

# Magdalen College School



## **ENGLISH TEST**

For entry to the Junior School at 9+

**SAMPLE PAPER**

# cassowaries

Rima stepped back and looked critically at his handiwork. He grunted with satisfaction, and smiled down at his son.

‘Well?’

5 The new hut stood foursquare in the corner of the garden. The plaited bamboo walls curled tightly round a stout frame of beech poles, cut and stripped by Rima with the big bush knife he had brought up from the trade-store when Joseph had run down to tell him the news.

‘It’s marvellous, father,’ said Joseph. ‘She won’t get out of that.’

10 He bent down and stroked the shining plumage of a large bird that lay at his feet, trussed up with creepers. The bonds were too tight to allow the muscular body any movement, but the bird crossly jerked its head and opened its pointed beak to hiss at Joseph’s fingers. The face and neck were coloured bright blue and red, and the head was topped with an oval dome of bone. The feathers were long and limp, hanging in  
15 silky strands. Under the creeper bindings twitched stumps of flightless wings.

‘That’s a fine cassowary,’ Rima remarked. ‘Did she give you much trouble?’

‘No: after all, there were eight of us. Aieee! She ran like the wind!’

20 The village boys had caught the cassowary that morning, coming on her suddenly in the bush and chasing her down a long slope. Her strong legs were capable of taking her clear of pursuers on the level or going

uphill. But once she was on a downward incline she could only run faster and faster, squawking with fury as she lost her balance, till she  
25 tripped over and fell in a tumble of feathers and feet.

Then Joseph and another boy, outrunning the others, had flung themselves on top of the flapping bird and held her down, while the remaining young hunters had torn down bush creepers for rope. The trickiest part was keeping the feet with their fearsome claws underneath  
30 the body while she was lashed up like a parcel. The whooping and laughing boys carried her back to the village, her head dangling down from a branch slotted between her feet. Joseph and the other boy had drawn playing cards for her, and Joseph’s ten of hearts had just beaten David Mali’s nine of diamonds.

35 Joseph was overjoyed to have his own cassowary. She would always be bad-tempered, liable to peck out an eye or lash out dangerously with those sharp claws. But safely shut in her new home, fed on taro scraps and berries, she would grow fat; and one day in the future she would make a tough but tasty roast for a clan gathering. Then the story of the  
40 capture would be told, with Joseph as the hero.

# Magdalen College School English Exam

## 9+ Entry. Time allowed: 35 minutes

*Attempt all the questions. All answers are to be written on this question and answer sheet.*

*Carefully read the extract from the story on the sheet first, then answer the questions.*

1. From your reading of the passage, which of the birds pictured below do you think is a cassowary? *Simply write (a), (b), (c) or (d).*

I think picture ..... is the cassowary



a.



b.



c.



d.

(1 mark)

2. What is the relationship between Rima and Joseph? (1 mark)

.....

3. a. When Rima looks at his 'handiwork' (line 1), what exactly is he looking at?

.....

(1 mark)

b. What do you think 'handiwork' means here?

.....

.....

(2 marks)

4. In what **two** ways have they made sure that the cassowary cannot escape?

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(4 marks)

5. Can the cassowary fly? What, in the story, tells you this?

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(2 marks)

6. Explain **in detail** and in your own words (you should write **6-7 lines** for this answer) the plan the boys used to catch the cassowary. *Use lines 21 onwards for this answer.*

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(8 marks)

7. Write in the space provided the correct meaning of these words (*simply write down the letter of the answer*):

Foursquare (line 4) means: a. having four straight walls  
b. four feet square c. built from four other huts .....  
d. four miles away

Plumage (line 9) means: a. beak b. feathers c. talons d. plum .....

Pursuers (line 22) means: a. farmers b. enemies c. chasers d. sounds .....

Incline (line 23) means: a. river b. tumble c. slope d. speed .....

(4 marks)

8. What were the **drawbacks** or **disadvantages (problems)** of having a cassowary?

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.....

(3 marks)

9. How is it that Joseph came to own the cassowary? Explain carefully.

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(4 marks)

**Total: 30 marks**

**Magdalen College School**  
**9+ English Writing Paper**  
**Total Time Taken: 30 minutes**



You should spend **15 minutes** on **BOTH** of these two pieces of writing. You will be told when the first 15 minutes has passed, and should move to the next question close to that time.

You may write in pen or pencil.

1. Imagine that the next day the cassowary escapes from Rima and Joseph, and that they set out on their own to capture it. In about 150 – 180 words, write the account of what happens. (20 marks)

*Try in this piece of writing to use as much detail as you can about the bird; make your account exciting or humorous (or both!). Aim to write accurately; punctuate clearly; write clearly and neatly.*

- 2 This is a piece of **descriptive** writing.

Write about any **building** that you know well enough (*this could be a castle, a hall, your own home if it is old and interesting, an Oxford college, a church etc.*

Imagine a character from a story is approaching it and / or entering it. Describe it from his point of view, trying to bring the building alive in our minds. (20 marks)

*Eg (if this were about a cave):*

*He approached the entrance to the cave with no little sense of dread. The entrance was dark and forbidding, covered with dark ivy and dying branches. From the innermost depths he thought he could almost hear a faint scratching, but perhaps that was only his imagination.*