

## Reading Part Two

*You are going to read an interview with a novelist who is also a dentist. On the basis of the text answer the questions below. Use maximum seven words.*

*There is an example done for you.*

### Man from Cairo

By day a Cairo dentist and by night a novelist, he spent years battling censorship to get published. Today, he is a bestselling writer across the globe.

However committed he was to dentistry, Aswany was always destined to be a writer. He was born in Cairo in 1957. His father was also a novelist, the recipient of the state award for literature in 1972, "when it was still respected", according to his son. "I was lucky. He was very liberal. He was my first professor of literature. He told me what to read and what not to read." Aswany had a traditional French education and then went to Chicago to study for his degree. As a dentistry student in Chicago three decades ago, he hugely admired America's efficiency. But it was not, in the long run, for him. "Everything is systemised, practical. Egypt is the opposite, but there is beauty in that. I cannot be objective about Egypt. It is only in Egypt that I feel myself. When I'm abroad, I'm someone who has much in common with myself, but it's not really me. I am always homesick! To me, it's the most wonderful place on earth. I had to come back for my people, for literature. "

So in the early hours of the morning, he would write and then he would walk to his practice and remove his patients' wisdom teeth. Did he, in the years when publishers kept rejecting his work, come close to giving up? "I got very upset. I said to my wife: That's enough. We must leave. I was planning to move to New Zealand. That was in 1998. But a dear friend of mine said: This will be the end for you. So I tried one last novel."

In 2002, his novel *The Yacoubian Building*, was quietly accepted by a small, independent publisher in Cairo. Its first edition sold out in four weeks and it was the Arab world's bestseller for five successive years, selling 250,000 copies in a region where print runs rarely exceed 3,000. Word spread quickly, people talked about it. It was made into a hit film and a TV serial, and has since been translated into 27 languages.

Part of Aswany's international success is down to the fact that his novels, which embrace every layer of Egyptian society from newspaper editor to manservant, and which reveal these characters' most shameful and most secret desires, have given us an amazing picture into a society which many knew little about.

But Aswany hates to be thought of as an Arab writer. "I'm against presenting literature on an ethnic basis. I am pushed, little by little, to be an Arab writer, but I prefer to think of myself as part of the republic of literature."

"Society is a living organism and you must keep up. That's why I still practise, though for only two days a week. I will never close the clinic. The clinic is my window. I open it to see what is happening in the street. You can't get disconnected from the street, as a writer; that's a common mistake. You can be too easily welcomed every night by the richest people and the most influential. It is very dangerous because it is that relationship with the street that made you successful in the first place."

**We do not accept answers with more than seven words!**

|    |  |  |  |  |
|----|--|--|--|--|
|    | <b>Example:</b><br>What used to be a major problem in the past?<br><i>censorship</i> |  |  |  |
| 1  | In what way was his father's work appreciated?                                       |  |  |  |
| 2  | What role did his father play in his life?   |  |  |  |
| 3  | What does he appreciate in America?  |  |  |  |
| 4  | Why does he feel homesick abroad?  |  |  |  |
| 5  | Why did he want to move to New Zealand?  |  |  |  |
| 6  | How was this novel advertised?   |  |  |  |
| 7  | How does his work change our understanding of Egyptian society?                      |  |  |  |
| 8  | Why doesn't he want to be an Arab novelist?  |  |  |  |
| 9  | How does he connect to real life?  |  |  |  |
| 10 | Why is a connection with common people important for him?                            |  |  |  |
|    |  |  |  |  |

**TURN OVER**