

Abitur 2004 Prüfung im 4. Fach

Text: Extract from: *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, 2003

FLOTSAM

On the white beach, ground-up coral and broken bones, a group of the children are walking. They must have been swimming, they're still wet and glistening. They should be more careful: who knows what may infest the lagoon? But they're unwary; unlike Snowman, who won't dip a toe in there even at night, when the sun can't get at him. [...]

5 He watches them with envy, or is it nostalgia? It can't be that: he never swam in the sea as a child, never ran around on a beach without any clothes on. The children scan the terrain, stoop, pick up flotsam; then they deliberate among themselves, keeping some items, discarding others; their treasures go into a torn sack. Sooner or later — he can count on it — they'll seek him out where he sits wrapped in his decaying sheet, hugging his shins and sucking on his mango, in under the shade
10 of the trees because of the punishing sun. For the children — thick-skinned, resistant to ultraviolet — he's a creature of dimness, of the dusk.

Here they come now. 'Snowman, oh Snowman,' they chant in their singsong way. They never stand too close to him. Is that from respect, as he'd like to think, or because he stinks? [...]

Opening up their sack, the children chorus, 'Oh Snowman, what have we found?' They lift out the
15 objects, hold them up as if offering them for sale: a hubcap, a piano key, a chunk of pale-green pop bottle smoothed by the ocean. A plastic BlyssPluss container, empty; a ChickieNobs Bucket O'Nubbins, ditto. A computer mouse, or the busted remains of one, with a long wiry tail.

Snowman feels like weeping. What can he tell them? There's no way of explaining to them what these curious items are, or were. But surely they've guessed what he'll say, because it's always the
20 same.

'These are things from before.'

Annotations:

Introductory remark: Snowman might be the only human left on earth. He is not entirely alone, however, as he considers himself the shepherd of a group of experimental, human-like creatures called the Children of Crake.

flotsam - wreckage or cargo that remains afloat after a ship has sunk **1** ground-up – grind = crush, pulverize **14** chorus – [part of speech: verb] **15** hubcap - round covering over the hub of the wheel of a motor vehicle **15** pop (bottle) – non-alcoholic drink **16** BlyssPluss (trademark) – sterilization pill Crake has created to bring about the end of humanity **16** ChickieNobs (trademark) - headless chickens designed to produce chicken parts for fast-food restaurants **17** ditto – the same as before (i.e. empty)

Assignments:

- 1) Describe the changes that have taken place in Snowman's world.
- 2) Elaborate on the genre markers in this extract.
- 3) Comment on the chances of Margaret Atwood's most recent novel to become a bestseller.