

**OPTION INTERNATIONALE DU BACCALAURÉAT
SESSION 2015**

SECTION : AMÉRICAINNE

ÉPREUVE : LANGUE ET LITTÉRATURE

DURÉE TOTALE : 4 HEURES

Les dictionnaires sont interdits.

Choose either Option A or B :

Option A : Write on **one** of the following four essay topics in Part I and write a **commentary** on one of the two passages in Part II, either poetry or prose.

Option B : Write on **two** of the following four essay topics in Part I. Those candidates choosing two essay questions will treat **four** different works, two for each essay.

1. "Art is on the side of the oppressed." (Nadine Gordimer) In light of this assertion, discuss how two authors on your OIB program offer a sympathetic insight into the burdens or dilemmas of their central characters.

2. Journeys, both metaphorical and literal, often play a central role in literature. Discuss with reference to two works you have studied in OIB.

3. Often the point of view of the narrator casts its own perspective upon the events in a work of literature. Discuss how the literary device of point of view influences the reader in two works you have studied in the OIB program.

4. Hemingway said that "at the crossroads of our life there are no signs." How do two works from your OIB program explore how characters cope with crucial moments in their lives?

Part II: Commentary

Poetry: Comment on “Rite of Passage” by Sharon Olds (1942-)

As the guests arrive at my son’s party
they gather in the living room –
short men, men in first grade
with smooth jaws and chins.

- 5 Hands in pockets, they stand around
jostling, jockeying for place, small fights
breaking out and calming. One says to another
How old are you? Six. I’m seven. So?
They eye each other, seeing themselves
- 10 tiny in the other’s pupils. They clear their
throats a lot, a room of small bankers,
they fold their arms and frown. *I could beat you*
up, a seven says to a six,
the dark cake, round and heavy as a
- 15 turret, behind them on the table. My son,
freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,
chest narrow as the balsa keel of a
model boat, long hands
cool and thin as the day they guided him
- 20 out of me, speaks up as a host
for the sake of the group.
We could easily kill a two-year-old,
he says in his clear voice. The other
men agree, they clear their throats
- 25 like Generals, they relax and get down to
playing war, celebrating my son’s life.

Prose: Comment on the following excerpt from *The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor (1982).

At first they seemed like such nice girls. No one could remember exactly when they had moved into Brewster. It was earlier in the year before Ben was killed – of course, it had to be before Ben’s death. But no one remembered if it was in the winter or spring of that year that the two had come. People often came and went on Brewster Place like a restless night’s dream, moving in and out in the dark to avoid eviction notices or neighbourhood bulletins about the dilapidated condition of their furnishings. So it wasn’t until the two were clocked leaving in the mornings and returning in the evenings at regular intervals that it was quietly absorbed that they now claimed Brewster as home. And Brewster waited, cautiously prepared to claim them, because you never know about young women, and obviously single at that. But when no wild music or drunken friends careened out of the corner building on weekends, and especially, when no lightly eager husbands were encouraged to linger around that first-floor apartment and run errands for them, a suspended sigh of relief floated around the two when they dumped their garbage, did their shopping, and headed for the morning bus.

The women of Brewster had readily accepted the lighter, skinny one. There wasn’t much threat in her timid mincing walk and the slightly protruding teeth she seemed so eager to show everyone in her bell-like good mornings and evenings. Breaths were held a little longer in the direction of the short dark one – too pretty, and too much behind. And she insisted on wearing those thin Qiana¹ dresses that the summer breeze molded against the madding rhythm of the twenty pounds of flesh that she swung steadily down the street. Through slitted eyes, the women watched their men watching her pass, knowing the bastards were praying for a wind. But since she seemed oblivious to whether these supplications went unanswered, their sighs settled around her shoulders too. Nice girls.

And so no one even cared to remember exactly when they had moved into Brewster Place, until the rumor started. It had first spread through the block like a sour odor that’s only faintly perceptible and easily ignored until it starts growing in strength from the dozen mouths it had been lying in, among clammy gums and scum-coated teeth. And then it was everywhere – lining the mouths and whitening the lips of everyone as they wrinkled up their noses at its pervading smell, unable to pinpoint the source or time of its initial arrival. Sophie could – she had been there.

It wasn’t that the rumor had actually begun with Sophie. A rumor needs no true parent. It only needs a willing carrier, and it found one in Sophie. She had been there – on one of those August evenings when the sun’s absence is a mockery because the heat leaves the air so heavy it presses the naked skin down on your body, to the point that a sheet becomes unbearable and sleep impossible. So most of Brewster was outside that night when the two had come in together, probably from one of those air-conditioned movies downtown and had greeted the ones who were loitering around their building. And they had started up the steps when the skinny one tripped over a child’s ball and the darker one had grabbed her by the arm and around the waist to break her fall. “Careful, don’t wanna lose you now.” And the two of them had laughed into each other’s eyes and went into the building.

¹ Made of Nylon