

St Albans School English Department**13+ Entrance Examination 2009****One hour thirty minutes**

*This examination consists of two sections, each of which carries an equal number of marks. Divide your time **equally** between each section.*

WRITE YOUR ANSWERS TO EACH SECTION ON A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER CLEARLY HEADED WITH THE TITLE OF THE PAPER AND YOUR FULL NAME

SECTION A: READING

*Read carefully the passage from an autobiography (*Dreams of My Father, 1995*) printed below and answer the questions which follow. Provide full sentence answers with quotation from the text where required.*

Barack Obama, now President of the United States, is telling the story of his first visit to Kenya, his father's native land, which he did not make until he was in his mid twenties. He is on safari in the Masai Mara.

Dawn. To the east, the sky lightens above a black grove of trees, deep blue, then orange, then creamy yellow. The clouds lose their purple tint slowly, then dissipate, leaving behind a single star. As we pull out of camp, we see a caravan of giraffe, their long necks at a common slant, seemingly black before the rising red sun, strange markings against an ancient sky.

It was like that for the rest of the day, as if I were seeing as a child once again, the world a pop-up book, a fable, a painting by Rousseau¹. A pride of lions, yawning in the broken grass. Buffalo in the marshes, their horns like cheap wigs, tick birds scavenging off their mud-crusts backs. Hippos in the shallow riverbeds, pink eyes and nostrils like marbles bobbing on the water's surface. Elephants fanning their vegetable ears.

And most of all the stillness, a silence to match the elements. At twilight, not far from our camp, we came upon a tribe of hyenas feeding on the carcass of a wildebeest. In the dying orange light they looked like demon dogs, their eyes

¹ Henri Rousseau painted very bright paintings of jungle and forest in a so-called 'naive' style.

like slumps of black coal, their chins dripping with blood. Beside them, a row of vultures waited with stern, patient gazes, hopping away like hunchbacks whenever one of the hyenas got too close. It was a savage scene, and we stayed there for a long time, watching life feed on itself, the silence interrupted only by the crack of bone or the rush of wind, or the hard thump of a vulture's wings as it strained to lift itself into the current, until it finally found the higher air and those long and graceful wings became motionless and still like the rest. And I thought to myself: This is what Creation looked like. The same stillness, the same crunching of bone. There in the dusk, over that hill, I imagined the first man stepping forward, naked and rough-skinned, grasping a chunk of flint in his clumsy hand, no words yet for the fear, the anticipation, the awe he feels at the sky, the glimmering knowledge of his own death. If only we could remember that first common step, that first common word – that time before Babel.²

Now answer IN DETAIL the following questions, using quotation as evidence for your views. You should write a short paragraph in answer to each question.

1. In his first paragraph, Obama uses several techniques to paint a picture of the scene, and bring the natural world to life on the page. Give examples of these and describe their effect. [8 marks]
2. In his second paragraph, he paints a picture of the things he sees during the day. He begins with comparisons, and then uses a particular grammatical technique. Give examples and comment on the effect of his comparisons and the way he chooses to write in this paragraph. [8 marks]
3. In his third paragraph, he focuses at first on the scavengers, beast and birds of prey. How does he make them stand out from the scene, and appear sinister and threatening, yet also awe-inspiring? [8 marks]
4. He compares the scene to 'Creation'. What do you think he means by this, and how does he develop the comparison through his own imagination? [8 marks]

² In the Book of Genesis, men spoke a common Adamic language until they built the Tower of Babel in an attempt to reach the heavens. They were punished for their arrogance by being divided by different languages

5. Why do you think he describes man 'grasping a chunk of flint in his clumsy hand'? And what does he mean by a 'time before Babel'?
[8 marks]
6. Obama's mother was an anthropologist (someone who studies the science of the human race). Anthropologists, using archaeological evidence, believe that man has his origins in Africa. Religious people believe that the creation stories told in Genesis and other sacred texts tell us important truths about who we are. Evolutionists explain who we are by tracing our descent from the animal kingdom, through survival of the fittest. Psychologists tell us that our identity is made up of our experiences (especially in childhood), and geneticists locate our destiny in our DNA.

How does Obama's writing in this WHOLE passage show respect for all these different views, and put forward an idea of who we are, where we come from, and what this might teach us?

[10 marks]

SECTION B: WRITING

BEGIN THIS SECTION ON A FRESH PIECE OF PAPER

*Write an essay (or structured poem) – argumentative, descriptive or creative - suggested by **one** of the following titles (you can treat them literally or metaphorically):*

1. The Beginning of Time.
2. Out in the Wild.
3. A Search for Identity.
4. Hope.
5. A Moment of Fear.