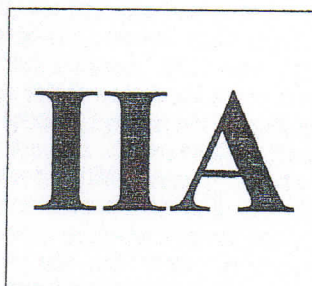


# AGREGATION INTERNE D'ANGLAIS

SESSION 2010

Epreuves orales

## EXPOSE DE LA PREPARATION D'UN COURS



**Ce sujet comprend 1 document**

- Document 1 : *Preservation*, nouvelle de Raymond Carver – extraite de *Cathedral*, 1983

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

RAYMOND CARVER, *PRESERVATION*

Sandy's husband had been on the sofa ever since he'd been terminated three months ago. That day, three months ago, he'd come home looking pale and scared and with all his work things in a box. "Happy Valentine's Day," he said to Sandy and put a heart-shaped box of candy and a bottle of Jim Beam on the kitchen table. He took off his cap and laid that on the table, too. "I got canned today. Hey, what do you think's going to happen to us now?"

Sandy and her husband sat at the table and drank whiskey and ate the chocolates. They talked about what he might be able to do instead of putting roofs on new houses. But they couldn't think of anything. "Something will turn up," Sandy said. She wanted to be encouraging. But she was scared, too. Finally, he said he'd sleep on it. And he did. He made his bed on the sofa that night, and that's where he'd slept every night since it had happened.

The day after his termination there were unemployment benefits to see about. He went downtown to the state office to fill out papers and look for another job. But there were no jobs in his line of work, or in any other line of work. His face began to sweat as he tried to describe to Sandy the milling crowd of men and women down there. That evening he got back on the sofa. He began spending all of his time there, as if, she thought, it was the thing he was supposed to do now that he no longer had any work. Once in a while he had to go talk to somebody about a job possibility, and every two weeks he had to go sign something to collect his unemployment compensation. But the rest of the time he stayed on the sofa. It's like he *lives* there, Sandy thought. He *lives* in the living room. Now and then he looked through magazines she brought home from the grocery store; and every so often she came in to find him looking at this big book she'd got as a bonus for joining a book club - something called *Mysteries of the Past*. He held the book in front of him with both hands, his head inclined over the pages, as if he were being drawn in by what he was reading. But after a while she noticed that he didn't seem to be making any progress in it; he still seemed to be at about the same place - somewhere around chapter two, she guessed. Sandy picked it up once and opened it to his place. There she read about a man who had been discovered after spending two thousand years in a peat bog in the Netherlands. A photograph appeared on one page. The man's brow was furrowed, but there was a serene expression to his face. He wore a leather cap and lay on his side. The man's hands and feet had shriveled, but otherwise he didn't look so awful. She read in the book a little further, then put it back where she'd gotten it. Her husband kept it within easy reach on the coffee table that stood in front of the sofa. That goddamn sofa! As far as she was concerned, she didn't even want to sit on it again. She couldn't imagine them ever having lain down there in the past to make love.

The newspaper came to the house every day. He read it from the first page to the last. She saw him read everything, right down to the obituary section, and the part showing the temperatures of the major cities, as well as the Business News section which told about mergers and interest rates. Mornings, he got up before she did and used the bathroom. Then he turned the TV on and made coffee. She thought he seemed upbeat and cheerful at that hour of the day. But by the time she left for work, he'd made his place on the sofa and the TV was going. Most often it would still be going when she came in again that afternoon. He'd be sitting up on the sofa, or else lying down on it, dressed in what he used to wear to work - jeans and a flannel shirt. But sometimes the TV would be off and he'd be sitting there holding his book.

"How's it going?" he'd say when she looked in on him.

"Okay," she'd say. "How's it with you?"

"Okay."

He always had a pot of coffee warming on the stove for her. In the living room, she'd sit in the big chair and he'd sit on the sofa while they talked about her day. They'd hold their cups and drink their coffee as if they were normal people, Sandy thought.



55 Sandy still loved him, even though she knew things were getting weird. She was  
 thankful to have her job, but she didn't know what was going to happen to them or to  
 anybody else in the world. She had a girlfriend at work she confided in one time about  
 her husband – about his being on the sofa all the time. For some reason, her friend  
 didn't seem to think it was anything very strange, which both surprised and depressed  
 Sandy. Her friend told her about her uncle in Tennessee – when her uncle had turned  
 60 forty, he got into his bed and wouldn't get up anymore. And he cried a lot – he cried at  
 least once every day. She told Sandy she guessed her uncle was afraid of getting old.  
 She guessed maybe he was afraid of a heart attack or something. But the man was  
 sixty-three now and still breathing, she said. When Sandy heard this, she was stunned.  
 If this woman was telling the truth, she thought, the man has been in bed for twenty-  
 65 three years. Sandy's husband was only thirty-one. Thirty-one and twenty-three is fifty-  
 four. That'd put her in her fifties then, too. My God, a person couldn't live the whole rest  
 of his life in bed, or else on the sofa. If her husband had been wounded or was ill, or  
 had been hurt in a car accident, that'd be different. She could understand that. If  
 something like that was the case, she knew she could bear it. Then if he had to live on  
 70 the sofa, and she had to bring him his food out there, maybe carry the spoon up to his  
 mouth – there was even something like romance in that kind of thing. But for her  
 husband, a young and otherwise healthy man, to take to the sofa in this way and not  
 want to get up except to go to the bathroom or to turn the TV on in the morning or off at  
 night, this was different. It made her ashamed; and except for that one time, she didn't  
 75 talk about it to anybody. She didn't say any more about it to her friend, whose uncle  
 had gotten into bed twenty-three years ago and was still there, as far as Sandy knew.

