IDÉE DE PROGRÈS
Le progrès = évolution sociale, technologique ou médicale qui bouscule les coutumes et traditions. Cette avancée = souvent l’objet d’inquiétudes quant aux possibles conséquences.

Plusieurs thèmes peuvent illustrer cette notion.

• **Avancées technologiques**

  Quand la fiction devient réalité : comment les grandes inventions ont bouleversé notre monde et les conséquences des grandes avancées techniques.

• **Réseaux sociaux**

  Internet a bouleversé nos rapports aux autres.

• **Progrès et sport**

  Quelles sont les limites éthiques et physiques aux performances sportives ?

Nous verrons dans quelle mesure les athlètes doivent toujours repousser leurs limites pour atteindre de nouveaux records et satisfaire la pression du « toujours plus ». Nous verrons également à quel point la frontière progrès – tricherie peut être poreuse.
We are going to deal with the notion « idea of progress ». To begin with, I’d like to give a definition of the notion. A progress is a steady evolution towards a better stage. In relation to the notion, the subject of my presentation will be the sport performances.

To what extent the tendency to push sports limits further can be seen as progress?

- Nation’s fame
- An athlete is bound to always improve his / her performance
- Sport has always played a major part in a nation’s fame. Indeed, a successful athlete sets a great example of a country’s power.

- It brings people together
- Creates a sense of community
- To set the example among teenagers
- Sport is tightly linked with the notion of progress since an athlete is bound to always improve his / her performances. An athlete is bound to always improve his / her performances.

In her Christmas speech in 2010, Queen Elizabeth laid the emphasis on the importance of sport. She stressed the fact that it brings people together ... and creates a sense of community.

An extract from the film Made in Dagenham (2010) draws our attention to the fact that women were still officially discriminated against in Great Britain in the second half of the 20th century. This extract takes place in a Ford car factory in London and stages underpaid women who demand equal pay to men. To be heard, they have decided to go on strike.

Their spokeswoman, Rita, tries to convince the Secretary of State for Employment, Mrs Castle, to guarantee an Equal Pay Act. Mrs Castle negotiates and suggests 75% of the man’s wages under the condition that the women go back to work.

The fact that women were less paid than men for an equivalent job relied on the idea that when it was done by a woman, a task was less valuable. Once more, it took much determination to make mentalities evolve and to obtain official and legal recognition.
Another beneficial evolution lays in the fact that the paralympic sports have achieved greater and greater success among the public. Indeed, the London 2012 Paralympic Games were more publicized than in the previous Olympic Games in Beijing. In other words, advertisers were willing to invest more money on these games, aware that it would be lucrative.

The South African double amputee Oscar Pistorius, nicknamed « Blade Runner » pertained to this success in so far as he was the first athlete to compete both in the Olympic Games and in the Paralympic Games. Even if that double entry turned out to be highly controversial, it proved that the scientific progress combined with iron will tend to bridge the gap between able-bodied athletes and disabled athletes.

For all these reasons, athletes should feel proud to represent their countries during the Olympic Games for instance.

The amount of money that some companies are ready to pay to advertise teams or athletes shows that, today, money is dominating world sport. Let’s take the example of the Super Bowl during which 30 seconds of commercials can cost more than $2 million. This evolution raises the question of the status of the athletes: Have they become mere products? Are sports only a question of money?

What’s more, in order to remain in the lead and to have interesting contracts, some sportsmen and women seem ready to go beyond the ethic limits.

Actually, they are expected to make great efforts to succeed and fulfill the public’s expectation. Some might be tempted, or even forced to use drugs to enhance their performance.

The point is that besides endangering the athletes’ health, doping corrupts the ideal of fairness and tarnishes the integrity, values which are supposedly embodied by sport.
1 - Sport performances

• Child abuse

Another consequence of this dangerous evolution is child abuse. There is no denying that various dangers threaten young people aspiring to become athletes. Some undergo endless hours of training, ill-treatment, not to mention the extreme pressure from unscrupulous managers.

• To be used as disposable products

What matters is how to exploit these kids’ potential to earn as much money as possible. Once more, these young athletes are used as disposable products. Once their performances are less good, their managers get rid of them.

• To set a bad example

Indeed, the enormous sums of money at stake and the commercialisation set a bad example for the young athletes who are bound to set off on the wrong foot.

2 - Vocabulaire

• To achieve / to accomplish: accomplir
• To compete for something: participer
• To mount the podium: monter sur le podium
• To be in the lead: être en tête
• Awe-inspiring: qui inspire le respect
• To play by the rule: être fair-play
• Criticize somebody for doing something: critiquer quelqu’un
• To denounce / to expose: dénoncer
• Ethical code / moral code: Code éthique / moral
• The flipside of the coin: le revers de la médaille