

NM i engelsk 2023

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What is *NM i engelsk*?

NM i engelsk is a text competition for all upper secondary students in Norway organized each year by English Teachers of Norway (ETN). Communication is key in the English subject and is an essential part of the interdisciplinary topic, Democracy and Citizenship. *NM i engelsk* provides an opportunity to inspire and highlight the creative texts that communicate the talents of young English students in Norway. The competition includes two text categories: written and short film.

Jury and prizes

A single topic is chosen as the framework for both text productions. The criteria for the short, 3-min films include precise and varied vocabulary, idiomatic language, and personal contact with the audience. All films are judged by a national teacher team.

The writing competition consists of two rounds of three-hour writing sessions. The first round takes place at participating schools, where local teachers decide the school's finalists. The second round for writing takes place at Jessheim High School, where the finalists write the final text. Both film and written candidates meet at Jessheim High School and participate in activities designed to encourage creating English texts while networking with other English students. The finalists for the written category this year were judged by two practicing English teachers, a representative from The Norwegian Center for English and Foreign Languages in Education (Fremmedspråksenteret), and an American visiting Fulbright Scholar.

The winners of the competition receive a trophy and a certificate of participation, and this year, the winning text is also highlighted in this magazine, *Communicare*.

This year's winning written text

Wilfrid Kelly-Coderre submitted the winning written text in 2023. He is an 18-year-old bi-lingual student from Ottawa Canada, currently on exchange in Norway via the Rotary club, studying in his second year of high school to receive college entrance accreditation. When not writing stories, Wilfrid enjoys rock-climbing, cross-country skiing and solving rubik's cubes.

The topic for the competition was The Joker. Springboarding from this topic, Wilfrid creates an imaginary community using a deck of cards as inspiration. He uses different suits in the deck of cards to depict the citizens of the city found inside the castle, Kard. The world of Kard was imagined and written within three hours!

Connecting the text to Democracy and Citizenship

The setting of the story is a welldefined community, albeit in the context of fantasy world. The card's suit and card values are used to describe the citizens of Kard. To connect the text to issues of democracy and citizenship, the following questions and tasks can be used to help design your lessons:

Before reading:

1. How would you describe a democratic society?
2. When is a society NOT a democracy?
3. What jobs are necessary in a democratic society?

During reading:

1. Stop in the middle of the text. What do you think will happen next? What in the text suggests this?
2. Mark in the text where the author uses a deck of cards to help describe and differentiate the citizens of Kard.
3. Highlight words or sentences you find interesting. Why do you find them interesting?
4. Highlight words whose meaning you are unsure of. Use different strategies to help you define these words.
5. Mark words and phrases you think may have different meanings or where the author may be playing on the meaning of the words.

After reading:

1. Describe the different citizens in Kard using examples from the text. How might the cultural differences in Kard reflect cultural differences found in a school? In Norway?
2. Do you think the main character, Jack, displays a tolerance and openness to the differences found in Kard? Why or why not? Where in the text can you find support for your answer?
3. How would you classify the society of Kard? Why?
4. What role does the Joker play in this story?
5. Write an alternative ending.

Royal Flush



by **Wilfrid-Coderre**

It was always misty by the pier. The thick fog that seldom faded was like a tightly wrapped blanket clinging for dear life to the waves that skipped over the lake's glimmering surface. While the everlasting fog seemed eerily quiet and omnipresent, like the shadow of a towering building in the sunset, the pier itself was not. Draping moss clung to its edges, having created a home for itself in the winding cracks and splinters of the decaying oak wood. It certainly isn't a destination that many would put on their vacation calendar, but for Jack, it was the one place on his rather unexciting patrol route where he would stop, sit, and relax for a brief moment, before marching on to complete his tour of the castle's perimeter.

The caw of a raven, and the rustling of the leaves from where its dark form had flown out of, reminded Jack that he could not rest here much longer. His armour creaked as he stood from the round stump that he had made his chair. The sounds of a door whose rusty hinges are in desperate need of a few drops of oil filling the air as he retrieved his spear from the grassy mound where he had planted it, just a few meters away. One heavy metallic step at a time, he started his half hour hike back towards the castle.

Kard was by far the most impressive castle in all Hosbra. Its walls stood well over two hundred feet; their pearly white colour meant to reflect the rare sunshine

that would fall upon them. However, the overcast of heavy grey clouds that stood their ground between the sky and the earth cast a darker shadow onto the great structure, promising a downpour within the coming hours. The slight tilt of the walls inwards let the eye to one of four gargantuan towers, each with unique engravings decorating its marble like walls.

