

AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, I attended an Ivy League college<sup>1</sup> for less than one term. A year later, I was married and living in central Florida. This was 1958 and '59. General Dwight Eisenhower was our President, and Dr Fidel Castro, hunkered down in the mountain passes southeast of Havana, was getting praised for his integrity and good looks by Time and Reader's Digest.

I'd been a whiz kid in high school, rewarded for it with an academic scholarship as fat as the starting quarterback's at a Midwestern state university. In this Ivy League school, however, among the elegant, brutal sons of the captains of industry, I was only that year's token poor kid, imported from a small New Hampshire mill town like an exotic herb. [ ... ] It was a status that perplexed and intimidated and finally defeated me, so that, after nine weeks of it, I fled in the night.

Literally. On a snowy December night, alone in my dormitory room (they had not thought it appropriate for me to have a roommate, or no one's profile matched mine), I packed my clothes and few books into a canvas duffel<sup>2</sup>, waited until nearly all the lights on campus were out and sneaked down the hallway, passed through the service entrance and walked straight down the hill from the eighteenth-century brick dormitories and classroom buildings to the wide boulevard below, where huge, neoclassical fraternity houses lounged beneath high, ancient elms<sup>3</sup>. At the foot of the hill, I turned south and jogged through unplowed snow, shifting my heavy duffel from one shoulder to the other every twenty or thirty yards, until I passed out of the valley town into darkness and found myself walking through a heavy snowstorm on a winding, narrow road.

A month later, with the holidays over and my distraught mother and bewildered younger brother and sister, aunts, uncles and cousins, all my friends and neighbors and high school teachers, as well as the director of admissions at the Ivy League college, convinced that I not only had ruined my life but may have done something terrible to theirs, too, I turned up in St Petersburg, Florida, with seven dollars in my pocket, my duffel on my shoulder and my resolve to join Castro in the Sierra Maestra seriously weakening.

I'd spent Christmas and the New Year at home, working days and nights as a salesman in a local men's clothing store and trying hard to behave as if nothing had happened. My mother seemed always to be red-eyed from weeping, and my friends from high school treated me coolly, distantly, as if I had dropped out of college because of a social disease. In some ways, my family was a civic reclamation project — the bright and pretty children and pathetic wife of a brute who, nearly a decade ago, had disappeared into the northern woods with a woman from the post office, never to be heard from again. As the oldest male victim of this abandonment, I was expected by everyone who knew the story to avenge the crime, mainly by making myself visibly successful, by rising above my station and in that paradoxical way showing the criminal how meaningless his crime had been. For reasons I was only dimly aware of, my story was important to everyone.

Leaving them behind, then, abandoning my fatherless family in a tenement and my old friends and the town I had been raised in, was an exquisite pleasure, like falling into bed and deep sleep after having been pushed beyond exhaustion. Now, I thought the morning I left — stepping onto the ramp to Route 93 in Catamount, showing my thumb to the cars headed south — now I can start to dream my own dreams, not everyone else's.

Russell Banks, *Success Stories*, 1986

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<sup>1</sup> Ivy League College : one of the best colleges in the US, like Harvard or Yale

<sup>2</sup> Canvas duffel : sac de toile

<sup>3</sup> Elm : orme

### NOTE AUX CANDIDATS

Les candidats traiteront le sujet sur la copie qui leur sera fournie et veilleront à :  
**respecter l'ordre des questions et reporter la numérotation sur la copie (numéro et lettre repère, le cas échéant ; ex. 8h) ;**  
**faire précéder les citations de la mention de la ligne ;**  
**composer des phrases complètes chaque fois qu'il leur est demandé de rédiger la réponse ;**  
**respecter le nombre de mots indiqué. En l'absence d'indication, les candidats répondront brièvement à la question posée.**

## I. COMPRÉHENSION — EXPRESSION

1. The narrator is a man. Give his possible age and his social background at the time. Justify by quoting from the text.
2. Rebuild the chronology of events using the dates below:
  - a. In October 1958    b. In December 1958    c. During the Christmas holidays of 1958
  - d. In January 1959    e. At the end of. 1959
3. What made it possible for the narrator to attend an Ivy League College?
4. a) How did he feel when he was at college? Why? Use your own words. (20-30 words)  
b) What did he decide to do then?
- c) How did his family and the people he knew react to his decision? Why? (40-50 words)
5. Say in your own words:
  - a) what major event happened in the narrator's childhood.
  - b) what impact it had on his family's attitude towards him.
6. Concentrate on the last paragraph (1.34-39) and say in your own words how the narrator finally reacted and how he felt. (25 - 30 words)
7. **Choose ONE of the following subjects. Write down the number of words.**  
(300 words: +/- 10%)

### Subject 1

One year later, the narrator goes back home and has to confront his family. Imagine the conversation.

**OR**

### Subject 2

(L. 38-39) "... now I can start to dream my own dreams, not everyone else's." To what extent is it important to fulfil one's dreams?

## II. TRADUCTION

Translate into French from line 10 "On a snowy December night, ..." to line 15 "... ancient elms."