

BACCALAURÉAT GÉNÉRAL - SESSION 2006

ÉPREUVE	ANGLAIS LV.1	Durée : 3 heures
Séries	ES - S	Coefficient : 3

Ce sujet comporte 4 pages numérotées de 1/4 à 4/4.

L'usage de la calculatrice et du dictionnaire n'est pas autorisé.

Dès que ce sujet vous est remis, assurez-vous qu'il est complet.

Barème	
Compréhension du texte	10
Expression personnelle	10

The train was at a standstill, some twenty minutes outside Kolkata¹, when an unexpected stroke of luck presented Piya with an opportunity to avail herself of a seat beside a window. She had been sitting in the stuffiest part of the compartment, on the edge of a bench, with her backpacks arrayed around her: now, moving to the window, she saw that the train had stopped at a station called Champahati. A platform sloped down into a huddle of hutments before sinking into a pond filled with foaming grey sludge. She could tell, from the density of the crowds on the train, that this was how it would be all the way to Canning: strange to think that this was the threshold of the Sundarbans, this jungle of shacks and shanties, spanned by the tracks of a commuter train.

10 Looking over her shoulder, Piya spotted a tea-seller patrolling the platform. Reaching through the bars, she summoned him with a wave. She had never cared for the kind of *chai*² sold in Seattle, her hometown, but somehow, in the ten days she had spent in India she had developed an unexpected affinity for milky, overboiled tea served in earthenware cups. There were no spices in it for one thing, and this was more to her taste
15 than the *chai* at home.

 She paid for her tea and was trying to manoeuvre the cup through the bars of the window when the man in the seat opposite her own suddenly flipped over a page, jolting her hand. She turned her wrist quickly enough to make sure that most of the tea spilled out of the window, but she could not prevent a small trickle from shooting over his papers.

20 'Oh, I'm so sorry!' Piya was mortified: of everyone in the compartment, this was the last person she would have chosen to scald with her tea. She had noticed him while waiting on the platform in Kolkata and she had been struck by the self-satisfied tilt of his head and the unabashed way in which he stared at everyone around him, taking them in, sizing them up, sorting them all into their places. She had noticed the casual self-
25 importance with which he had evicted the man who'd been sitting next to the window. She had been put in mind of some of her relatives in Kolkata: they too seemed to share the assumption that they had been granted some kind of entitlement (was it because of their class or their education?) that allowed them to expect that life's little obstacles and annoyances would always be swept away to suit their convenience.

30 'Here,' said Piya, producing a 'handful of tissues. 'Let me help you clean up.'

 'There's nothing to be done,' he said testily. 'These pages are ruined anyway.'

 She flinched as he crumpled up the papers he had been reading and tossed them out of the window. 'I hope they weren't important,' she said in a small voice.

 'Nothing irreplaceable – just Xeroxes.'

¹ The other name of Calcutta, a city in eastern India, the capital of the West Bengal State, near the Bay of Bengal.

² *Chai*: Indian spiced tea.

35 For a moment she considered pointing out that it was he who had jogged her hand. But all she could bring herself to say was, 'I'm very sorry. I hope you'll excuse me.'

'Do I really have a choice?' he said in a tone more challenging than ironic. 'Does anyone have a choice when they're dealing with Americans these days?'

Piya had no wish to get into an argument so she let this pass. Instead she opened
40 her eyes wide, feigning admiration, and said, 'But how did you guess?'

'About what?'

'About my being American? You're very observant.'

This seemed to mollify him. His shoulders relaxed as he leaned back in his seat. 'I
didn't guess,' he said. '*I knew.*'

45 'And how did you know?' she said. 'Was it my accent?'

'Yes,' he said with a nod. 'I'm very rarely wrong about accents. I'm a translator you see, and an interpreter as well, by profession. I like to think that my ears are tuned to the nuances of spoken language.'

'Oh really?' She smiled so that her teeth shone brightly in the dark oval of her face.
50 'And how many languages do you know?'

'Six. Not including dialects.'

'Wow!' Her admiration was unfeigned now. 'I'm afraid English is my only language. And I wouldn't claim to be much good at it either.'

A frown of puzzlement appeared on his forehead. 'And you're on your way to
55 Canning you said?'

'Yes.'

'But tell me this,' he said. 'If you don't know any Bengali or Hindi, how are you planning to find your way around over there?'

60 'I'll do what I usually do,' she said with a laugh. 'I'll try to wing it. Anyway, in my line of work there's not much talk needed.'

'And what is your line of work, if I may ask?'

'I'm a cetologist,' she said. 'That means' She was beginning, almost apologetically, to expand on this when he interrupted her.

65 'I know what it means,' he said sharply. 'You don't need to explain. It means you study marine mammals. Right?'

'Yes,' she said, nodding. 'You're very well informed. Marine mammals are what I study – dolphins, whales, dugongs and so on. My work takes me out on the water for days sometimes, with no one to talk to – no one who speaks English, anyway.'

Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, Harper Collins 2004.

Vous traiterez les questions dans l'ordre, en indiquant clairement leur numéro sur votre copie. Vous répondrez aux questions en anglais et par des phrases complètes. Vous accompagnerez les citations de la mention de la ligne.

I – COMPRÉHENSION - EXPRESSION

1. In the first two paragraphs, what details are typical of Indian life? Mention at least five details.
2. Explain why Piya moves to a seat by the window. Quote the text to justify your answer.
3. Sum up the incident that takes place in the compartment between Piya and the man sitting opposite her. (30 words)
4. What is the man's attitude towards the other people on the train? Explain how he came to find himself close to Piya. Illustrate your answer with six elements from the text.
5. Why does the man feel justified to behave so scornfully? Who does the man's attitude remind Piya of?
6. Read from line 20 to line 38. How does Piya react and what does it show about her character? Compare her attitude to the man's.
7. How does the man know that Piya is American? What does the reader know about her?
8. At first, what does Piya pretend to admire in the man and why? What does she really admire in him in the end?
9. Line 54 to the end: Explain the two characters' attitudes towards language as a means for different cultures to get in touch. What is typically American in Piya's attitude towards other cultures?
10. Translate into French from line 11 ("Looking over her shoulder, ...") to line 15 ("... more to her taste than the chai at home.")

II – EXPRESSION

Traitez l'un des deux sujets suivants en 300 mots (indiquez le nombre de mots) :

1. Imagine the same passage as told by the man.
2. Do you admire this young woman? Would you be ready to go and work alone in a faraway country whose customs and language you do not know?