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

Wednesday 2 May 2012 (morning)
Mercredi 2 mai 2012 (matin)
Miércoles 2 de mayo de 2012 (mañana)

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.
- The maximum mark for this examination paper is *[25 marks]*.

INSTRUCTIONS DESTINÉES AUX CANDIDATS

- N'ouvrez pas cette épreuve avant d'y être autorisé(e).
- Rédigez un commentaire sur un seul des passages.
- Le nombre maximum de points pour cette épreuve d'examen est *[25 points]*.

INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS ALUMNOS

- No abra esta prueba hasta que se lo autoricen.
- Escriba un comentario sobre un solo fragmento.
- La puntuación máxima para esta prueba de examen es *[25 puntos]*.

Write a commentary on **one** of the following:

1.

Birth of the Owl Butterflies

They hung in our kitchen for days:
a row of brown lanterns that threw no light,
merely darkened with their growing load.
Pinned to a shelf among the knick-knacks
5 and the cookery books;
ripening in the radiator's heat:
six Central American *Caligo* chrysalids,
five thousand miles from their mountain home.

My father had brought them here,
10 carefully packed in cotton wool,
to hatch, set, identify, and display:
these unpromising dingy shells plumped up
like curled leaves, on each a silver spur,
a tiny gleam or drop of dew,
15 Nature had added as a finishing touch
to perfect mimicry.

For weeks the wizened fruit had been maturing.
Now, one by one, the pods exploded,
crackling in the quiet kitchen,
20 and a furry missile emerged – quickly,
as if desperate to break free –
unhinged its awkward legs,
hauling behind it, like a frilly party dress,
the rumpled mass of its soft wings.

25 It clung unsteadily to the cloven¹ pod,
while slow wings billowed with the blood
that pumped them full.
The dark velvet began to glow
with a thousand tiny striations²,
30 and there, in each corner,
boldly ringed in black and gold,
two fierce owl-eyes widened.

Uneasy minutes, these, before *Caligo*
can flex its nine-inch wings and fly.
35 They drooped still, gathering strength,
limp flags loosely flowing.
When two butterflies hatched too close,
and clashed, each scrabbling for a footing,
one fell and its wings flopped
40 fatly on the kitchen floor.

I pictured them shattering later
on taps and cupboard corners;
but my father gauged his moment well,
allowed a first few timid forays,
45 then swooped down gentle-fingered
with his glass jar for the kill.
The monstrous wings all but filled it,
beat vigorously, fluttered, and were still.

Ruth Sharman, *Birth of the Owl Butterflies* (1997)

¹ cloven: split in two
² striations: an academic term for stripes

2.

All things arrive in the waters and waters carry all things away. So there is no beginning or end, only the waters' flow, ebb, flood, trickle, tides emptying and returning, salt seas and rivers and rain and mist and blood, the sun drowning in an ocean of night, wet sheen of dawn washing darkness from our eyes. This city is held in the water's palm. A captive as surely as I am captive. Long fingers of river, Schuylkill, Delaware, the rest of the hand invisible; underground streams and channels feed the soggy flesh of marsh, clay pit, sink, gutter, stagnant pool. What's not seen is heard in the suck of footsteps through spring mud of unpaved streets. Noxious vapors that sting your eyes, cause you to gag, spit, and wince are evidence of a presence, the dead hand cupping this city, the poisons that circulate through it, the sweat on its rotting flesh.

10 No one has asked my opinion. No one will. Yet I have seen this fever before, and though I can prescribe no cure, I could tell stories of other visitations, how it came and stayed and left us, the progress of disaster, its several stages, its horrors and mitigations. My words would not save one life, but those mortally affrighted by the fever, by the prospect of universal doom, might find solace in knowing there are limits to the power of this scourge that has befallen us, that some, yea, most will survive, that this condition is temporary, a season, that the fever must disappear with the first deep frosts and its disappearance is as certain as the fact it will come again.

20 They say the rat's-nest ships from Santo Domingo brought the fever. Frenchmen and their black slaves fleeing black insurrection. Those who've seen Barbados's distemper say our fever is its twin born in the tropical climate of the hellish Indies. I know better. I hear the drum, the forest's heartbeat, pulse of the sea that chains the moon's wandering, the spirit's journey. Its throb is source and promise of all things being connected, a mirror storing everything, forgetting nothing. To explain the fever we need no boatloads of refugees, ragged and wracked with killing fevers, bringing death to our shores. We have bred the affliction within our breasts. Each solitary heart contains all the world's tribes, and its precarious dance echoes the drum's thunder. We are our ancestors and our children, neighbors and strangers to ourselves. Fever descends when the waters that connect us are clogged with filth. When our seas are garbage. The waters cannot come and go when we are shut off one from the other, each in his frock coat, wig, bonnet, apron, shop, shoes, skin, behind locks, doors, sealed faces, our blood grows thick and sluggish. Our bodies void infected fluids. Then we are dry and cracked as a desert country, vital parts wither, all dust and dry bones inside. Fever is a drought consuming us from within. Discolored skin caves in upon itself, we burn, expire.

35 I regret there is so little comfort in this explanation. It takes into account neither climatists nor contagionists, flies in the face of logic and reason, the good doctors of the College of Physicians who would bleed us, purge us, quarantine, plunge us in icy baths, starve us, feed us elixirs of bark and wine, sprinkle us with gunpowder, drown us in vinegar according to the dictates of their various healing sciences. Who, then, is this foolish, old man who receives his wisdom from pagan drums in pagan forests? Are these the delusions of one whose brain the fever has already begun to gnaw? Not quite. True, I have survived other visitations of the fever, but while it prowls this city, I'm in jeopardy again as you are, because I claim no immunity, no magic. The messenger who bears the news of my death will reach me precisely at the stroke determined when it was determined I should tumble from the void and taste air the first time. Nothing is an accident. Fever grows in the secret places of our hearts, planted there when one of us decided to sell one of us to another. The drum must pound ten thousand thousand years to drive that evil away.