

## EXAMEN D'ADMISSIBILITE ECRIT

### Seconde Section Internationale, Session 2023

Vous écrierez directement vos réponses sur les copies prévues. Vous devez rendre la totalité des documents à la fin de l'épreuve en les plaçant dans votre copie.

*The scene is set in North London in the 1970s.*

‘Ada, please sit down,’ Mrs. Walcott said one more time, tension lending a hard edge to her voice.

But once again, Ada did not move. It wasn’t that she hadn’t heard the teacher. She understood perfectly what was being asked of her and she had no intention of defying it, but at that moment she just couldn’t make her body obey her mind. At the corner of her vision she glimpsed a hovering dot — the butterfly she had sketched in her notebook was fluttering around the classroom. She watched it with unease, worried that somebody else might see it, though a small, separate part of her knew they wouldn’t.

Steering a zigzag course, the butterfly settled on the teacher’s shoulder and hopped on to one of her dangling silver earrings, shaped like chandeliers. Just as quickly, it took off and wheeled towards Jason, alighting on his slim shoulders, wriggling under his shirt. Now Ada could picture in her mind’s eye the bruises hidden beneath Jason’s vest, most of them old and faded, but one fairly large and fresh. A glaring colour — raw purple. This boy, who was always cracking jokes and oozing confidence at school, was beaten by his own father at home. She gasped. Pain, there was so much pain everywhere and in everyone. The only difference was between those who managed to hide it and those who no longer could.

‘Ada?’ Mrs. Walcott said, louder.

‘Maybe she’s deaf!’ one of the students quipped.

‘Or retarded!’

‘We do not use such words in the classroom,’ Mrs. Walcott said, without convincing anyone. Her gaze focused back on Ada, confusion and concern passing in turn across her broad face. ‘Is something wrong?’

Rooted to the spot, Ada did not say a word.

‘If there is something you want to tell me, you can do that after class. Why don’t we talk later?’

30 Still Ada did not comply. Her limbs, acting of their own volition, refused to respond. A sound both familiar and too strange to be her own surged from somewhere inside her — loud, hoarse, raw, wrong.

She screamed.

So unpredicted and forceful and impossibly high-pitched was her voice that the other students fell quiet.

35 Her voice was a flying carpet that lifted her up and carried her against her will. She had the sense that she was floating, observing everything from a lamp in the ceiling, except it didn't feel like she was high above, more like she was outside, a sense of falling out of herself, not part of this moment, nor of this world.

40 Thirty seconds passed. An eternity.

This could have been the high shriek of a hawk, the soul-haunting howl of a wolf, the rasping cry of a red fox at midnight. It could have been any of them, but not the scream of a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl.

45 The other students, eyes widened in astonishment and disbelief, stared at Ada, spellbound by this display of insanity. Ada sensed their fear and, for once, it felt good not to be the one who was frightened. At the blurred edge of her vision they all gathered, indistinguishable with their baffled faces and matching gestures, a paper chain of identical bodies. She was no part of this chain. She was no part of anything. In her unbroken loneliness, she was complete.

50 The bell went.

Outside the classroom, multiplying down the corridors, hurried footsteps, animated exchanges. Excitement. Laughter. A brief commotion. The beginning of the Christmas holidays.

55 Inside the classroom, Ada's madness was so captivating a spectacle that no one dared to move.

Fifty-two seconds passed — almost but not quite a minute — and her voice gave out, leaving her throat dry and hollow inside like a parched reed. She fell quiet. Just as suddenly as she had started, she stopped.

60 Without looking at anyone, Ada collapsed back on to her chair, breathless and drained of energy; all of which Emma-Rose would describe later on in exaggerated detail. But, for now, even Emma-Rose was silent.

Abridged from *The Island of Missing Trees* by Elif Shafak, 2021

## COMPREHENSION (20 points)

*Answer the questions in order. You should always answer in your own words (reformulating the ideas of the text) except when you are asked to quote the text. Try to respect the number of words specified by developing several ideas in longer answers. When the number of words is not specified, answer in one or two sentences.*

1. **Vocabulary:** give an English definition or a French translation of the following words in context.

- a) glimpsed (l.6)      b) alighting (l. 12)      c) bruises (l.14)      d) limbs (l.29)  
e) hawk (l.41)      f) spellbound (l.45)      g) baffled (l.47)      h) hollow (l.57)

2. **General comprehension:** a) Where and when is the scene set (specific place and time of year)?

b) Who is the main character (name and age)?

c) Who is Mrs. Walcott? Who is Jason? Who is Emma-Rose?

3. What is the main character doing in each of the following sections? (one sentence for each)

a) from line 1 to line 31

b) from line 32 to line 55

c) from line 56 to line 61

### Focus on lines 1-31

4. Say whether the following statements are true or false, and justify with a short quotation from the text:

a) The main character is deliberately being rebellious.

b) The butterfly is imaginary.

c) She wishes her classmates could also see the butterfly.

d) She can see the bruises on Jason's body.

5. **Focus on lines 17-19:** What does the main character realise? (20-30 words)

6. Explain what Mrs. Walcott means in l. 23 ('We do not use such words in the classroom').

7. Find the two best quotations showing the main character cannot control her body.

### Focus on lines 32-end:

8. Explain in your own words how the other people in the room react to the main character's behaviour. (40-50 words)

9. 'Ada sensed their fear and, for once, it felt good not to be the one who was frightened.' (l. 45-46), 'She was no part of this chain. She was no part of anything. In her unbroken loneliness, she was complete.' (l. 48-49) Focusing on these two quotations, explain how this moment changes the way the main character feels. (30 words)

10. **Focus on lines 30-43.** How does the writer use language and imagery to make this a powerful moment? (approximately 80 words)

## WRITING (20 points)

**Treat both subjects.** On the whole, you should write approximately 300-350 words. Up to ten points are available for the content of your answer, and up to ten points for the quality of your writing. Please do not write your name anywhere in your answers.

1. You are Emma-Rose. After school, you tell your mother about what happened with Ada, discussing how you felt and speculating with your mum on the reasons for her behaviour. Imagine the dialogue.

Start with this and continue: "Mum, you'll never believe what happened today!"

(150-200 words)

2. What do you think of people who have very unexpected or unconventional behaviour? Explain your point of view and illustrate it with personal examples if you have any. (150-200 words)