

Concours général des lycées. Epreuve d'anglais.

Sujets d'examens

Concours Général des Lycées - Session de 2003 - Epreuve d'anglais

[Philip has just spent a first, frustrating evening with the tea-shop waitress Mildred Rogers.]

They came to the station, and he went to the booking-office.

"I've got my season," she said.

"I thought I'd take you home as it's rather late, if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind if it gives you any pleasure."

He took a single first for her and a return for himself.

"Well, you're not mean, I will say that for you," she said, when he opened the carriage door.

Philip did not know whether he was pleased or sorry when other people entered and if was impossible to speak. They got out at Heme Hill, and he accompanied her to the corner of the road in which she lived.

"I'll say good night to you here," she said, holding out her hand. "You'd better not come up to the door. I know what people are, and I don't want to have anybody talking."

She said good night and walked quickly away. He could see the white shawl in the darkness. He thought she might turn round, but she did not. Philip saw which house she went into, and in a moment he walked along to look at it. It was a trim, common little house of yellow brick, exactly like all the other little houses in the street. He stood outside for a few minutes, and presently the window on the top floor was darkened. Philip strolled slowly back to the station. The evening had been unsatisfactory. He felt irritated, restless and miserable.

When he lay in bed he seemed still to see her sitting in the corner of the railway carriage, with the white crochet shawl over her head. He did not know how he was to get through the hours that must pass before his eyes rested on her again. He thought drowsily of her thin face, with its delicate features, and the greenish pallor of her skin. He was not happy with her, but he was unhappy away from her. He wanted to sit by her side and look at her, he wanted to touch her, he wanted ... the thought came to him and he

did not finish it, suddenly he grew wide awake ... he wanted to kiss the thin, pale mouth with its narrow lips. The truth came to him at last. He was in love with her. It was incredible.

He had often thought of falling in love, and there was one scene which he had pictured to himself over and over again. He saw himself coming into a ballroom; his eyes fell on a little group of men and women talking; and one of the women turned round. Her eyes fell upon him, and he knew that the gasp in his throat was in her throat too. He stood quite still. She was tall and dark and beautiful, with eyes like the night; she was dressed in white, and in her black hair shone diamonds; they stared at one another, forgetting that people surrounded them. He went straight up to her, and she moved a little towards him.

Both felt that the formality of introduction was out of place. He spoke to her.

"I've been looking for you all my life," he said.

"You've come at last," she murmured.

"Will you dance with me?"

She surrendered herself to his outstretched hands and they danced. (Philip always pretended that he was not lame) She danced divinely.

"I've never danced with anyone who danced like you," she said.

She tore up her programme, and they danced together the whole evening.

"I'm so thankful that I waited for you," he said to her. "I knew that in the end I must meet you."

People in the ballroom stared. They did not care. They did not wish to hide their passion. At last they went into the garden. He flung a light cloak over her shoulders and put her in a waiting cab. They caught the midnight train to Paris; and they sped through the silent, star-lit night into the unknown.

He thought of this old fancy of his, and it seemed impossible that he should be in love with Mildred Rogers. Her name was grotesque. He did not think her pretty; he hated the thinness of her, only that evening he had noticed how the bones other chest stood out in evening dress; he went over her features one by one; he did not like her mouth, and the unhealthiness of her colour vaguely repelled him. She was common. Her phrases, so bald and few, constantly repeated, showed the emptiness of her mind; he recalled her vulgar little laugh at the jokes of the musical comedy; and he remembered the little finger carefully extended when she held her glass to her mouth; her manners, like her conversation, were odiously genteel. He remembered her insolence; sometimes he had felt inclined to box her ears; and suddenly, he knew not why, perhaps it was the thought of hitting her or the recollection of her tiny, beautiful ears, he was seized by an uprush of emotion. He yearned for her. He thought of taking her in his arms, the thin, fragile body, and kissing her pale

mouth; he wanted to pass his fingers down the slightly greenish cheeks. He wanted her. He had thought of love as a rapture which seized one so that all the world seemed spring-like, he had looked forward to an ecstatic happiness; but this was not happiness; it was a hunger of the soul, it was a painful yearning, it was a bitter anguish, he had never known before. He tried to think when it had first come to him. He did not know. He only remembered that each time he had gone into the shop, after the first two or three times, it had been with a little feeling in the heart that was pain; and he remembered that when she spoke to him he felt curiously breathless. When she left him it was wretchedness, and when she came to him again it was despair. He stretched himself in his bed as a dog stretches himself. He wondered how he was going to endure that ceaseless aching of his soul.

W.S. MAUGHAM, Of Human Bondage, pp. 277-278, Pan Books, 1915.

I. VERSION

Traduire de "He thought of this old fancy ..." (1. 43) jusqu'à "... it was despair" (1. 61).

II. QUESTIONS

- 1. Show how simple language in this passage is not incompatible with expressiveness.**
- 2. Analyse the use of cliché in the passage.**
- 3. Writing about love is nothing more than emotional release. To what extent does this apply to this passage and to autobiography in general?**
- 4. All writing aspires to be poetry. Discuss.**