

SECTION A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below. Then answer all the questions which follow it.

This story is told by a young black American girl.

I was glad to hear that Manny had fallen off the roof and that I could come out of hiding now. My mother got the whole story out of my sister, Frankie. "It's bad enough you won't wear skirts and you hang around with boys," she said. "But to want to fight with them too! And you would pick the craziest one at that." Manny was supposed to be crazy. To say you were bad put some people off. But to say you were crazy, well, you were definitely not to be messed with. On the other hand, after what I called *him* and after saying a few choice things about *his mother*, his face did go through some strange expressions. And I did kind of wonder if maybe he was nuts. I didn't wait to find out. I got running. And then he waited for me, outside my house, all day and all night. I shouted to him out of the kitchen window.

"You got no sense of humour, that's your trouble," I told him. He looked up, but he didn't say anything. All at once I was real sorry about the whole thing. I should've settled for teasing the little girls in the schoolyard, or waited for Frankie so we could raise some kind of trouble downtown.

I don't know how Manny got on the roof. Maybe some slates lost all their cement and anyway the roof always did kind of slant downward. So Manny fell off the roof, and for the first time in days I dared to go outside again.

After that, Manny stayed indoors for a long time. I almost forgot about him. Then one night I'm walking past the Douglas Street park and there's Manny on the basketball court, perfecting his shots and talking to himself. Being me, I quite naturally walk right up and ask what he's doing playing in the dark. And he looks up and all around like the dark had crept up on him when he wasn't looking. So I knew right away that he'd been out there for a long time.

"There was two seconds to go and we were one point behind," he said, shaking his head and staring at his trainers. "And I was in the clear. It was in the bag. They passed the ball and I slid the ball up nice and easy." And then he shook his head. "I muffed the goddamn shot. Ball bounced off the rim..." He stared at his hands. "The game of the season. Last game." And then he ignored me altogether, though he wasn't really talking to me anyway. He went back to his shots, always from the same spot with his arms crooked in the same way, over and over. I must've gotten hypnotized cause I probably stood there for at least an hour watching like a fool till I couldn't even see the damn ball, much less the basket. But I stood there anyway for no reason I know of. He never missed. But he cursed himself all the time. It was torture.

Then a squad car pulled up and a short cop got out. He looked real hard at me, then at Manny.

"What are you two doing?"

"He's practising shots. I'm watching. Ain't it obvious?" I said with my smart self.

The cop just stood there and finally turned to the other one who was just getting out of the car.

"Who unlocked the park gate?" the big one snarled.

"It's always unlocked," I said. Then we three just stood there watching Manny go at it.

"Is that true?" the big guy asked, tilting his hat back with the thumb the way tough guys do in the movies. "Hey you," he said, walking over to Manny. "I'm talking to you." He finally grabbed the ball to get Manny's attention. But that didn't work. Manny just stood there with his arms out waiting for the pass. He wasn't paying no attention to the cop. So, quite naturally, when the cop slapped his head it was a surprise.

"Gimme the ball, man." Manny's face was all tightened up and ready to pop.

"Did you hear what I said, black boy?"

Now, when somebody says that word like that, I gets warm. And crazy or no crazy, Manny became like my brother at that moment and the cop became the enemy.

"You better give him back his ball," I said. "Manny don't take no mess from no cops. He ain't bothering nobody. He's gonna be Mister Basketball when he grows up. Just trying to get a little practice in."

"Look here, sister, we'll run you in too," the short cop said.

"I sure can't be your sister seeing as how I'm a black girl and you're a white cop. Boy, I sure will be glad when you run me in so I can tell everybody about that. You're just picking on us because we're black, mister."

The big guy screwed his mouth up and let out one of them hard-day sighs. "The park's closed, little girl, so why don't you and your boyfriend go on home."

That really got me. The 'little girl' was bad enough but that 'boyfriend' was too much. I kept cool, mostly because Manny looked so pitiful waiting there for the ball. But I kept my cool mostly cause there's no telling how frantic things can get what with a big-mouth like me, a couple of wise-guy cops, and a crazy boy too.

"The gates are open," I said real quiet-like, "and this here's a free country. So why don't you give him back his ball?"

The big cop did another one of those sighs, and then he bounced the ball to Manny who went right into his gliding thing clear up to the backboard, damn near like he was some kind of very beautiful bird. And then he swooshed that ball in, even if there was no net, and you couldn't really hear the swoosh. Something happened to the bones in my chest. It was something.

"Crazy kids anyhow," said the short cop and turned to go. But the big guy watched Manny for a while and I guess something must've snapped in his head, cause all of a sudden he was hot for taking Manny to jail or court or somewhere and started yelling at him and everything, which is a bad thing to do to Manny, I can tell you, when obviously he had just done about the most beautiful thing a man can do. No cop could swoosh without a net.

"Look out, man," was all Manny said, but it was the way he pushed the cop that started the real yelling and threats. And then this dude was pulling Manny's clothes and I thought to myself, Oh God, now Manny gonna get run in or shot by these guys. I could see it all, and I'm practically crying too.

I wished Manny had fallen off the damn roof and died right then and there and saved me all this aggravation and him being killed by these bad-guy cops. But it didn't happen. They just took the ball, and Manny followed them real quiet-like out of the park, then into the squad car with his head dropping. And I went on home cause what the hell am I going to do on a basketball court and it getting to be nearly midnight?

(from 'The Hammer Boy' by Toni Cade Bambara)

Look again at lines 1-9

A1. List **five** things you learn about the girl who is telling the story. (5)

Look again at lines 17-30

A2. What impressions does the writer give you of Manny in these lines? (10)

You must refer to the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology.

Look again at lines 31-41

A3. List **five** reasons why the policemen's behaviour is unpleasant and threatening. (5)

Look again at lines 33-60

A4. How does the writer convey the girl's (who is telling the story) response to the policemen? (10)

You must refer to the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology.

Now consider the passage as a whole.

A5. "In the last twenty-five lines or so of this passage, the writer encourages the reader to feel sympathy for Manny."

Evaluate this view. (10)

You should write about:

- your own impressions of Manny as he is presented in the passage as a whole;
- how the writer has created these impressions.