Named for the material used to create it, Kard was a peculiar city. The sloping walls created an incomplete circle, interrupted by a straight, untouched section of land that cleaved the city into two equal parts. Each of the two sections was then again separated in half, this time only by a small

artificial stream, with several bridges, both small and large, making the crossing over the 30-foot gulf possible. Jack lived in Clubs, the most populous quadrant of Kard, but also that with the least social population. People in Clubs lived mostly quiet lives. Jack was a prime example. After his morning patrol, he'd head directly home for his lunch hour, before reporting to the Head Knave's office to respond to any requests that had been made in the meantime. Knaves were quite respected across Kard, in comparison to the Digits, who lived diverse lifestyles, heavily dependent on their Suit. Knaves had a consistent role across the city. Patrol the forested exterior of the castle and respond to any special requests within their Suit. Normally this would be something like eliminating vermin from a shop's storage, but a Knave's duty also included enforcing the rules set by their Suit's King. The King of Clubs was not very strict, so that wasn't a part of Jack's job that was frequently requested.

As he arrived home, Jack began to make his way towards the Head Knave's office, before suddenly stopping himself. Today is different. Because tomorrow is special. The week-long Festival of Aces was starting in the morning. Located in the centre of the city, Aces was the only place in all of Kard where you could see people from all four Suits interacting, the Suits being the name for the people of one of the four quadrants. Normally, the numerous but secluded people of Clubs stray away from large social events. While the happy go lucky types from Hearts would put on shows to entertain the masses. Dances,

acrobatics, and music of all kinds found their home in Hearts, and the Festival of Aces was their moment to shine. As for the other two, the people of Diamonds would show up out of necessity, not desire. Their primary focus has always been their image. Clad in expensive furs and with pendulums that would sooner be found on a grandfather clock than on someone's body dangling from their earlobes. The skin of a Diamond native was almost as white as the walls of Kard itself. In their rare social interactions, the people of Clubs would joke that the Suit had a giant tub of flour, in which all Diamonds would bath in before getting ready for the day. The final Suit, Spades, housed those who made the opulence of the Diamonds, possible, as well as the fervour of the Hearts, and the seclusion of the Clubs possible. They were the forgers, the leatherworkers, the trades people that were the basis of all that has become Kard. It was forbidden for people of Clubs and Spades to visit Diamonds or Hearts, who live on the other side of the crack that separates the city in half, so Jack had rarely seen them. On the other hand, he lived in a shabby room on the top story of an inn, directly overlooking the river border between Clubs and Spades. It was common for those on the other side of the river to come over for meals, with a large part of the population being farmers and cattle herders. Clubs was the place to be for a nice hot meal in Kard.

Jack ascended the rickety steps up to his room and once arrived, took of his once shiny Suit of armour, now caked with mud and grime from weeks of daily patrols, and

began cleaning it. This wasn't something he'd normally do, as it would get dirty again the next day, but with it being his last day before the festival, it was worth it to give the Suit a polish. A few hours passed and with his Suit looking as close to new as he could, the black feather that stood atop his helmet still bent, but less noticeably than before, Jack retired for the evening. There was no promise of when or how much he would be able to sleep the next evening, given that the streets and alleys to and from Aces would be crawling with people, no matter the time.

The high-pitched singing of a raven greeted Jack as he awoke the next morning. A glance outside of his dusty window suggested that the culprit was on the roof, barely outside of his line of sight. Leaving the stiff comfort of his bed behind, Jack briskly opened the window, cold autumn air rushing into the room, with the refreshing sent of bread baking downstairs making its way to his nose. After preparing himself for the day's festivities, Jack gingerly walked down the stairs to avoid the creaking planks waking anyone up and headed over to the counter.

"Good morning to ya Jack," The bubbly voice of Etera, the inn's cook greeted him from behind the counter. "Same thing as every day I assume," she stated, to which Jack nodded gently. Etera was a short, portly woman, who walked as a frog swam through water, with strong stubby fingers from years of kneading dough and working a knife. A paper sailor's cap rested

atop her short prickly grey hair, clearly made by one of the children who lived in the building. Jack had known Etera ever since he became a Knave and was offered the room he currently lived in curtesy of his new occupation. She handed him a tall mug, filled the top with a warm brown liquid and a freshly baked sourdough bun, generously buttered with margarine and marmalade. He hungrily wolfed down the bread and started on his drink. In other Suits, they called this hot chocolate, or chocolat chaud, for the posh people of Diamond, who couldn't bear to consume the same food as the low lives from Clubs. Here, they simply called it hot drink. It was common to describe things exactly how they were in Clubs since there was no desire for meaningless chatter.

