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

Tuesday 3 May 2011 (morning)

Mardi 3 mai 2011 (matin)

Martes 3 de mayo de 2011 (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.

We holidayed here every summer, my father and mother and I. We would not have put it that way. *We came here for our holidays*, that is what we would have said. How difficult now it is to speak as I spoke then. We came for our holidays here every summer, for many years, many years, until my father ran off to England, as fathers sometimes did, in those days, and do still, for that matter. The chalet that we rented was a slightly less than life-sized wooden model of a house. It had three rooms, a living room at the front that was also a kitchen and two tiny bedrooms at the back. There were no ceilings, only the sloped undersides of the tarpapered roof. The walls were panelled with unintentionally elegant, narrow, bevelled boards that on sunny days smelled of paint and pine-sap. My mother cooked on a paraffin stove, the tiny fuel-hole of which afforded me an obscurely furtive pleasure when I was called on to clean it, employing for the task a delicate instrument made of a strip of pliant tin with a stiff filament of wire protruding at a right angle from its tip. I wonder where it is now, that little Primus stove, so sturdy and steadfast? There was no electricity and at night we lived by the light of an oil lamp. My father worked in Ballymore and came down in the evenings on the train, in a wordless fury, bearing the frustrations of his day like so much luggage clutched in his clenched fists. What did my mother do with her time when he was gone and I was not there? I picture her sitting at the oilcloth-covered table in that little wooden house, a hand under her head, nursing her disaffections as the long day wanes. She was still young then, they both were, my father and my mother, younger certainly than I am now. How strange a thing that is to think of. Everybody seems to be younger than I am, even the dead. I see them there, my poor parents, rancorously playing at house in the childhood of the world. Their unhappiness was one of the constants of my earliest years, a high, unceasing buzz just beyond hearing. I did not hate them. I loved them, probably. Only they were in my way, obscuring my view of the future. In time I would be able to see right through them, my transparent parents.

My mother would only bathe far up the beach, away from the eyes of the hotel crowds and the noisy encampments of day trippers. Up there, past where the golf course began, there was a permanent sandbank a little way out from shore that enclosed a shallow lagoon when the tide was right. In those soupy waters she would wallow with small, mistrustful pleasure, not swimming, for she could not swim, but stretched out full-length on the surface and walking along the sea-floor on her hands, straining to keep her mouth above the lapping wavelets. She wore a crimplene swimsuit, mouse-pink, with a coy little hem stretched across tight just below the crotch. Her face looked bare and defenceless, pinched in the tight rubber seal of her bathing cap. My father was a fair swimmer, going at a sort of hindered, horizontal scramble with mechanical strokes and a gasping sideways grimace and one starting eye. At the end of a length he would rise up, panting and spitting, his hair plastered down and ears sticking out and black trunks abulge, and stand with hands on hips and watch my mother's clumsy efforts with a faint, sardonic grin, a muscle in his jaw twitching. He splashed water in her face and seized her wrists and wading backwards hauled her through the water. She shut her eyes tight and shrieked at him furiously to stop. I watched these edgy larks in a paroxysm<sup>1</sup> of disgust.

40 At last he let her go and turned on me, upending me and grasping me by the ankles and pushing  
me forward wheelbarrow-fashion off the edge of the sandbank and laughing. How strong his  
hands were, like manacles<sup>2</sup> of cold, pliant iron, I feel even yet their violent grip. He was a violent  
man, a man of violent gestures, violent jokes, but timid, too, no wonder he left us, had to leave us.  
I swallowed water, and twisted out of his grasp in a panic and jumped to my feet and stood in  
45 the surf, retching.

Chloe Grace and her brother were standing on the hard sand at the water's edge, looking on.

They wore shorts as usual and were barefoot. I saw how strikingly alike they were.  
They had been collecting seashells, which Chloe was carrying in a handkerchief knotted  
corner-to-corner to make a pouch. They stood regarding us without expression, as if we were  
50 a show, a comic turn that had been laid on for them but which they found not very interesting,  
or funny, but peculiar only. I am sure I blushed, grey and goosepimpled though I was, and I  
had an acute awareness of the thin stream of seawater pouring in an unstoppable arc out of the  
sagging front of my swimming-trunks. Had it been in my power I would have cancelled my  
shaming parents on the spot, would have popped them like bubbles of sea spray, my fat little  
55 bare-faced mother and my father whose body might have been made of lard. A breeze smacked  
down on the beach and swarmed across it slantwise under a skim of dry sand, then came on over  
the water, chopping the surface into sharp little metallic shards. I shivered, not from the cold  
now but as if something had passed through me, silent, swift, irresistible. The pair on the shore  
turned and trailed off in the direction of the wrecked freighter.

John Banville, *The Sea* (2005)

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<sup>1</sup> paroxysm: a sudden outburst of emotion or action

<sup>2</sup> manacles: handcuffs or shackles

2.

### Fishing on the Susquehanna in July

I have never been fishing on the Susquehanna  
or on any river for that matter  
to be perfectly honest.

Not in July or any month  
5 have I had the pleasure—if it is a pleasure—  
of fishing on the Susquehanna.

I am more likely to be found  
in a quiet room like this one—  
a painting of a woman on the wall,  
10 a bowl of tangerines on the table—  
trying to manufacture the sensation  
of fishing on the Susquehanna.

There is little doubt  
that others have been fishing  
15 on the Susquehanna,

rowing upstream in a wooden boat,  
sliding the oars under the water  
then raising them to drip in the light.

But the nearest I have ever come to  
20 fishing on the Susquehanna  
was one afternoon in a museum in Philadelphia

when I balanced a little egg of time  
in front of a painting  
in which that river curled around a bend

25 under a blue cloud-ruffled sky,  
dense trees along the banks,  
and a fellow with a red bandanna

sitting in a small, green  
flat-bottom boat  
30 holding the thin whip of a pole.

That is something I am unlikely  
ever to do, I remember  
saying to myself and the person next to me.

35 Then I blinked and moved on  
to other American scenes  
of haystacks, water whitening over rocks,

even one of a brown hare  
who seemed so wired with alertness  
I imagined him springing right out of the frame.

Billy Collins, *Picnic, Lightning* (1998)

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