

Tournon/Rhône

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SECTION

ENTRY TEST MARCH 2024

PART ONE : Reading Comprehension

Excerpt from *BECOMING*, Michelle OBAMA, 2020

Answer the questions in English. (1 hour)

PART TWO : Writing Assignment

Choose one subject. Write about 150 words. (30 minutes)

PART THREE : Listening Comprehension

Listen to the document three times and report what you understood. You can write your report in French or in English. (15 minutes)

PART ONE : Reading Comprehension

Excerpt from *BECOMING*, memoir by Michelle OBAMA, 2020

Michelle Robinson graduated from Whitney Young Magnet High School, Chicago, in 1981 and from Princeton University in 1985.

Answer the following questions in English.

1. Focus on paragraph 1. Explain the distortion between the expected quotas for the school and the actual percentage of nonwhite students attending it.
2. « *It was safe to be smart.* » line 14 « *talked like a white girl.* » line 16 : explain the implicit meaning of these two lines.
3. Explain what the college counselor meant by « *Princeton material* » line 24.
4. How did Michelle handle hearing that statement from the college counselor?
5. What type of education do you think she received from her parents?
6. Focus on the last paragraph. How did she feel when she eventually got admitted?

PART TWO : Writing Assignment

Choose one subject. Write about 150 words.

1. Why do you think Michelle Obama chose to name her memoir *Becoming*? What does the idea of « becoming » mean to you?

OR

2. « *Failure is a feeling long before it's an actual result.* » What can we all do – as students, parents and teachers – to break this cycle of self-doubt?

OR

3. Imagine Michelle Robinson's first day at Princeton University. Write as if you were Michelle.

PART THREE : Listening Comprehension

Listen to the document three times and report what you understood. You can write your report in French or in English. *Reaching the North Star by 2020*, The Obama White House 2014

Context : During Obama's second term, his "North Star" goal was that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. Michelle Obama, as First Lady, rallied the country around her « Reach Higher » initiative to inspire every student to complete their education past high school.

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Located on the dividing line between the North and the South Sides of the city and featuring forward-thinking teachers and brand-new facilities, the school was designed as a kind of equal-opportunity nirvana, meant to draw high-performing students of all colors. Admissions quotas set by the Chicago school board called for a student body that would be 40 percent Black, 40 percent white, and 20 percent Hispanic or other. But the reality of who enrolled looked slightly different. When I attended, about 80 percent of the students were nonwhite.

My worries about high school, if they were to be catalogued, could mostly be filed under one general heading : *Am I good enough?* It was a question that dogged me through my first month, even as I began to settle in, even as I got used to the pre-dawn wake-ups and navigating between buildings for class. [...] My first round of grades turned out to be pretty good, and so did my second. Over the course of my freshman and sophomore years, I began to build confidence. With each little accomplishment, my doubts slowly took leave. I liked most of my teachers. I wasn't afraid to raise my hand in class. At Whitney Young, it was safe to be smart. The assumption was that everyone was working toward college, which meant you never hid your intelligence for fear of someone saying you talked like a white girl. [...] I had peers who were always a step or two ahead of me, whose achievements seemed effortless, but I tried not to let that get to me. I was beginning to understand that if I put in extra hours of studying, I could often close the gap. I wasn't a straight-A student, but I was always trying, and there were semesters when I got close. [...]

Early in my senior year at Whitney Young, I went for an obligatory first appointment with the school college counselor to whom I'd been assigned. [...] I announced her my interest in joining my brother Craig at Princeton the following fall. « I'm not sure, » she said, giving me a perfunctory, patronizing smile, « that you're Princeton material. »

[...] Failure is a feeling long before it's an actual result. And for me, it felt like that's exactly what she was planting – a suggestion of failure long before I'd even tried to succeed. She was telling me to lower my sights, which was the absolute reverse of every last thing my parents had ever told me. Had I decided to believe her, her pronouncement would have toppled my confidence all over again, reviving the old thrum of *not enough, not enough*.

But three years of keeping up with the ambitious kids at Whitney Young had taught me that I was something more. I wasn't going to let one person's opinion dislodge everything I thought I knew about myself. Instead, I switched my method without changing my goal. I would apply to Princeton and a scattershot selection of other schools. That day I left the college counselor's office at Whitney Young, I was fuming, my ego bruised more than anything. My only thought, in the moment, was *I'll show you*.

But then I settled down and got back to work. I never thought getting into college would be easy, but I was learning to focus and have faith in my own story. [...] And ultimately, I suppose I did show that college counselor, because six or seven months later, a letter arrived in our mailbox, offering me admission to Princeton. My parents and I celebrated that night by having pizza delivered from Italian Fiesta. I called Craig and shouted the good news. [...] And in the end, I hadn't needed to show the college counselor anything. I was only showing myself.