With his meal finished, the chef thanked, and his boots laced snugly onto his feet, Jack made his way out of the building and over the bridge into Spades. While the walk to Aces was slightly longer this way, it was also more interesting to see the Digits go about their daily lives. Plus, the walk only took 15 minutes, and the Kings' speeches wouldn't begin for another 35. The winding cobblestone streets of Spades were allegedly quite similar to those in Hearts, with the main difference being the famously smooth and gradually turning roads in Hearts being forgotten in preference of sharper corners and turns. Looking back over the river Jack saw banners and flags of all kinds proudly displaying the black leaf that represented his home Suit. The three circles that made up the main shape creating a triangle of

sorts, pointing up towards the sky, which still promised less than ideal weather.

Arriving to Aces was like walking into a party store. The aggressive red colour of the Diamonds and Hearts drew your attention towards them, while the subtle black of Clubs and Spades hung quietly in the background. The speeches were starting soon, and the diverse crowd separated into their distinct Suits and gathered around the respective podium that each King would use to address his people. Out of the corner of his eye, Jack thought he spotted something he had never seen before. Just in a moment, a flash of light reflecting off metal drew his eye to a nearby market stall, from which a figure wearing a peculiar outfit stood perfectly still once he noticed the near observer. Most noticeably about the figure was its clothes, especially its hat, a winter cap of sorts with four long sections splitting outwards from the middle. Each one a mix of red and black, with the symbols of all four Suits carefully stitched into them. On the ends of each of these hat tails was a single gold bell, which for a moment, had reflected the sun in just the right way to catch Jack's eye. The person's face was white as snow, even more so than those of Diamonds, with a bright red ball seemingly attached to its nose. As the commotion implying the King was preparing to speak started, Jack was bumped and briefly lost sight of the figure. When he looked back towards the stall, it was nowhere to be seen.

Ignoring the strange occurrence for the

time being, Jack turned his attention towards the speeches that had just begun. Being the most populous Suit, Clubs would be the last to go, so Jack stood calmly and waited as the Kings of each Hearts, Spades, and Diamonds, made their addresses to the people of their Suit, until finally, a short thin man, awkwardly draped in a dark cloak that look ready to swallow him took to the podium. The King of Clubs was the embodiment of the people of his Suit. Dressed in regular but nice attire, with the only noticeable difference between him and any other well dress Club being the crown perched on his head, once again displaying the three circled leaf emblem that represented the Suit.

"I would like to welcome all of you to this year's festival of Aces and thank you all for another wonderful year in Clubs." Cheers echoed throughout the crowd as the King continued his speech. It was nearly identical to the past few years, with the King wishing everyone well, and giving his standard address. It was not until the end that there was a divergence from the regular text. "There has been a matter that has come to the attention of myself and the other Kings, and I would like to ask that someone assist me with it." Immediately, the crowd was jumping over itself to offer their aid to the King. While the people of Clubs may not be particularly social, they are very proud of where they lived. Raising his fist up to the mass of people swamping the base of the podium, the King calmly waited for the noise to subside. "I have already spoken to the Head Knave



about who he thinks would be a good fit for this task, so I would like to ask that Jack of Clubs come meet me directly following the conclusion of this speech." With that the King finished his speech with the normal hopes for another good year, and the crowd gradually began to disperse, off to see what the other Suits had come to show them. Stunned, Jack walked like a robot who had just learned to move, over to the base of the podium, where he was ushered into a separate room where the King was waiting to speak with him.

"Jack, I must confide something in you. Do I have your word that this will remain between us?" he asked as he motioned for the guard who had lead Jack in to leave the room.

"Of course, your majesty," Jack replied shakily. Just then, he could have sworn he heard the jingle of a few bells as he answered.

The king motioned for him sit in the sturdy looking chair opposite to him, and Jack obliged. "As you know, Kard is named for the material it was built with," Jack nodded, this was taught to everyone throughout the city, "and while the castle may seem impossibly strong from the outside, there is a certain piece of kard that if it were to fall, could cause the collapse of the entire castle. Only I and the other Kings are aware of its exact location, and we have reason to fear that it may be under threat." The King went on to explain how in dozens of private locations across all four suits, golden bells had been found in

places that were not at all accessible to the public. "Just this morning," he continued, "I found two placed in either of my shoes before I put them on." As the King offered Jack one of the bells, Jack noticed that they looked awfully like those he had seen on the figure's hat he had spotted outside. Twirling the little instrument between his hands, Jack recounted this encounter with the figure by the market, "One moment it was there, the next it was gone."

As he finished his sentenced, an objected fell out of the sky, landing between the two, narrowly avoiding striking the King. As he bent over to pick it up, noticing that it was the exact same type of bell he already held in his hand, Jack looked to the King with worry as a playful snickering voice filled the room. "Oops. I missed," it said, sounding more like a child than an adult. The pair gazed up into the rafters, hoping to catch a glimpse of the voice's owner, but to no avail. The roof was high, and with a hole two feet across as its summit. The culprit had certainly already gotten away. The King took the new bell from Jack's palm and relayed that he could make out tiny letters across its golden shell, "I hope you like your foundation kard."

