



**ENGLISH A1 – HIGHER LEVEL – PAPER 1**  
**ANGLAIS A1 – NIVEAU SUPÉRIEUR – ÉPREUVE 1**  
**INGLÉS A1 – NIVEL SUPERIOR – PRUEBA 1**

Tuesday 2 May 2006 (morning)

Mardi 2 mai 2006 (matin)

Martes 2 de mayo de 2006 (mañana)

2 hours / 2 heures / 2 horas

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Write a commentary on one passage only.

INSTRUCTIONS DESTINÉES AUX CANDIDATS

- N'ouvrez pas cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé(e).
- Rédigez un commentaire sur un seul des passages.

INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS ALUMNOS

- No abra esta prueba hasta que se lo autoricen.
- Escriba un comentario sobre un solo fragmento.

Write a commentary on **one** of the following:

1. (a)

Somewhere, my father is teaching us the names of the constellations. We lie in the cold, out in the dark backyard, on our backs against the hard November ground. We children distribute ourselves over his enormous body like so many spare handkerchiefs. He does not feel our weight. My father points a dime-store<sup>1</sup> six-volt flashlight beam at the holes in the enclosing black shell.  
5 We lie on the frozen earth while all in front of us spreads the illustrated textbook of winter sky. The six-volt beam creates the one weak warm spot in the entire world.

My father is doing what he does best, doing the only thing he knew how to do in this life. He is quizzing us, plaguing his kids with questions. Where is the belt of Orion? What is the English for Ursa Major? Who knows the story behind the Twins? How big is a magnitude?

10 He talks to us only in riddles. We climb out of the crib and learn to speak: he warns us about language with “When is a door not a door?” We grow, we discover the neighborhood. He is there, quizzing us on the points of the compass. We fall, we bruise ourselves. He makes the wound a lesson on the capillaries.<sup>2</sup> Tonight we learn, in the great square of Pegasus, how far things are from one another. How alone.

15 He points his way with the flashlight, although the beam travels only a few feet before it is swallowed up in the general black. Still, my father waves the pointer around the sky map as if the light goes all the way out to the stars themselves. “There,” he says to us, to himself, to the empty night. “Up there.” We have to follow him, find the picture by telepathy. We are all already expert at second-guessing. The five of us are fluent, native speakers of the condensed sign language, the  
20 secret code of family.

We lie all together for once, learning to see Taurus and Leo as if our survival depends on it. “Here; this dim line. Imagine a serpent, a dragon: can you all see Draco?” My older sister says she can, but the rest of us suspect she is lying. I can see the Dipper, the big one, the obvious one. And I think I can make out the Milky Way. The rest is a blur, a rich, confusing picture book of too  
25 many possibilities.

But even if we can’t see the images of myth, all of us, even my little brother, can hear in my father’s quizzes the main reason for his taking us out under the winter lights: “If there is one thing the universe excels at, it’s empty space.” We are out here alone, on a sliver of rock under the black vacuum, with nothing but his riddles for our thin atmosphere. He seems to tell us that the more we  
30 know, the less we can be hurt. But he leaves the all-important corollary, the how-to-get-there, up to us, the students, as an exercise.

Impressed with the truth he has just spoken, the one about the place’s one prejudice, he gives us a final glimpse of that closet romantic he will keep so perfectly hidden in later years: “For all must into Nothing fall,” he recites, the poetry lost on me until I see it in an anthology, decades later,  
35 “If it will persist in Being.” He recovers quickly, remembers the lesson at hand, and asks, “Why do you think people need to fill the sky with pictures?”

We have a few questions of our own to ask him in return. What are we running from? How do we get back? Why are you leaving us? What happens to students who fail? I have one urgent issue to pick with him before he flicks off the beam. But I have already learned, by example, to  
40 keep the real questions for later. I hold my retaliation until too late.

I feel cold, colder than the night's temperature, a cold that carries easily across the following years. Only the sight of my mother in the close glow of kitchen window, the imagined smell of cocoa, blankets, and hot lemon dish soap, keeps me from going stiff and giving in. I pull closer to my father, but something is wrong. He has thought himself into another place. He has already left  
45 us. He is no longer warm.

Richard Powers, *Prisoner's Dilemma* (1988)

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<sup>1</sup> dime-store: shop that sells inexpensive goods

<sup>2</sup> capillaries: thin blood vessels

1. (b)

### Behaviour of Fish in an Egyptian Tea Garden

As a white stone draws down the fish  
she on the seafloor of the afternoon  
draws down men's glances and their cruel wish  
for love. Slyly red lip on the spoon

5 slips in a morsel of ice-cream; her hands  
white as a milky stone, white submarine  
fronds, sink with spread fingers, lean  
along the table, carmined<sup>1</sup> at the ends.

10 A cotton magnate, an important fish  
with great eyepouches and a golden mouth  
through the frail reefs of furniture swims out  
and idling, suspended, stays to watch.

A crustacean old man clamped to his chair  
sits coldly near her and might see  
15 her charms through fissures where the eyes should be  
or else his teeth are parted in a stare.

Captain on leave, a lean dark mackerel,  
lies in the offing;<sup>2</sup> turns himself and looks  
through currents of sound. The flat-eyed flatfish sucks  
20 on a straw, staring from its repose, laxly.

And gallants in shoals swim up and lag,  
circling and passing near the white attraction;  
sometimes pausing, opening a conversation;  
fish pause so to nibble or tug.

25 Now the ice-cream is finished, is  
paid for. The fish swim off on business  
and she sits alone at the table, a white stone  
useless except to a collector, a rich man.

Keith Douglas in *Poetry of the Forties*, ed. Robin Skelton (1968)

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<sup>1</sup> carmined: painted red

<sup>2</sup> in the offing: in the distance