

Epreuve écrite

Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2011

Section: A

Branche: anglais

Numéro d'ordre du candidat

– Textes connus –

COMPREHENSION

(30 marks)

THE HANDMAID'S TALE

What is on the other side is normal life. I should say: what is on the other side looks like normal life. There is a desk, of course, with a Computalk on it, and a black leather chair behind it. There's a potted plant on the desk, a pen-holder set, papers. There's an oriental rug on the floor, and a fireplace without a fire in it. There's a small sofa, covered in brown plush, a television set, an end table, a couple of chairs.

But all around the walls there are bookcases. They're filled with books. Books and books and books, right out in plain view, no locks, no boxes. No wonder we can't come in here. It's an oasis of the forbidden. I try not to stare.

The Commander is standing in front of the fireless fireplace, back to it, one elbow on the carved wooden overmantel, other hand in his pocket. It's such a studied pose, something of the country squire, some old come-on from a glossy men's mag. He probably decided ahead of time that he'd be standing like that when I came in. When I knocked he probably rushed over to the fireplace and propped himself up. He should have a black patch, over one eye, a cravat with horseshoes on it.

It's all very well for me to think these things, quick as staccato, a jittering of the brain. An inner jeering. But it's panic. The fact is I'm terrified.

I don't say anything.

'Close the door behind you,' he says, pleasantly enough. I do it, and turn back.

'Hello,' he says.

(270 words)

1. Why is Offred so nervous about this encounter? (8 marks)
2. 'It's an oasis of the forbidden.' Explain Gilead's policy on books. (8 marks)
3. Comment on 'the fireless fireplace'. (4 marks)
4. How is this first encounter going to change Offred's life? Does she encourage us to sympathise with the Commander at any point in the novel? (10 marks)

