

Epreuve écrite

Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2007

Section: A

Branche: Anglais (*Texte inconnu*)

Numéro d'ordre du candidat

Unknown text

The Shawl

Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell. How they walked on the roads together, Rosa with Magda curled up between sore breasts, Magda wound up in the shawl. Sometimes Stella carried Magda. But she was jealous of Magda. A thin girl of fourteen, too small, with thin breasts of her own, Stella wanted to be wrapped in a shawl, hidden away, asleep, rocked by the march, a baby, a round infant in arms. Magda took Rosa's nipple, and Rosa never stopped walking, a walking cradle. There was not enough milk; sometimes Magda sucked air; then she screamed. Stella was ravenous. Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones.

Rosa did not feel hunger; she felt light, not like someone walking but like someone in a faint, in trance, arrested in a fit, someone who is already a floating angel, alert and seeing everything, but in the air, not there, not touching the road. As if teetering on the tips of her fingernails. She looked into Magda's face through a gap in the shawl: a squirrel in a nest, safe, no one could reach her inside the little house of the shawl's windings. The face, very round, a pocket mirror of a face: but it was not Rosa's bleak complexion, dark like cholera, it was another kind of face altogether, eyes blue as air, smooth feathers of hair nearly as yellow as the Star sewn into Rosa's coat. You could think she was one of *their* babies.

Rosa, floating, dreamed of giving Magda away in one of the villages. She could leave the line for a minute and push Magda into the hands of any woman on the side of the road. But if she moved out of line they might shoot. And even if she fled the line for half a second and pushed the shawl-bundle at a stranger, would the woman take it? She might be surprised, or afraid; she might drop the shawl, and Magda would fall out and strike her head and die. The little round head. Such a good child, she gave up screaming, and sucked now only for the taste of the drying nipple itself. The neat grip of the tiny gums. One mite of a tooth tip sticking up in the bottom gum, how shining, an elfin tombstone of white marble gleaming there. Without complaining, Magda relinquished Rosa's teats, first the left, then the right; both were cracked, not a sniff of milk. The duct-crevice extinct, a dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole, so Magda took the corner of the shawl and milked it instead. She sucked and sucked, flooding the threads with wetness. The shawl's good flavor, milk of linen.

It was a magic shawl, it could nourish an infant for three days and three nights. Magda did not die, she stayed alive, although very quiet. A peculiar smell, of cinnamon and almonds, lifted out of her mouth. She held her eyes open every moment, forgetting how to blink or nap, and Rosa and sometimes Stella studied their blueness. On the road they raised one burden of a leg after another and studied Magda's face. "Aryan," Stella said, in a voice grown as thin as a string; and Rosa thought how Stella gazed at Magda like a young cannibal. And the time that Stella said "Aryan," it sounded to Rosa as if Stella had really said "Let us devour her".

Cynthia Ozick "The Shawl"

<i>cradle:</i>	<i>small bed for babies</i>
<i>ravenous:</i>	<i>very hungry</i>
<i>to teeter:</i>	<i>to appear to be about to fall while moving or standing</i>
<i>bleak:</i>	<i>cold, empty, not attractive</i>
<i>mite:</i>	<i>a small amount of something</i> <i>a very small creature that lives in plants</i>
<i>to relinquish:</i>	<i>to give up, let go</i>
<i>duct:</i>	<i>narrow tube that liquid passes through</i>
<i>cinnamon:</i>	<i>sweet-smelling brown substance used for giving a special taste to cakes, etc.</i>
<i>almond:</i>	<i>a flat, pale nut</i>

Questions

Refer closely to the text to back up your answers to questions 1-4

1. Describe the situation that you find in this extract. (7)
2. Analyse the imagery Ozick uses and point out the effects she achieves in that way. (15)
3. Compare and contrast the attitudes that Rosa and Stella show towards Magda. (15)
4. What is the importance of the shawl in this extract? (8)
5. With reference to the present, discuss the reasons that sometimes lead human beings to treat others without respecting their human dignity and their most basic rights. (15)