

Lisez les documents A et B puis répondez aux questions

Document A

From the first day he could walk Simon had always wanted to outdistance his rivals. The Americans would have described him as ‘an achiever’, while many of his contemporaries thought of him as pushy, or even arrogant, according to their aptitude for jealousy. During his last term at Lancing Simon was passed over for head of school and he still found himself unable to forgive the headmaster his lack of foresight. Later that year, some weeks after he had completed his S-levels¹ and been interviewed by Magdalen², a circular letter informed him that he would not be offered a place at Oxford; it was a decision Simon was unwilling to accept.

In the same mail Durham University offered him a scholarship, which he rejected by return of post. “Future Prime Ministers aren’t educated at Durham,” he informed his mother.

“How about Cambridge?” she enquired continuing to wipe the dishes.

“No political tradition,” replied Simon.

“But if there is no chance of being offered a place at Oxford, surely-?”

“That’s not what I said, Mother”, replied the young man. “I shall be an undergraduate at Oxford by the first day of term.”

After eighteen years of forty-yard goals Mrs Kerslake had learned to stop asking her son. “How will you manage that?”

Some fourteen days before the start of the Michaelmas³ Term at Oxford Simon booked himself into a small guest house just off the Iffley Road. On a trestle table in the corner of lodgings he intended to make permanent he wrote out a list of all the colleges, then divided them into five columns, planning to visit three each morning and three each afternoon until his question had been answered positively by a resident Tutor for Admissions: “Have you accepted any freshmen for this year who are now unable to take up their places?”

It was on the fourth afternoon, just a doubt was beginning to set in and Simon was wondering if after all he would have to travel to Cambridge the following week, that he received the first affirmative reply.

The Tutor for Admissions at Worcester College⁴ removed the glasses from the end of his nose and started at the tall young man with a mop of dark hair falling over his forehead. Alan Brown was the twenty-second don Kerslake had visited in four days.

“Yes”, he replied. “It so happens that a young man from Nottingham High School, who had been offered a place here, was tragically killed in a motor cycle accident last month.”

“What course – what subject was he going to read?” Simon’s words were unusually faltering. He prayed it wasn’t Chemistry, Anthropology or Classics. Allan Brown flicked through a rotary index on his desk, obviously enjoying the little cross-examination. He peered at the card in front of him. “History,” he announced.

Simon’s heartbeat reached 120. “I just missed a place at Magdalen to read Politics, Philosophy and Economics,” he said. “Would you consider me for the vacancy?”

The older man was unable to hide a smile. He had never in twenty-four years come across such a request.

[...]

Mrs Kerslake was not surprised when her son went on to be President of the Oxford Union. After all, she teased, wasn’t it just another stepping stone on the path to Prime Minister?

Jeffrey Archer, *First Among Equals* (1984)

1 *S-levels*: an exam similar to A-levels for students hoping to get into the most prestigious universities

2 *Magdalen College*: a college that is part of Oxford University

3 *Michaelmas Term*: name given to first term at Oxford University

4 *Worcester College*: a college that is part of Oxford University

Document B

What happened to me?

The eighties happened. The nineties happened. Death and sickness and getting fat and going bald happened. I traded lots of dreams for a bigger paycheck, and I never realized I was doing it.

5 Yet here was Morrie talking with the wonder of our college years, as if I'd simply been on a long vacation.

“Have you found someone to share your heart with?” he asked.

“Are you giving to your community?”

“Are you at peace with yourself?”

10 “Are you trying to be as human as you can be?”

I squirmed, wanting to show I had been grappling deeply with such questions. *What happened to me?* I once promised myself I would never work for money, that I would join the Peace Corps, that I would live in beautiful, inspirational places.

15 Instead, I had been in Detroit for ten years now, at the same workplace, using the same bank, visiting the same barber. I was thirty-seven, more efficient than in college, tied to computers and modems and cell phones. I wrote articles about rich athletes who, for the most part, could not care less about rich people like me. I was no longer young for my peer group, nor did I walk around in gray sweatshirts with unlit cigarettes in my mouth. I did not have long discussions over egg salad sandwiches about the meaning of life.

20 My days were full, yet I remained, much of the time, unsatisfied.

What happened to me?

“Coach”, I said suddenly, remembering the nick-name.

Morrie beamed. “That’s me. I’m still your coach.”

Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997)

NOTE AUX CANDIDATS

Les candidats traiteront le sujet sur la copie qui leur sera fournie et veilleront à :

- respecter l'ordre des questions et reporter les repères sur la copie (lettre ou lettre et numéro ou lettre, numéro et lettre). Exemples : **A.** ou **A.1** ou **A.1.a.** ;
- faire toujours précéder les citations du numéro de la ligne ;
- dans les phrases à compléter, les recopier en **soulignant** l'élément introduit.

En l'absence d'indications spécifiques, le candidat répondra **brèvement** aux questions.

COMPRÉHENSION

Document A

Lines 1 to 17

A. Which statement best corresponds to the situation here?

1. Simon has just finished high school. His dream is to go either to Cambridge University or to Oxford University.
2. Simon is a university student at Oxford. He has rejected an offer from Durham University as his only dream was to go to Oxford.
3. Simon is at high school. He is determined to go to Oxford University and so he rejects offers from all other universities.

B. Explain what determines his choice of university? Justify with a quote.

Lines 17 to the end

C. Copy out the text and fill in the blanks (one blank = one word).

Simon is in _____ (name of the city). He intends to visit all the _____ to see if they have a _____ for him. He intends to visit six every day until he is _____.

D. Which adjective best describes Simon as he goes about his visits? Give two quotations to justify your choice.

HESITANT – DETERMINED – CONFUSED – IMPATIENT

E. Does he succeed in getting a place at university? Justify with an element from the text.

Document B

F. Who are the characters present in the extract and how do they know each other?

G. The passage refers to two periods in the narrator's life. Which ones?

H. Are the following statements **Right** or **Wrong**? Quote from the text to justify.

1. The narrator earns a lot of money.
2. The two characters haven't seen each other for quite a long time.
3. As a student the narrator had a lot of ideals.
4. The visit makes him realize he is content with his current life.

I. “*What happened to me?*” (ll. 1, 11 and 21). What did happen to him? Explain in a few sentences what he has just realized.

J. What do we realize about the narrator's state of mind when meeting his friend?

Documents A and B

K. 1. In your opinion what is the theme common to both documents?

1. Absence of ambition
2. Failure
3. Success in life
4. Pride

2. Explain your choice of answer in a few sentences.

EXPRESSION

Les candidats traiteront au choix **UN** des deux sujets n°1 **et UN** des deux sujets n°2.
(150 mots au moins pour **chaque** sujet).

Sujets 1

a) After meeting Alan Brown, Simon writes to his mother in order to keep her informed. Write his letter.

ou

b) Simon has decided to run for President of the University's Student Union. Write his first campaign speech.

Sujets 2

a) Is it possible to reconcile your dreams with a professional life?

ou

b) “*I once promised myself I would never work for money,*” (Document B, l.12). How easy is it to stick to such a decision?