



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

Wednesday 12 November 2008 (afternoon)
Mercredi 12 novembre 2008 (après-midi)
Miércoles 12 de noviembre de 2008 (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)

I felt a tremor in my sister’s arm.

Before us, at the intersection, the mosque stood towering in all its grandeur, outlined in a brilliant series of decorative light bulbs in honour of some celebration; its clock tolled the half hour at ten-thirty. A dog barked somewhere, and in perverse reply came the sound of a bicycle bell. The image of old Mwangi was floating in my mind, of him tending the garden patiently, when suddenly a terrifying, unearthly squeal came from the shadows, followed by a hoot. My sister and I froze in our tracks. Oh God, Oh Rabba, she whispered, digging her fingers into my arm. Out leapt before us six youths, howling like wild dogs, gesturing like demons, mouthing all manner of obscenities; they surrounded us. I took hold of Deepa’s hand and made a dash for it in the direction we had come, only to meet a leering Elvis face, shirt open, pants crotch-tight, wielding a tree branch. I lurched sideways, ran forward, to no avail. We should have screamed, but terror froze our throats. Backwards, sideways, forwards again, and our paths were blocked in a horrifying checkmate and what awaited was only the kill. But then at the intersection appeared a white Mercedes; it turned left onto the main road, swerved left again toward the gate where we stood trapped, and the six scampered away into the dark like cockroaches. The man at the wheel was a local millionaire, Mr. Babu; he rolled down a window and asked us who we were and what was the matter. We explained our predicament, and he told us to spend the night in his house, he would have us driven to the campus the next morning.

There was no doubt in my mind, from the obscenities I had heard—in a mixture of Cutchi and Swahili, that Tanzanian specialty—and the faces I had seen—that buck-toothed horse, the curly-haired half-caste chotara—that our attackers had known me, and most likely seen my sister before. I, a Nairobi Punjabi Hindu, was dating one of their girls; to make matters worse, I had a sister who was going out in the open with an African. When men develop contempt for a woman, the vilest, filthiest language escapes their lips. All night I smarted from those insults. Deepa was close to hysteria and I spent the night in the same room with her.

The next morning Mr. Babu drove us in his white Mercedes to the campus, but not before a lavish breakfast and a tour of his quite wonderful garden, which he obviously had a hand in tending, though there was an elderly gardener with whom he chatted amiably. Mr. Babu cut for Deepa a red rose. On the way he hummed a tune, some sort of bhajan, which we could not quite figure out, but it seemed completely out of key and Deepa and I had a job keeping up straight faces.

I realize that my contempt for those nocturnal attackers has not waned a bit; I have called them names, but this is how I have always recalled them and that terror-filled eternity that must actually have been two or three minutes. Mahesh Uncle comes to mind: when we were little he once said to us, in his typical manner, Henh, henh—see how memory makes monkeys out of our enemies, as one of my teachers used to say. And what does it make out of our friends, Uncle? we asked. He said, It gives them a tint of rose, or it saves them in amber—do you know what amber is, children?

Mr. Babu, whom we never saw again, is preserved in amber.

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1. (b)

Magician

What matters more than practice
is the fact that you, my audience,
are pulling for me, want me to pull
it off—this next sleight*. Now
5 you see it. Something more than
whether I succeed's at stake.

This talk is called patter. This
is misdirection—how my left
hand shows you nothing's in it.
10 Nothing is. I count on your mistake
of caring. In my right hand your
undoing blooms like cancer.

But I've shown you that already—
empty. Most tricks are done
15 before you think they've started—you
who value space more than time.
The balls, the cards, the coins—they go
into the past, not into my pocket.

MIRANDA, GARY; GRACE PERIOD. © 1983 Princeton University Press.
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* sleight: as in “sleight-of-hand”, clever use of the hands in order to deceive