Late one afternoon she came home from work, parked the car, and went inside the  
 house. She could hear the TV going in the living room as she let herself in the door to  
 the kitchen. The coffee pot was on the stove, and the burner was on low. From where  
 80 she stood in the kitchen, holding her purse, she could look into the living room and see  
 the back of the sofa and the TV screen. Figures moved across the screen. Her  
 husband's bare feet stuck out from one end of the sofa. At the other end, on a pillow  
 which lay across the arm of the sofa, she could see the crown of his head. He didn't  
 stir. He may or may not have been asleep, and he may or may not have heard her  
 85 come in. But she decided it didn't make any difference one way or the other. She put  
 her purse on the table and went over to the fridge to get herself some yogurt. But when  
 she opened the door, warm, boxed-in air came out at her. She couldn't believe the  
 mess inside. The ice cream from the freezer had melted and run down into the leftover  
 fish sticks and cole slaw. Ice cream had gotten into the bowl of Spanish rice and pooled  
 90 on the bottom of the fridge. Ice cream was everywhere. She opened the door to the  
 freezer compartment. An awful smell puffed out at her that made her want to gag. Ice  
 cream covered the bottom of the compartment and puddled around a three-pound  
 package of hamburger. She pressed her finger into the cellophane wrapper covering  
 the meat, and her finger sank into the package. The pork chops had thawed, too.  
 95 Everything had thawed, including some more fish sticks, a package of Steak-ums, and  
 two Chef Sammy Chinese food dinners. The hot dogs and homemade spaghetti sauce  
 had thawed. She closed the door to the freezer and reached into the fridge for her  
 carton of yogurt. She raised the lid on the yogurt and sniffed. That's when she yelled at  
 her husband.

100 "What is it?" he said, sitting up and looking over the back of the sofa. "Hey, what's  
 wrong?" He pushed his hand through his hair a couple of times. She couldn't tell if he'd  
 been asleep all this time or what.

"This goddamn fridge has gone out," Sandy said. "That's what." Her husband got up  
 off the sofa and lowered the volume on the TV. Then he turned it off and came out to  
 105 the kitchen. "Let me see this," he said. "Hey, I don't believe this."

"See for yourself," she said. "Everything's going to spoil."

Her husband looked inside the fridge, and his face assumed a very grave  
 expression. Then he poked around in the freezer and saw what things were like in  
 there.

110 "Tell me what next," he said.

A bunch of things suddenly flew into her head, but she didn't say anything.





115 "Goddamn it," he said, "when it rains, it pours. Hey, this fridge cannot be more than ten years old. It was nearly new when we bought it. Listen, my folks had a fridge that lasted them twenty-five years. They gave it to my brother when he got married. It was working fine. Hey, what's going on?" He moved over so that he could see into the narrow space between the fridge and the wall. "I don't get it," he said and shook his head. "It's plugged in." Then he took hold of the fridge and rocked it back and forth. He put his shoulder against it and pushed and jerked the appliance a few inches out into the kitchen. Something inside the fridge fell off a shelf and broke. "Hells bells," he said.

120 Sandy realized she was still holding the yogurt. She went over to the garbage can, raised the lid, and dropped the carton inside. "I have to cook everything tonight," she said. She saw herself at the stove frying meat, fixing things in pans on the stove and in the oven. "We need a new fridge," she said.

125 He didn't say anything. He looked into the freezer compartment once more and turned his head back and forth.

She moved in front of him and started taking things off the shelves and putting stuff on the table. He helped. He took the meat out of the freezer and put the packages on the table. Then he took the other things out of the freezer and put them in a different place on the table. He took everything out and then found the paper towels and the dishcloth and started wiping up inside.

130 "We lost our Freon," he said and stopped wiping. "That's what happened. I can smell it. The Freon leaked out. Something happened and the Freon went. Hey, I saw this happen to somebody else's box once." He was calm now. He started wiping again. "It's the Freon," he said.

135 She stopped what she was doing and looked at him. "We need another fridge," she said.

"You said that. Hey, where are we going to get one? They don't grow on trees."

