

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat		Code Sujet	CLG 3
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Your main commentary should be focused on *the uses of A/AN*. Other topics may also be addressed.

In point of fact, I met Strickland before I had been a fortnight in Paris.

5 I quickly found myself a tiny apartment on the fifth floor of a house in the Rue des Dames, and for a couple of hundred francs bought at a second-hand dealer's enough furniture to make it habitable. I arranged with the concierge to make my coffee in the morning and to keep the place clean. Then I went to see my friend Dirk Stroeve. Dirk Stroeve was one of those persons whom, according to your character, you cannot think of without derisive laughter or an embarrassed shrug of the shoulders. Nature had made him a buffoon. He was a painter, but a very bad one, whom I had met in Rome, and I still remembered his pictures. He had a genuine enthusiasm for the commonplace. His soul palpitating with love of art, he painted the models who hung about the stairway of Bernini
10 in the Piazza de Spagna, undaunted by their obvious picturesqueness; and his studio was full of canvases on which were portrayed moustachioed, large-eyed peasants in peaked hats, urchins in becoming rags, and women in bright petticoats. Sometimes they lounged at the steps of a church, and sometimes
15 dallied among cypresses against a cloudless sky; sometimes they made love by a Renaissance well-head, and sometimes they wandered through the Campagna by the side of an ox-waggon. They were carefully drawn and carefully painted. A photograph could not have been more exact. One of the painters at the Villa
20 Medici had called him *Le Maître de la Boîte à Chocolats*. To look at his pictures you would have thought that Monet, Manet, and the rest of the Impressionists had never been.

30 "I don't pretend to be a great painter," he said, "I'm not a Michael Angelo, no, but I have something. I sell. I bring romance into the homes of all sorts of people. Do you know, they buy my pictures not only in Holland, but in Norway and Sweden and Denmark? It's mostly merchants who buy them, and rich tradesmen. You can't imagine what the winters are like in those countries, so long and dark and cold. They like to think that Italy is like my pictures.

35 That's what they expect. That's what I expected Italy to be before I came here."

40 And I think that was the vision that had remained with him always, dazzling his eyes so that he could not see the truth; and notwithstanding the brutality of fact, he continued to see with the eyes of the spirit an Italy of romantic brigands and picturesque ruins. It was an ideal that he painted —a poor one, common and shop-soiled, but still it was an ideal; and it gave his character a peculiar charm.

45 It was because I felt this that Dirk Stroeve was not to me, as to others, merely an object of ridicule. His fellow-painters made no secret of their contempt for his work, but he earned a fair amount of money, and they did not hesitate to make free use of his purse. He was generous, and the needy, laughing at him because he believed so naively their stories of distress, borrowed from him with
50 effrontery. He was very emotional, yet his feeling, so easily aroused, had in it something absurd, so that you accepted his kindness, but felt no gratitude. To take money from him was like robbing a child, and you despised him because he was so foolish. I imagine that a pickpocket, proud of his light fingers, must feel a
55 sort of indignation with the careless woman who leaves in a cab a vanity-bag with all her jewels in it. Nature had made him a butt, but had denied him insensibility. He writhed under the jokes, practical and otherwise, which were perpetually made at his expense, and yet never ceased, it seemed wilfully, to expose himself to them. He was constantly wounded, and yet his good-
60 nature was such that he could not bear malice: the viper might sting him, but he never learned by experience, and had no sooner recovered from his pain than he tenderly placed it once more in his bosom. His life was a tragedy written in the terms of knockabout
65 farce.