

It was midday at the height of summer. The car slowed lazily, and we turned down a sand path and onto a beach of large smooth stones. We halted suddenly, but there was no dust.

The creek was low, no more than a foot of water, but fairly wide - at least 10 yards. The sun was a ball of hot, scarring gold and our tongues were tacky against the roofs of our mouths. The stones were a brightness of colour under the water; blues and deep blood red - a break from the yellow grass, green needles, and the pale, cloudless sky.

It would have been a sunny, beautiful day of sky and peace and birds if the water was not drying up, disappearing like candyfloss on a child's tongue. The breeze burnt our skin with flames made of air. I saw my father's look of worry, and fear crept into my veins.

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Extension task: Why do you think the child and father feel this way? Why might the creek be important to them?

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