"Oh wait," he read out. "The foundation kard is the piece that holds the city together. The one I explained earlier," said the King frantically, "It's located directly below Aces, in the centre of it all. If whoever this is poses a threat to it, we must go there now."

The King then lead Jack outside of the small building where they had been speaking, and together they navigated the crowd until they came to the bridge connecting Aces to the red side of the river. "Help me down," said the King, gesturing towards the 6-foot drop down to the pebbly beach of the river which the bridge crossed over. Once down, the King tapped on the stone bricks in the wall a complex pattern that seemed like utter nonsense to Jack. Just as he was about to ask what he was doing, the King stood back as a section of the wall sunk into the ground, revealing a stairway down, dimly lit by torches adorning the walls on either side, their flames casting a gentle orange glow over the sturdy steps. Carefully making their way downwards, the King explained to Jack that this was one of the two entrances to where the foundation kard stood, the other being on the other side of Aces, where Spades met Clubs. "I am only able to enter from the red side of Kard, same with the King of Spades." He stated, "In the same way, the King of Hearts and Diamonds can only enter from our side of Aces."

Several minutes later and the steps started to flatten out. The air was damp, and tracing a finger along the wall told Jack that it wasn't only the air. The hallway eventually opened up into a sizeable but simple room. Another hallway of the same stature as that they had come through stood opposite to them. The emblems of Spades and Clubs carefully engraved into the stone above it. In the centre, the thinnest piece of stone Jack had ever seen

stood perfectly balanced on a pedestal made of red and black stone. It was well over three feet tall, and its rough surface was completely white, a single red circle interrupting its consistent coloration. A simple look at the King indicated that this was the foundation kard. "This piece of Kard is older than the city itself," said the King. "None of the Kings know who put it here or how, nor do any of our predecessors. All we know is that if it were to somehow fall over, the rest of the castle would not be long to-..."

"Well, well, well, look who finally made it!" The same child's voice echoed off the stoney walls of the room, this time, its source stepping out from behind the foundation kard. One and the same as the person Jack had spotted by the stall at the festival. "Doesn't it look so pretty now," The figure snickered, "Look, we're matching," it added as it pointed to its nose and then to the one it had painted onto the kard. The King, who had been standing extremely still until this point, suddenly lunged towards the figure. His heavy cloak falling easily off his shoulders, and the opulent crown clanging to the ground with the clink of metal meeting rock. With surprise on his side, the King managed to get a hand on the child but could not keep it there. With the grace of a gymnast, it skipped out of the way and sat down nonchalantly, crossing one leg over the other.

"You're a Heart aren't you," The King spat, now on his hands and knees after his failed dive.

"I can dance like one for sure," answered the figure gleefully, "I also have skin like a Diamond. I'm handy like a Spade, and just like you Clubs, I'm really good at avoiding people." It stuck out its rosy tongue towards the king, who had barely managed to get back on his feet.

"Jack, help me would you?" screeched the King "You have more experience in this than I do!" Jack set down his rucksack that had been carrying his lunch for the day, and advanced towards to figure. Along with the King, they slowly approached the sitting duck, who was humming some melody to itself. Once they were within touching distance, the person quickly stood up, kicked Jack's feet out from under him, and hopped to the other side of the room with ease.

"Ouch, I stubbed my toe on that one," it taunted Jack with its tongue out. Now angry, both Jack and the King charged towards the child, with Jack managing to catch its foot before it jumped away this time.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Jack snarled at it, keeping a firm a firm grip on the person as the King restrained its arms. At this moment, the jingle of bells started playing, and another figure, dressed exactly the same as the one Jack was currently holding down, showed itself from behind the foundation kard. The notable difference with the second figure was its colour, while its counterpart had both black and red, this new character was so pale the colours were

almost invisible. When it stopped moving, Jack nearly lost sight of it. It shook its bell clad hat once more, again filling the room with the jingling sound, before finally answering Jack's question. "Don't you think it's high time your precious little Kard castle came tumbling down?" it said as it lifted the bottom of its foot towards the foundation kard. The voice itself was coming from both figures at once. They spoke in complete unison as they answered one final question, "Oh and, you wanted to know who we are?" They taunted; the one being held down unable to stop itself from giggling a bit. That's simple. All you Numbers and Knaves and Queens and Kings and Aces aren't strong enough.

A look of realization dawned on the King's face, "It can't be!" The answer came simply, "But it can be, and it is."

The nearly invisible figured pushed its foot down into the foundation kard, which slowly began to fall over. With six words it confirmed the King's thoughts, and promised Jack that today would be the last time he saw the sky. With a glint in its eye, the figures told him in unison, right as the kard hit the ground and the walls began to shake.

"Can't you tell?"

"We're The Joker."