

**CONCOURS GÉNÉRAL DES LYCÉES**

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**SESSION DE 2005**

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**COMPOSITION EN LANGUE ANGLAISE**

(Classes terminales ES, L et S)

**DURÉE : 5 heures**

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*L'usage de tout dictionnaire est interdit.*

**Tournez la page S.V.P.**

5 Morse began to run. In all probability this was silly. In all probability the girls were safe onshore, or, if not, help was already on its way, although certainly it was possible that the girls were not safe onshore and help was not on its way, and in fact it was even possible that the help that was on its way was him, which was worrisome, because he had never  
10 been good under pressure and in a crisis often stood mentally debating possible options with his mouth hanging open. Come to think of it, it was possible, even probable, that the boat had already gone over the Falls or hit the Snag. He remembered the crew of the barge *Fat Chance*, rescued via rope bridge in the early Reagan years. He hoped several sweaty, decisive men were already on the scene and that one of them would send him off to make a phone call, although what if on the way he forgot the phone number and had to go back and ask the sweaty, decisive man to repeat it? And what if this failure got back to Ruth and she was filled with shame and divorced him and forbade him to see the kids, who didn't want to see him anyway because he was such a panicky screw-up? This was certainly not positive thinking. This was certainly an example of predestining failure via negativity.  
15 Because, who could tell, maybe he would stand in line assisting the decisive men and incur a nasty rope burn and go home a hero wearing a bandage, which might cause Ruth to regard him in a more favorable sexual light, and they would stay up all night celebrating his new manhood and exchanging sweet words between bouts of energetic lovemaking, although what kind of thing was that to be thinking at a time like this, with children's lives at stake?  
20 He was bad, that was for sure. There wasn't an earnest bone in his body. Other people were simpler and looked at the world with clearer eyes, but he was self-absorbed and insincere and mucked everything up, and he hoped this wasn't one more thing he was destined to muck up, because mucking up a rescue was altogether different from forgetting to mail out the invitations to your son's birthday party, which he had recently done, although  
25 certainly they had spent a small fortune rectifying the situation, stopping just short of putting an actual pony on Visa, but the point was, this was serious, and he had to bear down. And throwing his thin legs out ahead of him, awkwardly bent at the waist, shirttails trailing behind and bum knee hurting, he remonstrated with himself to put aside all self-doubt and negativity and prepare to assist the decisive men in whatever way he could once he had  
30 rounded the bend and assessed the situation.

But when he rounded the bend and assessed the situation, he found no rope bridge or decisive men, only a canoe coming apart at the base of the Snag and two small girls in matching sweaters trying to bail with a bait bucket. What to do? This was a shocker. Go for help? Sprint to the Outlet Mall and call 911 from Knife World? There was no time. The  
35 canoe was sinking before his eyes. The girls would be drowned before he reached Route 8. Could one swim to the Snag? Certainly one could not. No one ever had. Was he a good swimmer? He was mediocre at best. Therefore he would have to run for help. But running was futile. Because there was no time. He had just decided that. And swimming was out of the question. Therefore the girls would die. They were basically dead. Although that  
40 couldn't be. That was too sad. What would become of the mother who this morning had dressed them in matching sweaters? How would she cope? Soon her girls would be nude and bruised and dead on a table. It was unthinkable. He thought of Robert nude and bruised and dead on a table. What to do? He fiercely wished himself elsewhere. The girls saw him now and with their hands appeared to be trying to explain that they would be dead soon.

45 My God, did they think he was blind? Did they think he was stupid? Was he their father?  
Did they think he was Christ? They were dead. They were frantic, calling out to him, but  
they were dead, as dead as the ancient dead, and he was alive, he was needed at home, it  
50 was a no-brainer, no one could possibly blame him for this one, and making a low sound  
of despair in his throat he kicked off his loafers and threw his long ugly body out across  
the water.

George SAUNDERS, *Pastoralia*, pp. 186-88, Bloomsbury 2000.

### I. VERSION

Traduire de « He was bad, that was for sure. » (l. 20) jusqu'à « This was a shocker. » (l. 33).

### II. QUESTIONS

1. Show how the author handles the interaction between speculation and action in the passage.
2. Which literary devices does the author use to bring Morse's personality through to the reader?
3. *Schlemiehl* (n. American slang): *unlucky or incompetent person who is often made a fool of and keeps failing; often an anti-hero.*  
Does this definition apply to the character in this story?
4. "One does not read literature to get away from one's life, one reads literature to understand one's life." Discuss.