

TEXT 4

35 sheepseyes at him under their mascaraed lashes.  
 He wanted to make good under the glare of the milliondollar searchlights  
 of El Dorado:  
 the Sheik, the Son of the Sheik;  
 personal appearances.

40 *The Big Money*, from USA, New York, Random House, 1937.

John Dos Passos

Adagio dancer

1 The nineteenyearold son of a veterinary in Castellanea in the south of Italy was shipped off to America like a lot of other unmanageable young Italians when his parents gave up trying to handle him, to sink or swim and maybe send a few lires home by international postal moneyorder. The family was through with him. But Rodolfo Guglielmi wanted to make good.

5 He got a job as assistant gardener in Central Park but that kind of work was the last thing he wanted to do; he wanted to make good in the brightlights; money burned his pockets.

10 He hung about cabarets doing odd jobs, sweeping out for the waiters, washing cars; he was lazy handsome wellbuilt slender goodtempered and vain; he was a born tango dancer.

15 Lovehungry women thought he was a darling. He began to get engagements dancing the tango in ballrooms and cabarets; he teamed up with a girl named Jean Acker on a vaudeville tour and took the name of Rudolph Valentino.

20 Stranded on the Coast he headed for Hollywood, worked for a long time as an extra for five dollars a day; directors began to notice he photographed well.

25 He got his chance in *The Four Horsemen* and became the gigolo of every woman's dreams.

30 Valentino spent his life in the colorless glare of klieg lights, in stucco villas obstructed with bricabrac oriental rugs tigerskins, in the bridasuites of hotels, in silk bathrobes in private cars.

35 He was always getting into limousines or getting out of limousines, or patting the neck of fine horses.

40 Wherever he went the sirens of the motorcyclecops screeched ahead of him  
 flashlights flared,

the streets were jumbled with hysterical faces, waving hands, crazy eyes; they stuck out their autographbooks, yanked his buttons off, cut a tail off his admirablytailored dress suit; they stole his hat and pulled at his necktie; his valets removed young women from under his bed; all night in nightclubs and cabarets actresses leching for stardom made

Questions

- **Question 1.** In this passage what are the terms which contribute to:
  - a. direct characterization;
  - b. indirect characterization. Put them into tabular form (name, physical appearance...).
- **Question 2.** Using the list of terms you have just made up, show how this text challenges the very concept of individuality.
- **Question 3.** Is Rudolph Valentino presented as an individual or as a type? Use whatever extratextual knowledge seems to you to be relevant to justify your answer.
- **Question 4.** Show how John Dos Passos' particular mode of writing, far from stressing the fact that Rodolfo Guglielmi alias Rudolph Valentino, was a real person with a real historical existence, moves away from the purely referential and transforms the real person into a character, that is to say a textual construct.