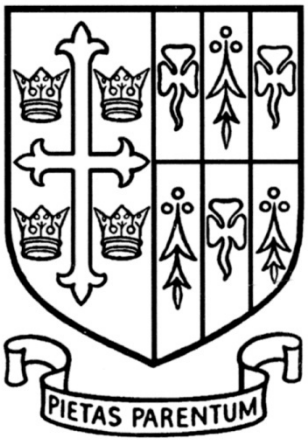
ST EDWARD'S OXFORD



16+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
2013-14

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 passage is from *Roumeli: Travels in Northern Greece* (1966) by Patrick Leigh Fermor. Here the author describes spending an evening with some mysterious nomadic shepherds called the Sarakatsani.

By the time we had finished the hot milk with black bread broken into it and sprinkled with hammered salt—their only food it seemed, which we all spooned in unison out of the same dish—about forty shepherds were eagerly settled, unshod and cross-legged on the spread blankets, nursing their crooks round a fire of thorns in the centre of the great domed hut. Half a dozen dogs lay panting in the doorway. The old man's oakapple-jointed fingers kept pushing a minute saucepan into the embers; and we hissed and gulped in turn over a single cup refilled with scalding and bubbling coffee. A shepherd sliced handfuls of tobacco leaves on a log with a long knife, then rolled them and genteelly offered the rough cylinders for the smoker to lick shut and light with a twig. The day's halting saga, the oddity of its language evoking friendly laughter from time to time, was demanded all over again and discussed till long after it was dark.

Scarcely anything in the hut had not been made by the nomads themselves. Their household goods hung on pegs and on the looped and fire-darkened stumps of branches jutting from the hut's timbers. Some were neatly piled against the brushwood walls, or spread underfoot: few clues singled out our surroundings for any particular period in the last few millennia: guns, tools, choppers, adzes, spades, billhooks, cooking pots, saddles, harness, the tin frills round the ikons and, among a pendant grove of dried and shaggy waterskins, a gleaming branchful of new horseshoes. Otherwise, all was hewn and carved wood or homespun from the backs of the flocks. Strings of onions, garlic, maize-cobs and tobacco leaves hung aloft among the sooty twigs and the cobwebs. Higher still the osier-bound reeds of the thatch converged symmetrically in the apex of the dome. An agreeable and pungent aroma of milk, curds, goats' hair, tobacco and woodsmoke filled the place. The thorns on the fire crackled, smokelessly; when a new faggot was thrown on, the flames made the tall hut dance in a gold hollow above a mob of shadows and highlight the bleached and matted hair and those faces shaped by the blasts of winter and the summer solstice. Their features glittered like the surfaces on a flint and whenever my eyes met any of theirs, a smile of welcoming friendliness answered.

I had begun to grasp, in the past few weeks, one of the great and uncovenanted delights of Greece: a direct and immediate link, friendly and equal on either side, between human beings, something which melts barriers of hierarchy and background and money and, except for a few tribal and historic feuds, politics and nationality as well. It is not a thing which functions in the teeth of convention, but in almost prelapsarian unawareness of its existence. Self-consciousness, awe and condescension (and their baleful remedy of forced egalitarianism), and the feudal hangover and the post-Fall-of-the-Bastille flicker—all the gloomy factors which limit the range of life and deoxygenize the air of Western Europe, are absent. Existence, these glances say, is a torment, an enemy, an adventure and a joke which we are in league to undergo, outwit, exploit and enjoy on equal terms as accomplices, fellow-hedonists and fellow-victims. A stranger begins to realize that the armour which has been irking him and the arsenal he has been lugging about for half a lifetime are no longer needed. Miraculous lightness takes their place.

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, describe what makes Fermor feel so delighted in the third paragraph. [5]

2. What can you deduce about the Sarakatsani character and way of life from this extract? [10]

3. Where in the first and second paragraphs does the author convey his sense of wonder and excitement most successfully? Discuss his literary technique, giving a detailed response to specific examples from the text. [10]

[Total for Section A: 25 marks]

SECTION B: POETRY

The following poem is from *Woods etc.*, a collection published in 2013 by the Devon-based author Alice Oswald.

Owl

last night at the joint of dawn,
an owl's call opened the darkness

miles away, more than a world beyond this room

and immediately, I was in the woods again,
poised, seeing my eyes seen,
hearing my listening heard

under a huge tree improvised by fear

dead brush falling then a star
straight through to God
founded and fixed the wood

then out, until it touched the town's lights,
an owl elsewhere swelled and questioned

twice, like you light lean and strike
two matches in the wind

Respond to this poem in any way you wish. You may, for instance, write a literary analysis, exploring the poem's thought, character and poetic qualities; or you may use the poem as a stimulus for a piece of reflective writing about the value, power or mystery of the natural world.

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

[Total for Section B: 25 marks]