



**ENGLISH A1 – STANDARD LEVEL – PAPER 1**  
**ANGLAIS A1 – NIVEAU MOYEN – ÉPREUVE 1**  
**INGLÉS A1 – NIVEL MEDIO – PRUEBA 1**

Friday 10 November 2006 (afternoon)  
Vendredi 10 novembre 2006 (après-midi)  
Viernes 10 de noviembre de 2006 (tarde)

1 hour 30 minutes / 1 heure 30 minutes / 1 hora 30 minutos

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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. It is not compulsory for you to respond directly to the guiding questions provided. However, you may use them if you wish.

**INSTRUCTIONS DESTINÉES AUX CANDIDATS**

- N'ouvrez pas cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé(e).
- Rédigez un commentaire sur un seul des passages. Le commentaire ne doit pas nécessairement répondre aux questions d'orientation fournies. Vous pouvez toutefois les utiliser si vous le désirez.

**INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS ALUMNOS**

- No abra esta prueba hasta que se lo autoricen.
- Escriba un comentario sobre un solo fragmento. No es obligatorio responder directamente a las preguntas que se ofrecen a modo de guía. Sin embargo, puede usarlas si lo desea.

Write a commentary on **one** passage only. It is not compulsory for you to respond directly to the guiding questions provided. However, you are encouraged to use them as starting points for your commentary.

1. (a)

It is winter. A narrow, muddy street, flanked by low mud-brick walls beneath a cloudless steely sky. The ground rutted deep by cartwheels, pock-marked with mule and donkey hooves, covered with a thin layer of ice that crunches underfoot. Dirty patches of snow linger here and there at the base of walls. At the end of the street the embrasure<sup>1</sup> of a door in front of which hangs  
5 an indigo-blue patched curtain, like a single spot of colour on a fawn canvas. From behind it comes a regular, monotonous muffled thud, like a distant hammer, followed by a whining screech.

This is my first memory – I must have been two or three years old. An inquisitive child, I stop and lift a corner of the curtain apprehensively: a pungent, spicy smell wafts across the street; inside is a small, dark room filled with clouds of yellow dust; in the middle a huge circular stone  
10 with a mast at its centre is being dragged round and round by a large, emaciated horse on bending spindly legs. His eyes are blindfolded with a black cloth and, as he rotates the stone, a mustardy-yellow flour pours from under it into the surrounding gutter. The scene is lit by a single glass eye in the domed ceiling far above, which shoots a diagonal shaft of light and illuminates a column of dust whose yellow specks dance as if to the rhythm of the horse’s hooves on the stony floor.

15 “Come along, child, we must hurry.” My mother. She takes me by the hand and pulls me away. I cling to the door, mesmerised, as the blindfold horse pulls round and round, its yoke screeching, its hooves thudding, its nostrils puffing jets of steam into the icy yellow air turning, turning.

“Why are his eyes covered, Mother?”

20 “So that he doesn’t see where he is, otherwise he would get dizzy going round in a circle all day, and he would balk. Blindfold, he can imagine he is walking in a straight line, in a field. But don’t worry, at the end of the day they take off the cloth from his eyes and give him some lovely oats to eat. He is quite happy, really ...”

The image dissolves.

25 But it comes back, leaping into memory at odd times – in daydreams or nightmares, in moments of doubt and anguish, and every time I use turmeric<sup>2</sup> in cooking: the skeletal blindfold horse, chained to its treadmill in a dark room, going round and round, day after day, year after year, all the while imagining that he is galloping in a daisy-dotted prairie, for a bag of oats at the end of the day ...

30 The blindfold horse, my earliest memory, *mon frère*, *mon semblable*<sup>3</sup> ...

Shusha Guppy, *The Blindfold Horse: Memories of a Persian Childhood* (1988)  
*The Blindfold Horse* Copyright © Shusha Guppy. Reproduced with kind permission of Gillon Aitken Associates Ltd

<sup>1</sup> embrasure: ornamented frame

<sup>2</sup> turmeric: a bright yellow spice

<sup>3</sup> *mon frère*, *mon semblable*: “my brother, my counterpart”

- Discuss the role of description in this opening scene of the memoir.
- Comment on the possible significance of the blind horse, including the final line of the passage.
- Discuss the interplay of the image of the horse, of the mother and of memory.
- Discuss the author’s use of structure.

1. (b)

**TO HELP THE MONKEY  
CROSS THE RIVER,**

which he must  
cross, by swimming, for fruit and nuts,  
to help him  
I sit, with my rifle, on a platform  
5 high in a tree, same side of the river  
as the hungry monkey. How does this assist  
him? When he swims for it  
I look first up river: predators move faster with  
the current than against it.  
10 If a crocodile is aimed from up river to eat the monkey  
and an anaconda from down river burns  
with the same ambition, I do  
the math, algebra, angles, rate-of-monkey  
croc and snake-speed, and if, *if*  
15 it looks like the anaconda or the croc  
will reach the monkey  
before he attains the river's far bank,  
I raise my rifle and fire  
one, two, three, even four times, into the river  
20 just behind the monkey  
to hurry him up a little.  
Shoot the snake, the crocodile?  
They're just doing their jobs,  
but the monkey, the monkey  
25 has little hands, like a child's  
and the smart ones, in a cage, can be taught to smile.

Thomas Lux, *The Cradle Place: Poems* (2004)  
from *The Cradle Place* Copyright © Thomas Lux.

- What is your interpretation of the situation described in the poem?
- What details help to portray the attitude and character of the speaker?
- What sense do you have of setting and how is it conveyed?
- How does the form of the poem support its meaning?