

Compréhension de l'écrit et expression écrite

Le sujet porte sur l'axe 1 du programme : **Identités et échanges**

Il s'organise en deux parties :

1. Compréhension de l'écrit ;
2. Expression écrite.

Afin de respecter l'anonymat de votre copie, vous ne devez pas signer votre composition, ni citer votre nom, celui d'un camarade ou celui de votre établissement.

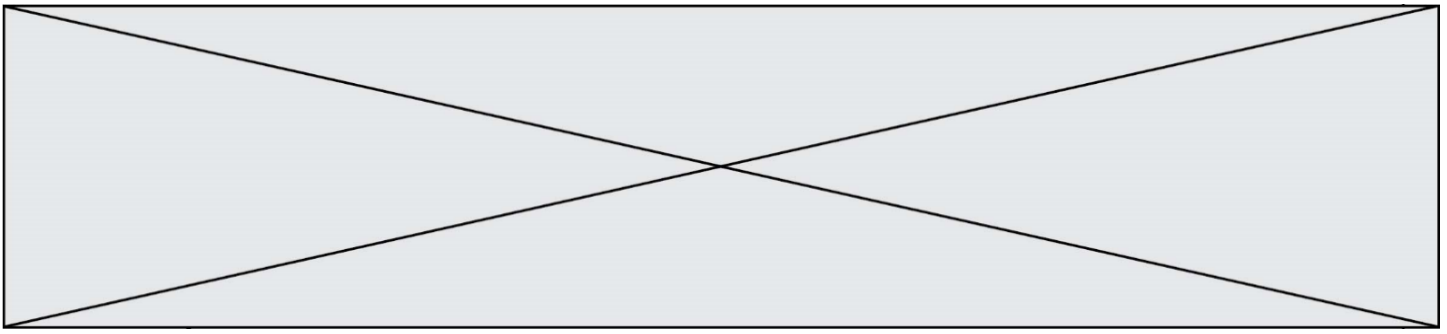
Texte :

Haters gonna hate ... but stars like Taylor Swift can help to make literature pop
I teach the megastar's lyrics. Adding contemporary material to school curriculums won't dumb down – it will inspire.

I'm delighted to hear that the English school curriculum¹ is about to be shaken up by the arrival of Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden² into classrooms. This is part of wider plans to turn pupils into "educated citizens in modern society" by including contemporary material alongside the more established canon, and it's led by Oak
5 National Academy, the government-backed creator of curriculum resources. [...]

No doubt the critics will see this as "dumbing down", a defeatist attempt to pander³ to today's teen spirit. Oh well, whatever, never mind. I've seen first-hand the beneficial effects of creating an invisible string between historical works and modern popular culture in my new course at Ghent University in Belgium. Titled *English literature*
10 *(Taylor's version)*, it offers in-depth perspectives on the works you might expect on an English literature syllabus – from anonymous Old English poets to Geoffrey Chaucer, Charlotte Brontë, and Sylvia Plath – with a special guest appearance from the 21st century's new literary superstar, Taylor Swift.

Since the 2020 release of her albums *Folklore* and *Evermore*, increasing interest has
15 been paid to Swift as a literary artist, whose works brim with references to everything from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to *The Great Gatsby*. The esteemed Shakespeare professor Jonathan Bate recently argued that Swift was a "literary giant", declaring that he would "compare her (favourably) to the greats of poetry and prose".



20 [...] Placing Swift in dialogue with such authors can only broaden our understanding of both.

Classic literature should not be enshrined as a “monument”, left to stagnate by our misguided notions of sanctity and untouchability, but should be treated as a living thing: like any real love, it is ever changing. I imagine that this mentality underpinned the decision to award Bob Dylan the Nobel prize in literature in 2016. What better way to emphasise this than through connection with Swift herself, who has reinvented herself countless times and always comes back stronger?

30 I’ve faced a fair amount of snobbery and backlash. I’ve heard that historical literature should “remain strange” and not be sullied through comparison with something as frivolous as pop music. Swift only writes about “boys and breakups”, so how can she possibly be considered literary? (I hate to break it to you, dear reader, but most of the literary canon is about boys and breakups.) [...]

35 Amid all this critique, something that has been conspicuously absent is the question of what the students themselves might actually want. I’ve received emails from students and teachers worldwide, whose interest in literature has been rekindled by its connections with Swift. My course has more than twice as many participants as I would usually expect, from diverse backgrounds. There are students who graduated decades ago, but have returned to the classroom *for fun*; students taking degrees in biophysics, veterinary sciences or archaeology who see the humanities as an important complement to their vocations; and students training to be teachers, hoping one day to make their own curriculums more relevant and accessible. [...]

40 Let’s not allow our cultural heritage to ossify into static monuments, but keep it fresh and vibrant by bringing more modern, disruptive and – heaven forbid – *fun* voices into the classroom. Let’s listen to our students. Here we are now, they are saying – entertain us.

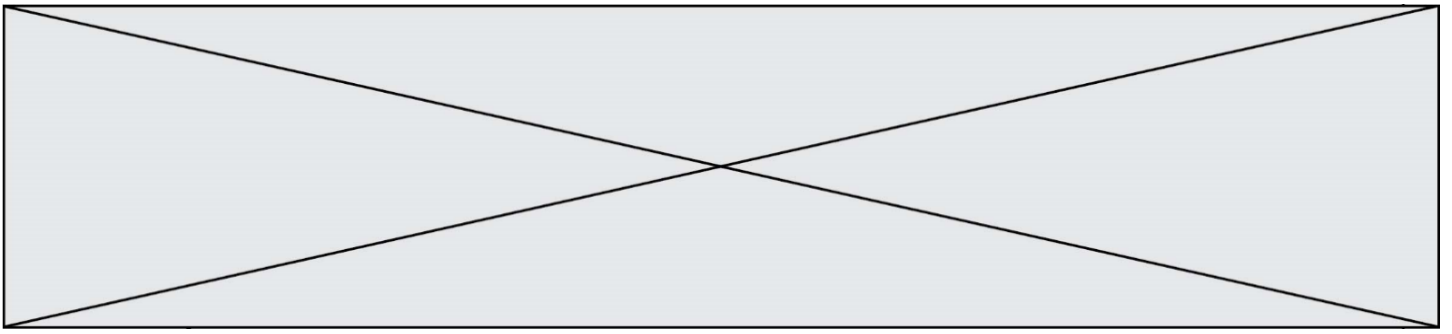
Elly McCausland⁴, *The Guardian*, October 17th 2023.

¹ Curriculum: course.

² Nirvana, PearlJam and Soundgarden are three American rock bands.

³ To pander: to please, to charm.

⁴ Elly McCausland is a writer and academic based in Ghent, Belgium, where she works as assistant professor of English literature at Ghent University.



1. Compréhension de l'écrit (10 points)

Give an account of the document, in your own words and **in English**, with the help of the following guidelines:

- 1- Explain what new elements have been introduced in the English school curriculum and why some people disapprove of them.
- 2- Explain Professor McCausland's choices in her English literature class and her reasons for making these choices.

2. Expression écrite (10 points)

Vous traiterez **en anglais**, et en 120 mots minimum, **l'un des deux sujets suivants au choix** :

Sujet A

Imagine you are a teacher planning a course which mixes classic literature and modern pop culture.

Explain the benefits you think students would get from this approach and address concerns critics might have.

Sujet B

Do you think song lyrics can have as much impact as literature?
Give examples to support your arguments.