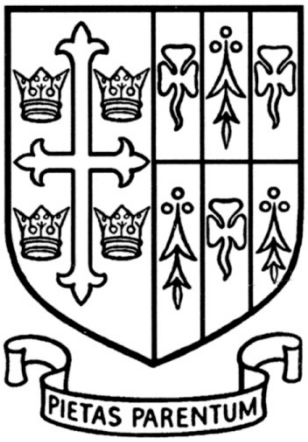
ST EDWARD'S OXFORD



13+ SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINATION
2013-2014

ENGLISH

1 hour

Answers should be written on lined paper.

The first **10 minutes** should be spent reading the texts in Section A and Section B.

- Section A asks you to analyse a prose passage.
- Section B asks you to respond to a poem in any way you wish.

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: PROSE

The following is a complete short story from **The Things They Carried** by Tim O'Brien, a collection about a group of young soldiers fighting in the Vietnam War.

Dave Jensen and Lee Strunk did not become instant buddies, but they did learn to trust each other. Over the next month they often teamed up on ambushes. They covered each other on patrol, shared a foxhole, took turns pulling guard at night. In late August they made a pact that if one of them should ever get totally messed up—a wheelchair wound—the other guy would automatically find a way to end it. As far as I could tell they were serious. They drew it up on paper, signing their names and asking a couple of guys to act as witnesses. And then in October Lee Strunk stepped on a rigged mortar round. It took off his right leg at the knee. He managed a funny little half step, like a hop, then he tilted sideways and dropped. "Oh, damn," he said. For a while he kept on saying it, "Damn oh damn," as if he'd stubbed a toe. Then he panicked. He tried to get up and run, but there was nothing left to run on. He fell hard. The stump of his right leg was twitching. There were slivers of bone, and the blood came in quick spurts like water from a pump. He seemed bewildered. He reached down as if to massage his missing leg, then he passed out, and Rat Kiley put on a tourniquet[1] and administered morphine and ran plasma into him.

There was nothing much anybody could do except wait for the dustoff.[2] After we'd secured a LZ,[3] Dave Jensen went over and kneeled at Strunk's side. The stump had stopped twitching now. For a time there was some question as to whether Strunk was still alive, but then he opened his eyes and looked up at Dave Jensen. "Oh, Jesus," he said, and moaned, and tried to slide away and said, "Jesus, man, don't kill me."

"Relax," Jensen said.

Lee Strunk seemed groggy and confused. He lay still for a second and then motioned toward his leg. "Really, it's not so bad, not terrible. Hey, *really*—they can sew it back on—*really*."

"Right, I'll bet they can." "You think?"

"Sure I do."

Strunk frowned at the sky. He passed out again, then woke up and said, "Don't kill me."

"I won't," Jensen said.

"I'm *serious*."

"Sure."

"But you got to promise. Swear it to me—swear you won't kill me." Jensen nodded and said, "I swear," and then a little later we carried Strunk to the dustoff chopper. Jensen reached out and touched the good leg. "Go on now," he said. Later we heard that Strunk died somewhere over Chu Lai, which seemed to relieve Dave Jensen of an enormous weight.

Notes

1. A *tourniquet* is a strap wrapped tightly above an arm or leg wound to reduce blood loss.

2. *Dustoff* and *chopper* are both words for helicopter.

3. *LZ* is short for Landing Zone.

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

1. Explain what you understand by the last sentence of this story. [5]

2. Judging from the tone and detail of the language he uses, what appears to be the narrator's attitude towards Dave Jensen and Lee Strunk? [10]

3. How does the way this story is written (its style) suit its action, characters, setting and the ideas it explores? [10]

[Total for Section A: 25 marks]

SECTION B: POETRY

The following poem was published in 2007 by the American poet Charles Simic.

Driving Home

On the car radio, how right
Your Hell and damnation sound to me
As I travel these small, bleak roads
Thinking of the mailman's son
The Army sent back in a sealed coffin.

His house is around the next turn.
A forlorn mutt sits in the yard
Waiting for someone to come home.
I can see the TV is on in the living room,
Canned laughter in the empty house
Like the sound of beer cans tied to a hearse.

Respond to this poem in any way you wish. You may, for instance, write a literary analysis of the poem, exploring its most interesting features; or you may use it as a stimulus for a piece of reflective writing about the waste and futility of war.

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

[Total for Section B: 25 marks]