

Pierre COIFFARD 1°4 ES



« Mission Accomplished »

On Friday, May 19th, the American writer and teacher Eric PUCHNER

visited us in our school. He was invited for the Festival of Literature "Caractères" in Auxerre with several other foreign authors. We interviewed him on his life, his career, and the short story we had been studying in class : "Mission".

This interview started with a surprise for Eric PUCHNER. A few students staged the first scene of "Mission". He was very impressed by our commitment and he found it funny: "*Amazing, really wonderful!*"

Then, he told us about Baltimore (the city where he lives), its segregated population and poverty. He told us about his life as a father too and the difficulties he faces when he mixes his career and his family life. Actually, he told us that he needed eight months or more to write a short story (it took him a year to write "Mission") and that it's a challenging piece of work because inspiration is not present every day : "*It is sometimes easy, sometimes hard*". It's the main difficulty of his job. Eric PUCHNER isn't a full-time writer, he also teaches Creative Writing at Claremont McKenna College. He particularly admires the famous Russian author Anton Tchekov.

And about "Mission" ? Eric PUCHNER compares himself to Nils, the main character of his short story, because he likes discovering new cultures just like Nils and like Nils, he once had a mission: teaching English to immigrants. He feels very close to his fascinating character. In his short story, he talks about a group of immigrants who live in America and American imperialism. He told us his views about racism which is very widespread in America, particularly in the Midwest while more educated people move to the coasts. The election of Donald Trump traumatized him. His message to Trump's racist supporters ? "*Grow up!*"

This interview ended with a buffet, discussions with students and the local press and we thanked Eric PUCHNER for his visit and we told him we hoped he would have a good time in Auxerre.