourteen children, my mother included, to prove it. Perhaps she was both, both child and woman, darkness and light, past and present, life and death—all the opposites contained and reconciled in her.

"My Da-duh', my mother said formally and stepped forward. The name sounded like thunder fading softly in the distance.

## **SECTION A**: READING

Answer the following questions in full sentences written in clear, precise English. Spend about **30 minutes** altogether on this section.

1. What does the word 'unrelenting' mean in the third paragraph? [2]

2. Where does the story take place (first paragraph), and how do you know? [2]

3. In your own words, describe three of Da-duh's characteristics. [3]

4. Remind yourself of the third and fourth paragraphs. Explain the purpose of the sentences in brackets (what do they tell us, for example, about the narrator or the situation?) [3]

5. How old do you think the narrator is? Refer to the language of the passage and use quotations to support your answer. [10]

6. In your own words, and using only evidence from the passage, summarise the situation the narrator has just experienced. [10]

[Total for Section A: 30 marks]

## **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. Spend about **30 minutes** on this section.

1. Write a letter to a friend about a time in which you met someone who intrigued you in a particular way. [30]

2. Write an article for Age Concern magazine explaining why it is important for young people to spend 'quality time' with those of older generations. [30]