



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

Wednesday 11 November 2009 (afternoon)  
Mercredi 11 novembre 2009 (après-midi)  
Miércoles 11 de noviembre de 2009 (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

- 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.

1677

The artist is at work on two paintings. One is a scene in the Arctic with a floundering ship pitched steeply among the ice floes, the other a painting of the frozen Thames.

The artist is from Holland, but he has spent a great deal of his life in England. He is an etcher as well as a painter and most of his work features animals – dogs and hunting scenes – so he is almost unaware of the fact that he has painted animals in both the Arctic scene and the painting of the frozen Thames. In the former a team of wild dogs chases a man across the ice in the foreground. In the Thames painting a dog barks at two men who have fallen to the ice, also in the foreground.

The painting of the frozen Thames is huge, almost six feet wide, and it shows practically the entire span of the London Bridge in its background.

The main action of the painting is a line of figures advancing across the river from a set of stairs at the left. The stairs are from a ferry stage and since the watermen can't row people across the ice, they stand guard at the top of the stairs and charge people to walk down the flight of steps onto the icy river. Once they walk across they will be charged again to climb the stairs on the other side.

All of the figures are men except for one woman in the left background who is walking over the ice with a tray of cups balanced on her head. The painter has been down numerous times to the Thames and knows that, during this winter's freeze, there is brandy for sale out there on the ice.

There are two references to the painter's homeland in the painting of the Thames. One is a figure of a skater in the bottom right corner, wearing a Dutch hat. The second is a sign for an inn hanging at the top of the stairs. The sign has the drawing of a Dutch hat inside a wreath.

The figures in the painting are very active, helping each other over the ice, throwing snowballs, skating. One man shoots a gun at some birds, crossing the sky over the bridge.

In the Arctic painting there are fewer people. The central space of the painting is taken up with the distressed ship, sails up and flapping, tossed high by the ice floes. The background is merely a horizon line and there are only a handful of men and the wild dogs in the foreground.

They seem like very different paintings, and it is only when they are both near completion that the painter realizes they are very much alike. The scenes might be different but the ice in both paintings is very much the same ice. It occupies the same space and looks identical in both depictions – chunks of sheared white more than six feet high with chasms and craters, rivers of clearer, darker ice running under the base of the ice cliffs.

The painter steps back, walks across the floor of his studio, and looks at the paintings from the far wall. He has never been to the Arctic, but he has been down to the Thames every afternoon all this winter. Of course he would end up painting the same picture. He squints at the paintings. It is the Thames that looks fantastical, the ice so huge and difficult. The Arctic picture, the place he has never been and will never be, and which he has modelled solely on the vision of the frozen Thames – the Arctic painting looks exactly right, exactly real.

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2.

### I Go Back to May 1937

I see them standing at the formal gates of their colleges,  
I see my father strolling out  
under the ochre sandstone arch, the  
red tiles glinting like bent  
5 plates of blood behind his head, I  
see my mother with a few light books at her hip  
standing at the pillar made of tiny bricks with the  
wrought-iron gate still open behind her, its  
sword-tips black in the May air,  
10 they are about to graduate, they are about to get married,  
they are kids, they are dumb, all they know is they are  
innocent, they would never hurt anybody.  
I want to go up to them and say Stop,  
don't do it – she's the wrong woman,  
15 he's the wrong man, you are going to do things  
you cannot imagine you would ever do,  
you are going to do bad things to children,  
you are going to suffer in ways you never heard of,  
you are going to want to die. I want to go  
20 up to them there in the late May sunlight and say it,  
her hungry pretty blank face turning to me,  
her pitiful beautiful untouched body,  
his arrogant handsome blind face turning to me,  
his pitiful beautiful untouched body,  
25 but I don't do it. I want to live. I  
take them up like the male and female  
paper dolls and bang them together  
at the hips like chips of flint as if to  
strike sparks from them, I say  
30 Do what you are going to do, and I will tell about it.

Sharon Olds, "I go back to May 1937", *The Gold Cell* (1987) copyright © 1987 by Sharon Olds.  
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