"We have to have one," she said. "Don't we need a fridge? Maybe we don't. Maybe we can keep our perishables on the window sill like those people in tenements do. (...)

140 "I need a bed lamp, too," she went on. "They'll have bed lamps."

"Hey, we need lots of things. But I don't have a job, remember?"

"I'm going to this auction," she said. "Whether you go or not. You might as well come along. But I don't care. If you want the truth, it's immaterial to me. But I'm going."

145 "I'll go with you. Who said I wouldn't go?" He looked at her and then looked away. He picked up the paper and read the ad again. I don't know the first thing about auctions. But, sure, I'll try anything once. Whoever said anything about us buying an icebox at an auction?"

"Nobody," she said. "But we'll do it anyway."

"Okay," he said.

150 "Good," she said. "But only if you really want to."

He nodded.

She said, "I guess I'd better start cooking. I'll cook the goddamn pork chops now, and we'll eat. The rest of this stuff can wait. I'll cook everything else later. After we go to this auction. But we have to get moving. The paper said seven o'clock."

155 "Seven o'clock," he said. He got up from the table and made his way into the living room, where he looked out the bay window for a minute. A car passed on the street outside. He brought his fingers up to his lip. She watched him sit down on the sofa and take up his book. He opened it to his place. But in a minute he put it down and lay back on the sofa. She saw his head come down on the pillow that lay across the arm of the sofa. He adjusted the pillow under his head and put his hands behind his neck. Then he lay still. Pretty soon she saw his arms move down to his sides.



165 She folded the paper. She got up from the chair and went quietly out to the living room, where she looked over the back of the sofa. His eyes were shut. His chest seemed to barely rise and then fall. She went back to the kitchen and put a frying pan on the burner. She turned the burner on and poured oil into the pan. She started frying pork chops. She'd gone to auctions with her dad. Most of those auctions had to do with farm animals. She seemed to remember her dad was always trying to sell a calf, or else buy one. Sometimes there'd be farm equipment and household items at the auctions. But mostly it was farm animals. Then, after her dad and mom had divorced, and she'd gone away to live with her mom, her dad wrote to say he missed going to auctions with her. The last letter he wrote to her, after she'd grown up and was living with her husband, he said he'd bought a peach of a car at this auction for two hundred dollars. If she'd been there, he said, he'd have bought one for her, too. Three weeks later, in the middle of the night, a telephone call told her that he was dead. The car he'd bought leaked carbon monoxide up through the floorboards and caused him to pass out behind the wheel. He lived in the country. The motor went on running until there was no more gas in the tank. He stayed in the car until somebody found him a few days later.

170 The pan was starting to smoke. She poured in more oil and turned on the fan. She hadn't been to an auction in twenty years, and now she was getting ready to go to one tonight. But first she had to dry these pork chops. It was bad luck their fridge had gone flooey, but she found herself looking forward to this auction. She began missing her dad. She even missed her mom now, though the two of them used to argue all the time before she met her husband and began living with him. She stood at the stove, turning the meat, and missing both her dad and her mom.

175 Still missing them, she took a pot holder and moved the pan off the stove. Smoke was being drawn up through the vent over the stove. She stepped to the doorway with the pan and looked into the living room. The pan was still smoking and drops of oil and grease jumped over the sides as she held it. In the darkened room, she could just make out her husband's head, and his bare feet. "Come on out here," she said. "It's ready."

180 "Okay," he said.

She saw his head come up from the end of the sofa. She put the pan back on the stove and turned to the cupboard. She took down a couple of plates and put them on the counter. She used her spatula to raise one of the pork chops. Then she lifted it onto a plate. The meat didn't look like meat. It looked like part of an old shoulder blade, or a digging instrument. But she knew it was a pork chop, and she took the other one out of the pan and put that on a plate, too.

185 In a minute, her husband came into the kitchen. He looked at the fridge once more, which was standing there with its door open. And then his eyes took in the pork chops. His mouth dropped open, but he didn't say anything. She waited for him to say something, anything, but he didn't. She put salt and pepper on the table and told him to sit down.

190 "Sit down," she said and gave him a plate on which lay the remains of a pork chop. "I want you to eat this," she said. He took the plate. But he just stood there and looked at it. Then she turned to get her own plate.

195 Sandy cleared the newspaper away and shoved the food to the far side of the table. "Sit down," she said to her husband once more. He moved his plate from one hand to the other. But he kept standing there. It was then she saw puddles of water on the table. She heard water, too. It was dripping off the table and onto the linoleum.

200 She looked down at her husband's bare feet. She stared at his feet next to the pool of water. She knew she'd never again in her life see anything so unusual. But she didn't know what to make of it yet. She thought she'd better put on some lipstick, get her coat, and go ahead to the auction. But she couldn't take her eyes from her husband's feet. She put her plate on the table and watched until the feet left the kitchen and went back into the living room.

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Raymond Carver, *Cathedral*, 1983.