



Ulm-Chartes – Anglais

My dear students

In Ulm and Chartes, no set texts in English. It is literature, texts that I choose, first and foremost because I like them and because I'm hoping to make you like them too.

I remind you that the BEL exam consists in the literary commentary of a contemporary text (published after 1850) and the translation into French of a passage from this text.

For the Ulm orals, it is a poem or an essay or an extract from a novel or a play, which might date all the way back to the 15th century and be written by any English-speaking author of whatever origin. (preparation: 1 hour, presentation: 20 mn, questions: 10 mn).

For both exams, you are allowed to use the Oxford Concise Dictionary (for the orals, this year is the first) and I would strongly advise you to buy a copy if you don't have one yet.

For the Chartes orals, it is contemporary fiction, a text of around 500 words (preparation: 40 mn, presentation: 10 mn and questions 10 mn). No dictionary.

It is a bad idea not to do any English at all during the summer holiday. English is not a school subject, it is a language and if you stop using it, it deteriorates dramatically. Yet speaking English must remain (or become) something pleasant, exciting and rewarding.

Some students tell me that they watch films or TV series in English and they think that it is enough to make their English perfect. I beg to differ. Watching all that stuff will of course improve your English in the long run, but unless you are exceptionally gifted, it will take ages.

So here is my advice. Select a short passage (between one and two minutes) from your favourite film or series and listen to it at least ten times in a row, every day, for two weeks, until you know it by heart and then you do the same with another extract and so on.

This will really improve your accent and your fluency and will make you acquire reflexes. Again, the emotional dimension is of primary importance and it is preferable to choose a scene you really enjoy or an actor or actress you really like. Alternatively, you can find short oral documents, with transcripts, on Cyber Room 407.

You must also read literature. I gave my former LS2 students some books they might like and I think Ms Lannic did the same. It must be pleasure reading. If you start a book and find that after, say, fifty pages, you still don't like it, just give up and get another one.

Here are some authors I like and you will work on some of their texts next year. If you want more advice or my opinion on the book(s) you have chosen, don't hesitate to send me an email at PhErnoul@aol.com.

Authors: David Lodge, William Boyd, TC Boyle, Kazuo Ishiguro (though not all his novels, ask me before you buy one), Margaret Atwood, Paul Theroux, Ian McEwan, Jonathan Coe, Charles Dickens, John Irving, Donna Tartt, William Styron, Philip Roth, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Sue Townsend, Roald Dahl, Kate Atkinson, Nick Hornby, to name a few.

Ph. Ernoul