



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

Thursday 8 November 2001 (afternoon)

Jeudi 8 novembre 2001 (après-midi)

Jueves 8 de noviembre de 2001 (tarde)

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**

- 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 passages.

1. (a)

(Bosaaso, at first dreaming then awake, relates aspects of his life history to Duniya, who is asleep and perhaps dreaming *him* too.)

5 Bosaaso had been up for some time, turning and tossing in his bed, eager for dawn. He had dreamt of a brightly-coloured eagle soaring high, unprepared to alight on any of the tall eucalyptus trees in the vicinity. Below, where he waited for the handsome bird to descend on a branch so he could take aim and shoot it, was a long-legged red plover, chattering its customary oaths, repeating its standard vow in the ugliest sequence of notes ever sung by a bird.

10 In his dream, a small boy carrying a kilo or so of uncooked meat on an uncovered platter walked into view, and the alert eagle came down in a sudden swoop, going not for the blood-dripping raw flesh, but for the child's brain. The boy fell to the ground in fear, dropping the meat. Several women emerged from behind the acacia bushes and formed a mournful circle around the prostrate boy. One woman stood apart, a woman wearing a patchwork of peacock-coloured clothes, with feathers in her hair. The others hushed when she beckoned. She took from the folds of her clothing a talismanic pebble which she placed near the boy's nostrils. Then he rose and, unafraid, walked away, taking with him the platter of meat, now dusty.

15 Anxiety in Bosaaso's chest stirred up a dusty cough and, still asleep, he sneezed. He diverted his mind by telling himself (and Duniya in her dream, of which he was part) the story of an only son of an only parent. The boy's given name was Mohamoud.

20 He was a most fortunate child. He had a mother who sang well, being endowed with a beautiful voice, who cooked wonderfully and was an excellent seamstress. These three assets made her a frequent and welcome guest at weddings and all manner of events at which her services were in demand. She was Mohamoud's single parent, his father having stowed away on a ship – everybody thought – never to be heard of again.

25 The boy and his mother lived in the small coastal town of G., not far from Cape Guardafui, on the east of the Somali peninsula. They were a feature of the locality, always together, colourful as the clothes she stitched herself, like itinerant gypsies, ready at the drop of a hint to entertain an audience. There was something decidedly ambivalent about the boy's attitude to his mother. He loved her to sing her songs and he loved the food she prepared; on the other hand, he felt it degrading that he should accompany her everywhere, tagging along at the feasts where she performed.

30 She was paid mostly in kind: mutton, beef or camel meat, a choice portion to cook at home for herself and her son. Mohamoud loathed crossing town with the fly-inviting raw meat wrapped in a sooty cloth. He hated being near the improvised cooking sites, four-stone arrangements on which cauldrons were placed, under which fire was lit. He was equally embarrassed by his mother's habit of calling him and giving him food in front of all the women, with none of the other boys being asked to join him. He would scamper away somewhere, like a dog seeking a quiet place to chew a bone, unobserved. It embarrassed him to eat when no one else was doing so.

40 Mohamoud felt more relaxed when his mother wore the singer's mask and chanted ballads praising the virtues of a bride or groom at an auspicious wedding. His mother would be clothed in her best and would smell of the charming scent of sandal and other *cuuds*<sup>1</sup>, which he loved. He didn't have to go with her on such days. She brought back cooked food herself after she performed.

Nuruddin Farah, *Gifts*, (1993).

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<sup>1</sup> cuuds: fragrant incenses

1. (b)

**The Cyclist**

Freewheeling down the escarpment past the unpassing horse  
Blazoned in chalk the wind he causes in passing  
Cools the sweat of his neck, making him one with the sky,  
In the heat of the handlebars he grasps the summer  
5 Being a boy and to-day a parenthesis  
Between the horizon's brackets; the main sentence  
Is to be picked up later but these five minutes  
Are all to-day and summer. The dragonfly  
Rises without take-off, horizontal,  
10 Underlining itself in a sliver of peacock light.

And glaring, glaring white  
The horse on the down moves within his brackets,  
The grass boils with grasshoppers, a pebble  
Scutters from under the wheel and all this country  
15 Is spattered white with boys riding their heat-wave,  
Feet on a narrow plank and hair thrown back

And a surf of dust beneath them. Summer, summer –  
They chase it with butterfly nets or strike it into the deep  
In a little red ball or gulp it lathered with cream  
20 Or drink it through closed eyelids; until the bell  
Left-right-left gives his forgotten sentence  
And reaching the valley the boy must pedal again  
Left-right-left but meanwhile  
For ten seconds more can move as the horse in the chalk  
25 Moves unbeginningly calmly  
Calmly regardless of tenses and final clauses  
Calmly unendingly moves.

Louis MacNiece, *Collected Poems 1942-48*.

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