



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

Friday 12 November 2004 (afternoon)
Vendredi 12 novembre 2004 (après-midi)
Viernes 12 de noviembre de 2004 (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

- 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)

She put a record on the turntable. The record player was still on the sideboard where it had been for years. Loyal studied the album cover; five men in musician’s chairs, a swirl of yellow color coming from their hands to the top of the cover and red letters bursting, “MUSIC TO SING ALONG WITH - Volume 7 - Country Ballads.”

5 The record rotated, double-stop fiddle harmonies of a sentimental country song filled the room. Starr stood in front of the oven, feet side by side, hands folded in a knot of fingers, held in front of her crotch. Middle-aged, in wrinkled whipcords and a sweatshirt, but something of the old vulnerable beauty persisting. Perhaps she knew it.

10 She counted silently, then sang “He was just passing through, I was all alone and blue.” The words forced themselves up into her nose, she reached for the cheap sadness. Loyal couldn’t help it, felt the barroom tears jerking out of his eyes. That song always got to him, but here he had to sit in a damn kitchen chair, couldn’t even hunch over a beer. So he closed his eyes and wished Jack had lived.

The quiche was good, and they ate all of it. It was easier now, no talking, the food on the plates, the forks spearing and lifting. She put a paper napkin near his hand. Jack’s chair was empty. Pickles. The coffee perked. How many times had he sat here?

“So, what do you think of my singing, Loyal?”

That was the kind of question he couldn’t answer.

“It’s fine. I like it fine.”

20 Sour face. She poured coffee while his fingers pinched up crumbs in the quiche dish. All of Jack’s things were scattered around as if he’d just stepped out. Well, that’s all he’d done, just stepped out. The rope he knotted while they watched television on a peg by the door, a pair of boots, stiff now from disuse. Bills still on the Victorian spindle. The grey rancher’s hat, the band stained with Jack’s sweat, on top of the side board where he always slung it when he came in for dinner.

25 “Think you might go back to Wisconsin, see your kids? Must be all growed up now.”

“Them ties was cut too long ago. With blunt scissors.” She said the milk was on the turn. He smelled it and said he’d take his coffee without.

30 “I know I’m not going to sing at any rodeo*, Loyal. My voice is weak, I’m too old. Old ladies don’t sing at rodeos. But you know, I don’t feel old. I feel like I’ve got the liveliest part of my life still ahead. I could stay on the ranch, Loyal, but not alone. A man is needed.” She couldn’t say it much clearer.

The coffee. Its blackness in the familiar blue cups. He stirred in sugar. Her spoon clinked.

35 Then all at once the awkwardness was gone. Stories of things he had seen began to pour out, the words firing from between his loosened and gapped teeth. He told her about Cucumber drowning in a mine, midnight driving with Bullet over dangerous passes where headlights failed, the mountain lion. He, who had talked little, talked much, swelled to a glowing huckster selling stories of his life. At two in the morning, Starr nodding off, wanting nothing but sleep and silence, he stopped. They were tired of each other, each longed for the relief of solitude. He said he would

40 sleep on the daybed beside the stove. The kitchen stank of cigarettes.

In the morning she gave him Jack’s pearl gray cowboy hat.

E. Annie Proulx, *Postcards* (1992)

* rodeo: a contest and performance involving cattle and horses

1. (b)

Brainstorm

The house was shaken by a rising wind
That rattled window and door. He sat alone
In an upstairs room and heard these things: a blind
Ran up with a bang, a door slammed, a groan
5 Came from some hidden joist, a leaky tap,
At any silence of the wind walked like
A blind man through the house. Timber and sap
Revolt, he thought, from washer, baulk and spike.
Bent to his book, continued unafraid
10 Until the crows came down from their loud flight
To walk along the roof-tree overhead.
Their horny feet, so near but out of sight,
Scratched on the slate; when they were blown away
He heard their wings beat till they came again,
15 While the wind rose, and the house seemed to sway,
And window panes began to blind with rain.
The house was talking, not to him, he thought,
But to the crows; the crows were talking back
In their black voices. The secret might be out:
20 Houses are only trees stretched on the rack.
And once the crows knew, all nature would know.
Fur, leaf and feather would invade the form,
Nail rust with rain and shingle warp with snow,
Vine tear the wall, till any straw-borne storm
25 Could rip both roof and roof-tree off and show
Naked to nature what they had kept warm.
He came to feel the crows walk on his head
As if he were the house, their crooked feet
Scratched, through his hair, his scalp. He might be dead,
30 It seemed, and all the noises underneath
Be but the cooling of the sinews, veins,
Juices, and sodden sacks suddenly let go;
While in his ruins of wiring, his burst mains,
The rainy wind had been set free to blow
35 Until the green uprising and mob rule
That ran the world had taken over him,
Split him like seed, and set him in the school
Where any crutch can learn to be a limb.

Inside his head he heard the stormy crows.

Howard Nemerov, *New and Selected Poems* (1960)