

**Agrégation interne d'anglais**

**Session 2019**

**Épreuve ESP**

**Explication d'un texte  
extrait du programme**

**ESP**

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### **Explication de texte**

MELVILLE, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857). New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. 33–35.

### **Explication de faits de langue**

Le candidat proposera une analyse linguistique des segments soulignés dans le texte.

At the time, he was leaning over the rail at the boat's side, in his pensiveness, unmindful of another pensive figure near—a young gentleman with a swan-neck, wearing a lady-like open shirt collar, thrown back, and tied with a black ribbon. From a square, tableted broach, 5 curiously engraved with Greek characters, he seemed a collegian—not improbably, a sophomore—on his travels; possibly, his first. A small book bound in Roman vellum was in his hand.

Overhearing his murmuring neighbor, the youth regarded him with some surprise, not to say interest. But, singularly for a collegian, being 10 apparently of a retiring nature, he did not speak; when the other still more increased his diffidence by changing from soliloquy to colloquy, in a manner strangely mixed of familiarity and pathos.

“Ah, who is this? You did not hear me, my young friend, did you? Why, you, too, look sad. My melancholy is not catching!”

15 “Sir, sir,” stammered the other.

“Pray, now,” with a sort of sociable sorrowfulness, slowly sliding along the rail, “Pray, now, my young friend, what volume have you there? Give me leave,” gently drawing it from him. “Tacitus!” Then opening it at random, read: “In general a black and shameful period lies before me.” 20 “Dear young sir,” touching his arm alarmedly, “don't read this book. It is poison, moral poison. Even were there truth in Tacitus, such truth would have the operation of falsity, and so still be poison, moral poison. Too well I know this Tacitus. In my college-days he came near souring me into cynicism. Yes, I began to turn down my collar, and go about with a 25 disdainfully joyless expression.”

“Sir, sir, I—I—”

“Trust me. Now, young friend, perhaps you think that Tacitus, like me, is only melancholy; but he's more—he's ugly. A vast difference, young sir, 30 between the melancholy view and the ugly. The one may show the world still beautiful, not so the other. The one may be compatible with benevolence, the other not. The one may deepen insight, the other shallows it. Drop Tacitus. Phrenologically, my young friend, you would seem to have a well-developed head, and large; but cribbed within the ugly view, the Tacitus view, your large brain, like your large ox in the 35 contracted field, will but starve the more. And don't dream, as some of you students may, that, by taking this same ugly view, the deeper meanings of the deeper books will so alone become revealed to you. Drop Tacitus. His subtlety is falsity. To him, in his double-refined anatomy of human nature, is well applied the Scripture saying—'There is a subtle 40 man, and the same is deceived.' Drop Tacitus. Come, now, let me throw the book overboard.”

“Sir, I—I—”

45 “Not a word; I know just what is in your mind, and that is just what I am speaking to. Yes, learn from me that, though the sorrows of the world are great, its wickedness—that is, its ugliness—is small. Much cause to pity man, little to distrust him. I myself have known adversity, and know it still. But for that, do I turn cynic? [...]”