

Concours général des lycées. Epreuve d'anglais.

Sujets d'examens

Concours Général des Lycées - Session de 1992 - Epreuve d'anglais

The piano came in the night when Danny was in bed. When he had visited Uncle George, Danny would slip into the front room on his own and climb up on the piano stool and single-finger notes. He liked to play the white ones because afterwards, when he struck a black note it was so sad that it gave him a funny feeling in his tummy. The piano stool had a padded seat which opened. Inside were wads of old sheet music with film stars' pictures on the front.

Bing Crosby, Johnny Ray, Rosemary Clooney. He had heard her singing on the radio.

A cannon-ball don't pay no mind

Whether you're gentle or you're kind.

It was about a civil war. He liked the way she twirled her voice. When he tried to sing that song he always put on an American accent.

Two brothers on their way

One wore blue and one wore grey.

After school he walked to his first lesson on a road that fumed with dry snow and wind. The door of the forge was closed and the place silent. On the way out a car passed him, returning to town. A white face pressed itself up against the back window. White hair, blue glasses and a red tongue sticking out at him. Mingo. Danny hated Mingo, with his strange eyes and white fleshy skin. Some of the boys in school had told him that Mingo was from Albania and they were all like that there. Miss Schwartz had a warm fire blazing in her front room.

"You must be cold," she said. "Come, warm your hands."

Danny held out his chapped hands and felt the heat on them. He rubbed the warmed palms on his bare knees, trying to thaw them out. Miss Schwartz smiled.

"You are such a good-looking boy," she said. Danny stood embarrassed, his brown eyes averted, looking down at the fire. His blond hair had been cuffed and ruffled by the wind and gave him a wild look.

"You look like the Angel Gabriel," she said and pulled her mouth into a wide smile. "Sit down-near the fire-and let me tell you about music." She spoke with a strange accent, as if some of her words were squeezed into the wrong shape. Her mouth was elastic. Danny knew every word she said but it was not the way he had heard anybody talk before.

"What kind of music do you like?"

"I dunno," said Danny after a moment's thought.

"Do you have a favourite singer?"

"I like Elvis."

"Rubbish," she said, still smiling. "What I am going to tell you now you will not believe. You will not understand it, but I have to tell you all the same. I will teach you about things. I hope I will nurture in you a love you will never forget." The smile had disappeared from her face and her eyes widened and drilled into Danny's. "Music is the most beautiful thing in the world. Today beautiful is a word that has been dirtied, but I mean it truly. Beautiful." She let the word hang in the air between them.

"Music is why I do not die. Other people-they have blood put in their arms," she stabbed a fingernail at the inside of her elbow, "I am kept alive by music. It is the food of love, as you say. I stress that you will not believe me, but what you must do is trust me. I will show it to you if you will let me. Rilke says that music begins where speech ends-and he should know."

Danny looked at her and the two pin-head reflections of the fire in her eyes. She was good-looking, with a long thin face and a broad mouth which she was constantly contorting as she wrestled to make the strange words clear. She did not wear lipstick like his mother. Her jet black hair was pulled back into a knot at the back of her neck and her parting was straight, as if ruled. Danny had seen her from the back when she played the organ in church and occasionally when she had come into the town shops, a dark figure hardly worth notice, her basket on her stiff forearm, her wrist to the sky. But here she seemed to fill the room with her talk and her flashing hands. All the time she sat on the edge of her chair, leaning towards him, talking into him. He swayed back as far as his stool would let him. "Wait, she said. She got up and went over to a bureau and took out a sheet of paper from a type writer. She held it up.

"Look. Look hard at this."

Danny looked but could see nothing, only the slight curl at the bottom of the page where it had lain in the machine.

"I give you a white sheet of paper. It is nothing. But the black marks... The black marks,

Danny. That is what makes it important. The music, the words. They are the black marks," she said, and her whole face blazed with passion. "I am going to teach you those marks. Then I am going to teach you to make the most wonderful music from them. Come, let us begin." As she sat down at the piano she snorted. "Elvis Presley!"

When the lesson was over Miss Schwartz got up and went out, saying that they both deserved a cup of tea. Danny sat on the piano stool and looked at the room. It was a strange place, covered in pictures. Behind the pictures the wallpaper was dark brown, or else so old that it looked dark brown. There were plants in pots standing in saucers all over the place. Large dark green spikes with leathery leaves, small hanging plants, one with a pale flower on it. The wind pressured round the house and buffeted in the chimney. He could hear the ticking of fresh snow on the windows and the drone of a lorry taking the hill.

"I hope it lies," he said to himself. The fire hissed and blew out a small feather of flame.

Miss Schwartz, carrying a tray, closed the door with her toe, which peeped out from her dressing-gown. It was black silk, long to the floor and hanging loosely about her body. On the back it had a strange Chinese pattern in scarlet and green and silver threads. It reminded Danny of the one the magician wore in the Rupert Bear strip in the Daily Express.

"Now, while we drink our tea I will have to play you some music," she said. She lifted the lid of one of the pieces of furniture and put on a record. She turned it up so loud that the music bulged in the room Danny had never heard anything like it and he hated it. It had no tune and he kept waiting for somebody to sing but nobody did. He ate two biscuits and drank his tea as quickly as he could then

she let him go.

Bernard MAC LAVERTY, My Dear Palestrina, p. 82-86.

I. VERSION

Traduire de "After school..." (ligne 13) a "... the air between them." (lignes 37-38).

II. COMPOSITION

Répondre en anglais aux questions suivantes :

1. Danny's encounters with music.

2. Culture shocks.

3. Music as some palatable pleasure in this excerpt.

4. Judging by your own experience of music, would you regard musical education as all-important