ST EDWARD'S OXFORD

14+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION 2012-13

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 Guy de Maupassant's short story, "On The River".

One evening as I was coming home alone and was pretty tired, rowing with difficulty my big boat, a twelve-footer, which I always took out at night, I stopped a few moments to draw breath near the reed-covered point yonder, about two hundred metres from the railway bridge.

It was a magnificent night, the moon shone brightly, the river gleamed, the air was calm and soft. This peacefulness tempted me. I thought to myself that it would be pleasant to smoke a pipe in this spot. I took up my anchor and cast it into the river.

The boat floated downstream with the current, to the end of the chain, and then stopped, and I seated myself in the stern on my sheepskin and made myself as comfortable as possible. There was not a sound to be heard, except that I occasionally thought I could perceive an almost imperceptible lapping of the water against the bank, and I noticed taller groups of reeds which assumed strange shapes and seemed, at times, to move.

The river was perfectly calm, but I felt myself affected by the unusual silence that surrounded me. All the creatures, frogs and toads, those nocturnal singers of the marsh, were silent.

Suddenly a frog croaked to my right, and close beside me. I shuddered. It ceased, and I heard nothing more, and resolved to smoke, to soothe my mind. But, although I was a noted colorer of pipes, I could not smoke; at the second draw I was nauseated, and gave up trying. I began to sing. The sound of my voice was distressing to me. So I lay still, but presently the slight motion of the boat disturbed me. It seemed to me as if she were making huge lurches, from bank to bank of the river, touching each bank alternately. Then I felt as though an invisible force, or being, were drawing her to the surface of the water and lifting her out, to let her fall again. I was tossed about as in a tempest. I heard noises around me. I sprang to my feet with a single bound. The water was glistening, all was calm.

I saw that my nerves were somewhat shaky, and I resolved to leave the spot. I pulled the anchor chain, the boat began to move; then I felt a resistance. I pulled harder, the anchor did not come up; it had caught on something at the bottom of the river and I could not raise it. I began pulling again, but all in vain. Then, with my oars, I turned the boat with its head up stream to change the position of the anchor. It was no use, it was still caught. I flew into a rage and shook the chain furiously. Nothing budged. I sat down, disheartened, and began to reflect on my situation. I could not dream of breaking this chain, or detaching it from the boat, for it was massive and was riveted at the bows to a piece of wood as thick as my arm. However, as the weather was so fine I thought that it probably would not be long before some fisherman came to my aid. My ill-luck had quieted me. I sat down and was able, at length, to smoke my pipe. I had a bottle of rum; I drank two or three glasses, and was able to laugh at the situation. It was very warm; so that, if need be, I could sleep out under the stars without any great harm.

All at once there was a little knock at the side of the boat. I gave a start, and a cold sweat broke out all over me. The noise was, doubtless, caused by some piece of wood borne along by the current, but that was enough, and I again became a prey to a strange nervous agitation. I seized the chain and tensed my muscles in a desperate effort. The anchor held firm. I sat down again, exhausted.

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 "yonder" mean in the first paragraph? [2]

2. In your own words, and using evidence only from the passage, summarise the situation the narrator is experiencing. [8]

3. Explain how the imagery of the river contrasts with the mood of the narrator. [8]

4. Where, in your view, does the author convey the fear and excitement of the situation most successfully? Discuss his literary technique, giving a detailed response to specific examples from the text. [12]

[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.

EITHER

1. Continue the story, as the narrator, explaining what happens next.

OR

2. Imagine someone or something is watching the narrator. Re-tell the story from an observer's point of view.

[Total for Section B: 30 marks]