

CONCOURS GÉNÉRAL DES LYCÉES

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SESSION 2016

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COMPOSITION EN LANGUE ANGLAISE

(Classes de terminale ES, L et S)

Durée : 5 heures

*L'usage de tout dictionnaire est interdit***Consignes aux candidats**

- Ne pas utiliser d'encre claire
- N'utiliser ni colle, ni agrafe
- Numéroté chaque page en bas à droite (numéro de page / nombre total de pages)
- Sur chaque copie, renseigner l'en-tête + l'identification du concours :

Concours

C	G	L
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Section/Option

A	N	G	L	A
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Epreuve

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Matière

A	N	G	L
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It was the summer that men first walked on the moon. I was very young back then, but I did not believe there would ever be a future. I wanted to live dangerously, to push myself as far as I could go, and then see what happened to me when I got there. As it turned out, I nearly did not make it. Little by little, I saw my money dwindle to zero; I lost my apartment; I wound up living in the streets. If not for a girl named Kitty Wu, I probably would have starved to death. I had met her by chance only a short time before, but eventually I came to see that chance as a form of readiness, a way of saving myself through the minds of others. That was the first part. From then on, strange things happened to me. I took the job with the old man in the wheelchair. I found out who my father was. I walked across the desert from Utah to California. That was a long time ago, of course, but I remember those days well, I remember them as the beginning of my life.

I came to New York in the fall of 1965. I was eighteen years old then, and for the first nine months I lived in a college dormitory. All out-of-town freshmen at Columbia were required to live on campus, but once the term was over I moved into an apartment on West 112th Street. That was where I lived for the next three years, right up to the moment when I finally hit bottom. Considering the odds against me, it was a miracle I lasted as long as I did.

I lived in that apartment with over a thousand books. They had originally belonged to my Uncle Victor, and he had collected them slowly over the course of about thirty years. Just before I went off to college, he impulsively offered them to me as a going-away present. I did my best to refuse, but Uncle Victor was a sentimental and generous man, and he would not let me turn him down. “I have no money to give you,” he said, “and not one word of advice. Take the books to make me happy.” I took the books, but for the next year and a half I did not open any of the boxes they were stored in. My plan was to persuade my uncle to take the books back, and in the meantime I did not want anything to happen to them.

As it turned out, the boxes were quite useful to me in that state. The apartment on 112th Street was unfurnished, and rather than squander my funds on things I did not want and could not afford, I converted the boxes into several pieces of “imaginary furniture.” It was a little like working on a puzzle: grouping the cartons into various modular configurations, lining them up in rows, stacking them one on top of another, arranging and rearranging them until they finally began to resemble household objects. One set of sixteen served as the support for my mattress, another set of twelve became a table, others of seven became chairs, another of two became a bedstand, and so on. The overall effect was rather monochromatic, what with that somber light brown everywhere you looked, but I could not help feeling proud of my resourcefulness. My friends found it a bit odd, but they had learned to expect odd things from me by then. Think of the satisfaction, I would explain to them, of crawling into bed and knowing that your dreams are about to take place on top of nineteenth-century American literature. Imagine the pleasure of sitting down to a meal with the entire Renaissance lurking below your food. In point of fact, I had no idea which books were in which boxes, but I was a great one for making up stories back then, and I liked the sound of those sentences, even if they were false.

My imaginary furniture remained intact for almost a year. Then, in the spring of 1967, Uncle Victor died. This death was a terrible blow for me; in many ways it was the worst blow I had ever had. Not only was Uncle Victor the person I had loved most in the world, he was my only relative, my one link to something larger than myself. Without him I felt bereft, utterly scorched by fate. If I had been prepared for his death somehow, it might have been easier for me to contend with. But how does one prepare for the death of a fifty-two-year-old man whose health has always been good? My uncle simply dropped dead one fine afternoon in the middle of April, and at that point my life began to change, I began to vanish into another world.

There is not much to tell about my family. The cast of characters was small, and most of them did not stay around very long. I lived with my mother until I was eleven, but then she was killed in a traffic accident, knocked down by a bus that skidded out of control in the Boston snow. There was never any father in the picture, and so it had just been the two of us, my mother and I. The fact that she used her maiden name was proof that she had never been married, but I did not learn that I was illegitimate until after she was dead. As a small boy, it never occurred to me to ask questions about such things. I was Marco Fogg, and my mother was Emily Fogg, and my uncle in Chicago was Victor Fogg. We were all Foggs, and it made perfect sense that people from the same family should have the same name. Later on, Uncle Victor told me that his father's name had originally been Fogelman, but someone in the immigration offices at Ellis Island had truncated it to Fog, with one *g*, and this had served as the family's American name until the second *g* was added in 1907. *Fogel* meant bird, my uncle informed me, and I liked the idea of having that creature embedded in who I was. I imagined that some valiant ancestor of mine had once actually been able to fly. A bird flying through fog, I used to think, a giant bird flying across the ocean, not stopping until it reached America.

Paul Auster, *Moon Palace*, 1989

I. Questions

1. This passage is the very beginning of the novel *Moon Palace*. To what extent is it a typical opening?
2. Analyse the importance of cycles and circularity in the extract.
3. Explain how this passage can be read as a commentary on literary creation itself.
4. Show how the narrator's life story is intertwined with a national narrative and discuss the characterisation of America in literature, art or cinema.

II. Translation

Translate into French from "It was the summer" (line 1) down to "the beginning of my life" (line 10).

