

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat		Code Sujet	CLG 10
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Your main commentary should be focused on *OF, genitive and compound constructions*. Other topics may also be addressed.

I approached the crime-scene tapes that closed the King's Road entrance to the estate, and showed my pass to the two policemen waiting for the Home Secretary's arrival. The driver of a florist's delivery van was arguing with them, pointing to a large display of arum lilies on the seat beside him. I guessed that a local resident, some happily married solicitor or account executive, had been too busy with the revolution to cancel his wife's birthday bouquet. The constables were unmoved, refusing to let the driver into the estate. They sensed that something deeply suspect had taken place in this once law-abiding community, an event that required the presence of a cabinet minister and his retinue of worthies. The visitors – Home Office advisers, concerned churchmen, senior social workers and psychologists, including myself – would begin their tour at noon, in an hour's time. No armed police would guard us, on the safe assumption that a rebellious middle class was too well mannered to pose a physical threat. But, as I knew all too well, that was the threat. Appearances proved nothing and everything. The policemen waved me through, barely glancing at my pass. Having been harangued for weeks by articulate mothers in the scruffiest jeans, they knew that my fashionable haircut, courtesy of BBC make-up, dove-grey suit and sunbed tan ruled me out as a native of Chelsea Marina. The residents would die rather than resemble a minor television guru, a renegade intellectual from the dubious world of video-conferencing and airport seminars. But the suit was a disguise, which I had put on for the first time in six months, after stuffing my torn leather jacket and denims into the dustbin. I sprang lightly over the crime-scene tapes, far fitter than the policemen guessed. The 'terrorist actions', as the Home Secretary termed them, had soon toughened up a lazy physique softened by years of boarding lounges and hotel atriums. Even my wife Sally, forever tolerant and never surprised, was impressed by my muscular arms as she counted the bruises left by scuffles with police and security guards.

35 But a disguise could go too far. Catching sight of myself in the broken windows of the gatehouse, I loosened the knot of my tie. I was still unsure what role I was playing. Richard Gould and I had been seen together so often, and the constables should have recognized me as the chief accomplice of this hunted terrorist.

40 When I waved to them they turned away, scanning the King's Road for the Home Secretary's limousine. I felt a pang of disappointment. For a few seconds I had wanted them to challenge me. In front of me lay Chelsea Marina, its streets empty as never before in its twenty-year existence. The entire population had vanished, leaving a zone of silence like an urban nature reserve. Eight hundred families had fled, abandoning their comfortable kitchens, herb gardens and book-lined living rooms. Without the slightest regret, they had turned their backs on themselves and all they had once believed in.

50 Beyond the rooftops I could hear the west London traffic, but it faded as I walked down Beaufort Avenue, the estate's main thoroughfare. The vast metropolis that surrounded Chelsea Marina was still holding its breath. Here the revolution of the middle class had begun, not the uprising of a desperate proletariat, but the rebellion of the educated professional class who were society's keel and anchor. In these quiet roads, the scene of uncountable dinner parties, surgeons and insurance brokers, architects and health service managers, had built their barricades and overturned their cars to block the fire engines and rescue teams who were trying to save them. They rejected all offers of help, refusing to air their real grievances or to say whether any grievances existed at all. The siege negotiators sent in by Kensington and Chelsea Council were met first by silence, then by mockery, and finally by petrol bombs. For reasons no one understood, the inhabitants of Chelsea Marina had set about dismantling their middle-class world. They lit bonfires of books and paintings, educational toys and videos.