

# Anglais LV1- Série L

## Sujet de bac

*Voici le sujet de l'année dernière, tombé en France métropolitaine en juin 2008. Il demande une attention particulière au contexte temporel et social de l'époque pendant laquelle se déroule l'action du récit.*

*The story takes place in Kenya in the early 1950s*

A postcard came airmail from London:

*Dear Vic and Deepa,*

*We're having a wonderful time here!*

*Hope you have a smashing holiday too. Say "jambo" to Njoroge.*

*Kwa heri! See you soon!*

*Bill and Annie*

On the reverse side, Picadilly Circus in full colour, a city scene grander and infinitely more bustling than our own modest and quite somnolent King Street roundabout. Look, said Papa, who was holding up the postcard, the biggest city in the world.

Where's the circus, Papa? I asked him, our self-styled expert on matters English.

Maybe there was a circus there a long time ago, he said, trying to sound confident and unable to hide his uncertainty.

Mother, Deepa, and I were gathered round Papa in the shop, poring with him over every detail of the glorious scene. The black taxis, a red double-bus carrying advertisements on its side, men and women in hats, a red mailbox, a newsagent, all the store and street signs. Papa turned a wistful eye to Mother, who acknowledged with a smile; it was his dearest wish to visit that centre of the universe once in his lifetime. It was his Mecca, his Varanasi, his Jerusalem. A visit there conferred status, moreover: you became one of the select group, the London-returned.

He tacked the postcard on the upright behind the table, where it stayed for more than a year, proud reminder not only of his yearning but also of his European "friends".

Bill and Annie had gone without their parents. To my parents, it was a sign of European irresponsibility that they could send their children on an expensive voyage and yet run up sizeable debts in town. Though Mother remembered graciously that Mrs. Bruce did have a wealthy family in England. But how could she allow herself to send the children by themselves, unescorted, on a voyage that took twenty-four hours, with stopovers in strange places? Suppose someone kidnapped them? Who'd hurt a British child, Papa snapped in reply, they'd have every policeman in the world looking for them. That privilege comes from ruling the world.

It was mid July, a month and a half since they had gone. Six weeks was an eternity to a child in those days. Saturday playtime at our shopping centre became subdued and lacking in adventure. I recall Deepa, Njoroge, and myself sitting on the cement floor of the veranda outside our shop, playing a game of imagining by turns all the exciting things our two friends must be up to in London: riding double-buses and taxis, visiting all those castles and palaces and bridges we had read about, shopping at wonderful stores spilling over with comic books, toffees and chocolates. If you ran out of something to say in this game, you were "out".

That postcard clinched the case for my mother: her children too needed to visit places during their vacation. And so it was resolved in our home that all of us would go to Nairobi and Mombasa for the August holidays.

The train from Kisumu had come in late and so we left at a little before dawn from Nakuru, which was as well because we could see more, though the Kisumu passengers were irate for having to wake up from their rocking slumbers. We reached Naivasha as dawn was breaking beyond the mountains.

How can I describe that feeling of looking out the sliding window above the little washbasin, as the small second-class cabin jostled and bumped along the rails, and taking in deep breaths of that cool, clean air and, simply, with wide hungry eyes absorbing my world. It was to become aware of one's world, physically, for the first time, in a manner I had never done before, whose universe had encompassed our housing estate and my school, the shop and my friends, the tree-lined street outside that brought people in and out of our neighbourhood. That scene outside the train window I can conjure up at any time of the day or night; I would see, feel, and experience it in similar ways so frequently in my life; in some essential way it defines me. This was my country – how could it not be? Yes, there was that yearning for England, the land of Annie and Bill and the Queen, and for all the exciting, wonderful possibilities of the larger world out there. But this, all around me was mine, where I belonged with my heart and soul.

Adapted from M.G. Vassanji, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, 2003

## COMPRÉHENSION - EXPRESSION

Vous traiterez les questions dans l'ordre, en indiquant clairement leur numéro sur votre copie.

Lorsque la réponse doit être développée, le nombre de mots ou d'éléments de réponse sera indiqué dans la question.

En l'absence d'indications, vous répondrez brièvement (moins de 20 mots) à la question posée.

### Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4: focus on lines 1 to 25.

1. Line 1: "A postcard came airmail from London."

- Say who this postcard is addressed to and who is actually looking at it.  
It is addressed to Vic and Deepa who are looking at it with their parents
- Deduce the name of the narrator.  
The narrator is called Vic

2. Describe the characters' dominant reaction when looking at the postcard.

They scrutinize the postcard. They are amazed by London because they find it wonderful and very exotic.

