

Anglais LV1 - Série S

Sujet de bac

Voici le sujet de l'année dernière, tombé en France métropolitaine en juin 2008. Ce texte présente quelques difficultés essentiellement au niveau du vocabulaire qui est très riche, c'est pourquoi il demande une lecture particulièrement attentive pour cerner le contexte.

Fiona Sweeney shoved a pair of rolled-up jeans into the corner of her purple duffel bag. Outside her bedroom window, a siren's wail sliced through the white noise of a wet snowfall. Those eerie man-made moans were part of New York City's wallpaper, a signal of trouble commonplace enough to pass unnoticed. But Fi registered this one, maybe because she knew she wouldn't be hearing sirens for a while.

5 She turned her attention back to her bag, which still had space. What else should she take? Lifting a framed snapshot, she examined her mother as a young woman, wading into a stream, wearing rubber boots and carrying a fishing pole. Fi cherished the photograph; in real life, she'd never known her mother to be that carefree. The mother Fi had known wouldn't want to go to Africa. In fact, she wouldn't want Fi to go. Fi put the picture facedown and scanned the room, her attention drawn to a worn volume of Irish poetry by her bedside. She tucked it in.

10 "How about the netting?" Chris called from the living room where he sat with Devi. "Already in," Fi answered. "And repellent?" asked Devi.

"Yes, yes." Fi waved her hand as though shooing away a gnat—a gesture that Chris and Devi couldn't see from the other room. "Should have kept my mouth shut," she murmured.

15 Early on in her research about Kenya, she'd discovered that the country's annual death toll from malaria was in the tens of thousands. She had pills; she had repellents; logically, she knew she'd be fine. Still, a figure that high jolted her. She became slightly obsessed and—here's the rub—discussed it with Chris and Devi. Mbu—mosquito—had been the first Swahili word she'd learned. Sometimes the insects even dive-bombed into her nightmares. Eventually, mosquitoes became a metaphor for everything she feared about this trip: all the stories she'd read about a violent and chaotic continent, plus the jitters that come with the unknown.

20 And what wasn't unknown? All she knew for sure, in fact, was why she was going. Fi's mom had never been a big talker, but she'd been a hero, raising four kids alone. Now it was Fi's turn to do something worthwhile.

"Fi." Chris, at the door of the bedroom, waved in the air the paper on which he'd written a list of all the items he thought she should bring and might forget. Money belt. Hat. Granola bars. "Have you been using this?" he asked half-mockingly in the tone of a teacher.

25 "I hate lists," Fi said.

He studied her a second. "OK," he said. "Then, what do you say, take a break?" "Yeah, c'mon, Fi. We don't want to down all your wine by ourselves," Devi called from the living room, where an Enya CD played low.

30 Pulling back her dark, frizzy hair and securing it with a clip, Fi moved to the living room and plopped onto the floor across from Devi, who sprawled in a long skirt on the couch. Chris poured Fi a glass of cabernet and sat in the chair nearest her. If they reached out, the three of them could hold hands. Fi felt connected to them in many ways, but at the same time, she was already partly in another place and period. A soft light fell in from the window, dousing the room in a flattering glow and intensifying the sensation that everything around her was diaphanous, and that she herself was half here and half not.

"You know, there's lots of illiteracy in this country," Devi said after a moment.

35 "That's why I've been volunteering after work," Fi said. "But there, it's different. They've never been exposed to libraries. Some have never held a book in their hands."

"Not to mention that it's more dangerous, which somehow makes it appealing to Fi," Chris said to Devi, shaking his head. "Nai-robbery."

40 Though he spoke lightly, his words echoed those of Fi's brother and two sisters—especially her brother. She was ready with a retort. "I'll mainly be in Garissa, not Nairobi," she said. "It's no more dangerous there than New York City. Anyway, I want to take some risks—different risks. Break out of my rut. Do something meaningful." Then she made her tone playful. "The idealistic Irish. What can you do?"

"Sometimes idealism imposes," Chris said. "What if all they want is food and medicine?"

45 "You know what I think. Books are their future. A link to the modern world." Fi grinned. "Besides, we want Huckleberry Finn to arrive before *Sex in the City* reruns, don't we?" Devi reached out to squeeze Fi's shoulder. "Just be home by March."

COMPRÉHENSION

1. In what country does the scene take place? Justify your answer by quoting from the text.

The scene takes place in the USA – “New York City” (1.3)

2. How many characters are present in the scene? Name them and say which one is the main character.

Three characters are present in the scene : Fiona Sweeney, the main character, Chris and Devi

3. Give additional information about the main character (surname, nickname, family composition).

Fiona’s surname is Sweeney (1.1) and her nickname is Fi (1.3). She has one brother and two sisters (1.39). Her mother brought up her four kids by herself (1.21).

