

ST EDWARD'S OXFORD



14+ ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

For entry in 2018

ENGLISH

Time: 1 hour

Candidate's name:

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 is a creative 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 from *The Underground Railway* by Colson Whitehead, which tells the story of a secret railway line built to smuggle slaves out of South Carolina's plantations.

A young slave girl called Cora has been separated from her friend, Caesar, and is now entirely alone. She has been hidden in a house that has a concealed trap door leading down from the kitchen to the underground railway. If she remains undiscovered, then she has the chance to escape to freedom.

Was she supposed to pray now? She sat at the table in the thin lamplight. It was too dark on the platform to make out where the tunnel began. How long would it take them to root out Caesar? How fast could he run? She was aware of the bargains people make in desperate situations. To reduce the fever in a sick baby, to halt the brutalities of an overseer, to deliver one from a host of slave hells. From what she saw, the bargains never bore fruit. Sometimes the fever subsided, but the plantation was always still there. Cora did not pray.

She fell asleep waiting. Later, Cora crawled back up the steps, perching just beneath the door, and listened. It might be day or night in the world. She was hungry and thirsty. She ate some of the bread and sausage. Moving up and down the steps, putting her ear to the door and then retreating after a time, she passed the hours. When she finished the food, her despair was complete. She listened by the door. There was not a sound.

The thundering above woke her, terminating the void. It was not one person or two, but many men. They ransacked the house and shouted, knocking over cabinets and upending furniture. The noise was loud and violent and so near, she shrank down the steps. She could not make out their words. Then they were done.

The seams in the door permitted no light and no draft. She could not smell the smoke, but she heard the glass shatter and the pop and crackle of the wood.

The house was on 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, describe what Cora is feeling in this extract. [5]
2. How does the author convey the isolation of Cora's situation? Remember to use examples of language from the passage to illustrate your ideas. [10]
3. How is a sense of danger and suspense created in this extract? Consider a range of examples and literary techniques in your answer. [10]

[Total for Section A: 25 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.

EITHER

1. Think of a time when you were reluctant to go somewhere new. Describe your thoughts and feelings using varied and engaging English.

OR

2. Describe a time spent anticipating an important event, in detail, using varied and engaging English.

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

[Total for Section B: 25 marks]