3. Line 18: "He tacked the postcard on the upright behind the table, where it stayed for more than a year..."

- Who does "he" refer to?  
The narrator's father. "Papa" (l.8)
  - Using elements from the text, find three reasons why this character decides to tack and keep the postcard. (50/60 words)  
He admires London because he thinks it's "the biggest in the world" (l.9) or even "the center of the universe" (l.16). He really longs to go there as he says it is "his dearest wish" (l.16). Besides, he is proud to have a postcard from his "European friends" (l.19).
4. a) What aspects of Bill and Annie's trip to London do the narrator's parents discuss? (3 elements)  
The father thinks it is long and expensive and the mother thinks it is risky because Annie and Bill are on their own.
- b) Lines 24-25: "Who'd hurt a British child, Papa snapped in reply, they'd have every policeman in the world looking for them. That privilege comes from ruling the world."  
Explain what the father means by that. (40/50 words)  
He means that it is not dangerous because nobody would hurt or kidnap a British child because, at that time, the Britons were considered as "the masters of the world".

### Questions 5 and 6: focus on lines 26 to 33.

5. a) How does Bill and Annie's absence affect Deepa and the narrator's mood and activities?  
The narrator and Deepa miss them and they spend their time imagining what their friends are doing in London. They are bored because they find their games less exciting.
- c) What do Deepa and the narrator's activities show about their vision of London?  
They see London as a wonderful city but they have a stereotyped vision of it as they can only imagine London according to what they read on the postcard.
6. a) What decision does the mother make after the postcard has arrived?  
She decides to organize a trip for the whole family.
- c) Commenting on the use of "too" (line 32) and "all of us" (line 33), explain what motivates her decision. (40/50 words)  
She wants to prove that she is a more responsible mother and prefers to leave as a family instead of letting Vic and Deepa leave on their own. She can't find any reason for her children to take a break.

### Question 7: focus on the passage from line 34 to the end.

7. a) Say where the narrator is in this passage.  
He is on the train.
- b) "...taking in deep breaths of that cool, clean air and, simply, with wide hungry eyes absorbing my world." (lines 38-39)  
What happens to the narrator at that moment and how does it affect him for the rest of his life? (40/50 words)  
The narrator feels excited because he realizes that there is another world beyond his neighborhood. Besides, he feels like he belongs to Kenya which is really his home country, though he admires England.

### Question 8: choose one of the following subjects.

(250 words approximately. Write down the number of words.)

#### Subject 1

“... It was his dearest wish to visit that centre of the universe once in his lifetime.” (lines 15-16)

Is there a place in the world that you would particularly like to visit? Explain why.

- Premièrement, préciser de quel endroit il s'agit (ville, pays...)
- Puis, expliquer les raisons de ce choix : que vous évoque cet endroit ? (rêve, fascination, évasion...), comment connaissez-vous cet endroit ? (photos, récits de proches, livres/Internet, éventuellement souvenirs d'enfance...), y a-t-il tout de même des aspects qui vous feraient hésiter à y aller ? (climat, éloignement, situation politique/sociale...)

## Subject 2

“Leaving is more important than arriving”. Discuss and illustrate, drawing from your experience or your readings.

- Exposer les arguments en faveur de l'une et l'autre des positions sans oublier d'exprimer votre opinion personnelle
- Possibilité d'explicitier ce qu'on entend par « more important » : plus difficile, conséquences plus significatives...
- Exposer ce qu'implique de quitter un endroit : abandonner ses habitudes, quitter sa famille/ses amis, quitter son travail...
- Exposer ce qu'implique d'arriver dans un endroit : retrouver des repères, s'adapter à un nouveau rythme/environnement/culture, se faire de nouveaux amis...

! Comme indiqué dans le sujet, illustrer chaque argument par des exemples tirés de votre propre expérience (ou éventuellement celle de proches) ou de lectures personnelles

## TRADUCTION

Translate into French from line 26 to line 31.

### Traduction possible :

C'était la mi-juillet, un mois et demi après leur départ. Six semaines semblaient une éternité pour un enfant à cette période. Notre temps libre du samedi au centre commercial devenait terne et pauvre en aventures. Je me souviens de Deepa, Njoroge et moi-même, assis sur le sol de ciment de la véranda à l'extérieur de notre magasin, imaginant, tout à tour, ce que nos deux amis pouvaient faire d'amusant à Londres : prendre les bus à impériale et des taxis, visiter tous ces châteaux, palais et autres ponts sur lesquels nous avons lu tant de choses, faire les magasins dans des boutiques débordant de bandes dessinées, de caramels et de chocolats. Celui qui était à court d'imagination dans ce jeu avait perdu.