

# ATLAS

## CONCOURS ATLAS JUNIOR 2014 – ANGLAIS

### Extrait de *Wake*, Anna Hope

*Anna Hope*, actrice et comédienne originaire de Manchester, signe avec *Wake*, paru en Angleterre en 2014, son premier roman.

*Wake* se déroule en novembre 1920, durant les cinq jours qui se sont écoulés entre l'exhumation du corps du soldat inconnu britannique et ses funérailles nationales. La découverte de la dépouille de ce soldat sur un champ de bataille en France et son acheminement en Angleterre constitue le fil rouge du roman, qui rythme le récit croisé de trois femmes endeuillées par la Première Guerre Mondiale. Hettie, Evelyn et Ada appartiennent à trois générations différentes, la première a perdu son père, la deuxième son amant et la troisième son fils. Elles ne se connaissent pas, et pourtant leur vie, sans qu'elles le sachent, sont liées.

**L'extrait que vous allez devoir traduire se situe au tout début du roman. Trois soldats britanniques dans une caserne à Arras, au nord de la France, partent en pleine nuit effectuer une mystérieuse mission sur un ancien champ de bataille. Parvenus à un cimetière de fortune, ils s'arrêtent. Le colonel semble chercher une croix précise.**

Eventually the colonel crouches by one of the small wooden crosses, set a little way apart from the rest. "Here." He motions for the men to come forward. "Dig here". A date is written on the cross, scribbled in shaky black pencil, but no name.

The private does as he's told, lifting his shovel and kicking it into the hard ground. The sergeant joins him, but after a couple of spades of earth he stops.

"Sir?"

"What?"

"What are we looking for, Sir?"

"A body," says the colonel. "And bloody well get on with it. We haven't got all day."

The two men lock eyes, before the sergeant looks away, spits on the ground and continues to dig.

Beneath its frosted crust the mud is softer, clinging, and they do not have to dig for long. Soon metal scrapes on metal. The sergeant puts down his shovel and kneels, clearing the mud from a steel helmet. "Think we might be there, Sir."

The colonel holds his light over the hole. "Keep going," he says, his voice tight.[...] "Clear as much as you can [...] and then check for his badges."

The dead man is lying twisted in the earth, his right arm beneath him. The men reach down, lifting and turning him over. The sergeant takes his pocketknife and scrapes away at where the shoulder should be. The man's regimental badges are there still, just, but they are unreadable, the colours long gone, leached into the soil; it is impossible to tell what they once were.

"Can't see them, Sir. Sorry, Sir." The sergeant's face is red in the torchlight, sweaty from effort.

"Check around the body. All around it. I want anything at all that might identify him."

The men do as they are ordered, but find nothing.

[...]

The private looks back up at the colonel. Impossible to tell if this is the body he was searching for [...]. This has been a waste of time. He waits for the man's reaction, bracing himself for the expected anger on his face.

But the colonel only nods.

"Good," he says, chucking his cigarette on the earth. "Now lift him out and put him in the sack."