4. Pick out two quotations to prove that the main character is about to leave.

“Fiona Sweeney shoved a pair of rolled-up jeans into the corner of her purple duffel bag.” (1.1)

“she wouldn't be hearing sirens for a while” (1.4)

“She turned her attention back to her bag, which still had space. What else should she take?” (1.5)

“She tucked it in.” (1.9)

“the paper on which he'd written a list of all the items he thought she should bring and might forget.” (l. 22-23)

5. The main character's destination is Kenya. Rewrite the following sentences using words from the text to complete them.

Kenya is a country in Africa where Swahili and English are the two official languages. Nairobi is the capital while Garissa is a smaller city.

6. a) How does the main character feel in the passage from line 14 to line 19 ?

She feels apprehensive and anxious.

b) Give at least three reasons why the main character feels this way. (30 words)

First, she worries about mosquitoes and malaria which causes the death of many people. Besides, she fears about violence which is rampant in Kenya. At last, above all, she fears of the unknown.

7. a) Who was an inspiration for the main character to do something out of the ordinary? Justify with a quotation.

Fiona’s main inspiration is her mother. “she'd been a hero” (1.21)

b) In what way was this person an inspiration? (20 words)

Fiona admired her mother because she brought up her four kids on her own without complaining about it.

8. Among the following sentences, choose the one which explains what the play on words "Nai-robbery" in line 38 means.

a) The crime rate in Nairobi is very high.

b) Women in Nairobi wear very fashionable dresses.

c) Life in Nairobi is very expensive.

d) You'll never be robbed in Nairobi.

9. a) Which people does the pronoun "them" refer to in the sentence "Fi felt connected to them in many ways" (1.30)?

It refers to Chris and Devi.

b) Do these people approve of the main character's decision to go to Kenya? Sum up their arguments. (30 words)

They disapprove Fiona’s decision because they think that it’s too dangerous and that Fiona doesn’t need to go abroad to fight illiteracy. Besides, they think illiteracy is not the main issue in Kenya.

10. What arguments does the main character give to refute theirs? (30 words)

She argues that New York City is as dangerous as Garissa. Besides, she has already been involved in volunteer work in New York but she thinks that the need to fight illiteracy in Africa is greater.

11. Quote elements from the text to show that, despite their disagreement, the atmosphere is cosy and comfortable in the passage from line 26 to line 33.

“We don't want to down all your wine by ourselves” (l.26-27)

“an Enya CD played low” (l.27)

“ a glass of cabernet” (l.29)

“a soft light” (l.31)

Read the whole text again.

12. Explain why the people present in the scene have decided to meet at the main character's home. (30 words)

They have come for a farewell party and to show they care. They are there to help her pack and to see if they can't get her to change her mind.

13. Analyze what personal benefits the main character hopes to derive from this Kenyan experience. (30 words)

She hopes to make her life more exciting and, above all, to give it a meaning by doing something useful. She may also want to do as well as her mother and do something that she would have been proud of.

EXPRESSION

Choose subject 1 (a+b) or subject 2.

Subject 1:

a) Write the letter the main character sends to a friend after living and working in Kenya for a few weeks. (150 words)

Dans cette lettre, le personnage peut exposer plusieurs éléments à son ami(e) :

- comment s'adapte-t-elle à sa nouvelle vie ? vie quotidienne, amis, travail, collègues...
- quelle est la réalité de la vie sur place par rapport à ce qu'elle imaginait avant de partir ? ses craintes et ses doutes se sont-ils confirmés ou bien finalement n'étaient-ils pas fondés ?
- regrette-t-elle d'être partie ? est-ce que la vie à New York lui manque ? pourquoi ?

b) One of the characters suggests that all that people in developing countries want is "food and medicine" (1.43). To what extent do you agree? (150 words)

Pour ce sujet, il est peut-être utile de différencier les types de pays dits « en développement » : certains connaissant des situations de guerres civiles ou d'épidémies qui, en effet, ont avant tout besoin de nourriture et de médicaments ; d'autres, sortis de telles situations et en reconstruction, où d'autres types de besoins se font ressentir. Il est ensuite possible d'exposer les différents types d'aide dont peuvent avoir besoin ces pays : lutte contre l'illettrisme, accès à l'école, accès à la culture, accès à l'information, prévention contre certaines maladies...

Subject 2:

Is it possible to combine idealism with a professional career? (300 words)

Pistes possibles :

- expliquer ce que l'on entend par « idealism » : s'agit-il simplement de suivre certains principes ou convictions personnels ? ou de s'engager pleinement pour une cause particulière ?...
- est-ce possible dans le cadre même du travail ? quelles professions s'y prêteraient le mieux/le moins ? dans quel secteur ?...
- en dehors du travail ? faire du bénévolat ? s'impliquer dans une association ?...