

МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО, МЛАДЕЖТА И НАУКАТА

REGIONAL OLYMPIAD IN ENGLISH

2012

Group Three

Part One

Dictation

What was really peculiar / in this couple's progress, / and would have attracted the attention / of any casual observer / was the perfect silence they preserved. // They walked side by side / in such a way as to suggest / the low, easy, confidential chat / of people full of reciprocity; / but on closer view / it could be discerned / that the man was reading, / or pretending to read, / a ballad which he kept / before his eyes / with some difficulty / by the hand that was passed / through the basket strap. // Whether this apparent cause / were the real cause, / or whether it were an assumed one / to escape a conversation / that would have been boring to him, / nobody but himself / could have said precisely; / but the silence was unbroken, / and the woman enjoyed / no society whatever from his presence. // Virtually she walked the highway alone, / except for the child she bore. // Sometimes the man's elbow / almost touched her shoulder, / because she kept as close to his side / as was possible without actual contact, / but she seemed to have / no idea of taking his arm, / nor he of offering it; / and far from exhibiting surprise / at his ignoring silence / she appeared to receive it / as a natural thing. // If any word at all / were uttered by the little group, / it was an occasional whisper / of the woman to the child – / a tiny girl in short clothes / and blue boots – / and the babble of the child in reply. //

The chief attraction / of the young woman's face / was its mobility. // When she looked down / sideways to the girl / she became pretty, / and even handsome, / as her features caught the rays / of the strongly coloured sun, / which set fire on her lips. //

That the man and woman / were husband and wife, / and the girl's parents / there could be little doubt. // No other than such relationship / would have accounted / for the atmosphere of stale familiarity / which the three carried along with them / as they moved down the road. //

(Adapted from "*The Mayor of Casterbridge*" by **Thomas Hardy**)