

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

Wednesday 12 November 2003 (afternoon)

Mercredi 12 novembre 2003 (après-midi)

Miércoles 12 de noviembre de 2003 (tarde)

2 hours / 2 heures / 2 horas

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

- Ne pas ouvrir cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé.
- Rédiger 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)

The child had been born punctually. This first grave and alarming duty of entering into the world was performed not only unflinchingly but with a flourish: for this thoroughly satisfactory child was a boy. His little organism, long before birth, had put aside the soft and drowsy temptation to be a female. It would have been so simple for the last pair of
5 chromosomes to have doubled up like the rest, and turned out every cell in the future body complete, well-balanced, serene, and feminine. Instead, one intrepid particle decided to live alone, unmated, unsatisfied, restless, and masculine; and it imposed this unstable romantic equilibrium on every atom of the man-child's flesh, and of the man-child's sinews. To be a male means to have chosen the more arduous, though
10 perhaps the less painful adventure, more remote from home, less deeply rooted in one soil and one morality. It means to be pledged to a certain courage, to a certain recklessness about the future: and if these risks are to be run without disaster, there should be also a greater buoyancy, less sensitiveness, less capacity for utter misery than women commonly show. Yet this compensation is sometimes lacking. Mysterious
15 influences may cross and pervade the system, and send through it, as it were, a nostalgia for femininity, for that placid, motherly, comfortable fullness of life proper to the generous female.

Had the unborn Oliver decided to be a girl, he – or rather she – could hardly have been blamed. Such a result would have been equally involuntary, equally normal, equally
20 useful; yet somehow it would have been disappointing. Our admirably gentle and admirably stern Oliver Alden, always choosing the darker and the ruder duty, would have missed existence. Or he would have begun – and how wrong that would have been! – by cheating his mother's hopes. Because while Mrs. Alden always declared that women were intellectually the equals of men and morally their superiors, yet she would have felt that a
25 little girl was only a second-best baby: and how ill that would have gone with her settled determination that everything in her new life – except perhaps her husband – should be absolutely first rate! No: Providence was rewarding her for aiming high.

The child was a fine boy, full weight, perfectly formed, fair-skinned with large grey eyes, and a little fuzz of limp, yellow hair. At the first contact with freedom he wagged his
30 arms and legs about vigorously, experimentally, silently: he seemed ready for everything, anxious for nothing, willing to wait and see. Philosophy possessed the soul of this child from his first breath: inarticulately, of course, as it was destined, at bottom, to remain always; because the words which his education supplied were not capable of uttering it truly. But in action, in determination, and by a sort of inner blind fortitude, his faith was
35 distinctly in him from the beginning. There were good things and there were bad things, and there was an equal duty to pull through both and come out somehow on the further side of all trouble. At least, so I venture to put it into words for him, words which wouldn't have satisfied him; but at this first moment of his existence I may presume to understand him better than he understood himself.

George Santayana from *The Last Puritan* (1935)

1. (b)

Wild Bees

Often in summer, on a tarred bridge plank standing,
Or downstream between willows, a safe Ophelia drifting¹
In a rented boat – I had seen them come and go,
Those wild bees swift as tigers, their gauze wings a-glitter
5 In passionless industry, clustering black at the crevice
Of a rotten cabbage tree, where their hive was hidden low.

But never strolled too near. Till one half-cloudy evening
Of ripe January, my friends and I
Came, gloved and masked to the eyes like plundering desperadoes,
10 To smoke them out. Quiet beside the stagnant river
We trod wet grasses down, hearing the crickets chitter
And waiting for light to drain from the wounded sky.

Before we reached the hive their sentries saw us
And sprang invisible through the darkening air,
15 Stabbed, and died in stinging. The hive woke. Poisonous fuming
Of sulphur filled the hollow trunk, and crawling
Blue flame sputtered – yet still their suicidal
Live raiders dived and clung to our hands and hair.

O it was Carthage under Roman torches,
20 Or loud with flames and falling timber, Troy!²
A job well botched. Half of the honey melted
And half the rest young grubs. Through earth-black smoldering ashes
And maimed bees groaning, we drew out our plunder.
Little enough their gold, and slight our joy.

25 Fallen then the city of instinctive wisdom.
Tragedy is written distinct and small:
A hive burned on a cool night in summer.
But loss is a precious stone to me, a nectar
Distilled in time, preaching the truth of winter
30 To the fallen heart that does not cease to fall.

James K. Baxter, from *Collected Poems* (1984)

¹ Ophelia drifting: Ophelia, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, drowned in a river after going mad.

² Carthage and Troy: Two cities destroyed by fire in the classical era
