

COMPOSITION EN LANGUE ANGLAISE

CONCOURS GÉNÉRAL DES LYCÉES - SESSION DE 1973

(Classes de Première A, B, C, D et E)

Durée de l'épreuve: 5 heures (non compris le temps de la dictée)

L'usage de tout dictionnaire est interdit.

I. VERSION

LET US NOT BE ROMANTIC

Romance is always, I think, a product of ennui, an attempt to escape from a condition in which real life appears empty, prosaic, and boresome — therefore essentially a gentlemanly product. The man who has grappled with real life, flesh to flesh and spirit to spirit, has little patience with fools' paradises. When Carlyle said to the emigrants, « Here and now is your America », he spoke as a realist to romanticists; and Ibsen was of the same mind when he finally decided that there is more tragedy in the next suburban villa than in a whole imaginary Italy of unauthentic Borgias. Indeed, in our present phase, romance has become the literary trade of imaginative weaklings who have neither the energy to gain experience of life nor the genius to divine it : wherefore I would have the State establish a public Department of Literature, which should affix to every romance a brief dossier of the author. For example : « The writer of this story has no ascertainable qualifications for dealing with the great personages and events of history. His mind is stored with fiction, and his imagination inflamed with alcohol. His books, full of splendid sins, in no respect reflect his life, as he is too timid not to be conventionally respectable, and has never fought a man or tempted a woman. He cannot box, fence, or ride, and is afraid to master the bicycle. He appears to be kept alive mainly by the care of his wife, a plain woman; much worn by looking after him and the children. He is unconscious that he has any duties as a citizen; and the Secretary of State for Literature has failed to extract from him any intelligible answer to a question as to the difference between an Urban Sanitary Authority and the Holy Roman Empire. The public are therefore warned to attach no practical importance to the feats of swordsmanship, the breakneck rides, the intrigues with Semiramis, Cleopatra, and Catherine of Russia, and the cabinet councils of Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Richelieu, and Napoleon, as described in his works...»

For all that, the land of dreams is a wonderful place...

G.B. SHAW, *Our Theatre In The Nineties*.

II. QUESTIONS

1. Comment upon the quotation attributed to Carlyle "Here and now is your America".
2. Is Shaw right when he says that the man who has grappled with real life will have no patience with romantic stories ? Justify your opinion.
3. Yet, many people love romances — and you may be one of them —. Can you explain why ?
4. Do you agree with Shaw's portrait of the writers of romances ? Can you give examples to support or contradict his assessment ?