
GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Post-16 reading support, Paper 1

High quality, challenging extracts framed with questions demanding the same thinking as the 'unseen' section of the exam

Published: June 2017

'Wherever you go becomes a part of you somehow.'

Anita Desai



Assessment objectives for Paper 1

- AO1 Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise from different texts.
- AO2 Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
- AO4 Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

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Introduction

Use this resource to help students interpret information and ideas and understand the means by which they are presented. These skills are needed for the ‘unseen’ element of the exam.

Paper 1 requires engagement with unseen texts drawn from ‘*high quality, challenging literature*’. We’ve provided relevant extracts, specially selected to engage post-16 students, and framed them with questions that require the same thinking as an exam response.

Please note this resource purposefully contains extracts from 19th century texts – this will help build familiarity with the language used in early 20th century texts. Remember that Paper 2 includes 19th century texts, and none will be used on Paper 1.

Texts on Paper 1 will be drawn from either the 20th or 21st century. Section A of the paper involves reading a literature fiction text in order to consider how established writers use narrative and descriptive techniques to capture the interest of readers.

To get the best from this resource

We recommend reading and appreciating the whole passage first, as this is good exam practice. This can be followed by close reading, analysis of the writer’s craft and the production of an independent response. Students can then be asked for a more considered, evaluative response which they need to support with detailed reference to, and analysis of, the text.

For each extract, after a first response, there are possible related activities relating to skills needed for the exam.

For each extract, there are some overarching things to think about, such as outlining what the extract is about and what the writer is trying to suggest. We then suggest concentrating on particular parts of the source, with activities which make some analysis of language. This provides practice for exam question 2.

Note that in the exam, students would give an integrated interpretation of the language and the effects and not be directed or assisted as in some of these activities.

There are some activities which focus on structural analysis, providing practice for the kind of approach used in exam question 3.

Finally, some evaluation tasks require critical consideration of the whole text: a helpful skill for exam question 4.

Please note that the sources in this reading booklet are not always typical of the length of the sources used on live question papers. We’ve chosen these sources with the sole purpose of helping develop the skills students will be required to show.

The Time Machine

HG Wells (1985)

I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback—of a helpless headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast for me. The twinkling succession of darkness and light was excessively painful to the eye. Then, in the intermittent darkneses, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars. Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous color like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue.

The landscape was misty and vague. I was still on the hill-side upon which this house now stands, and the shoulder rose above me grey and dim. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, now brown, now green; they grew, spread, shivered, and passed away. I

saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed—melting and flowing under my eyes. The little hands upon the dials that registered my speed raced round faster and faster. Presently I noted that the sun belt swayed up and down, from solstice to solstice, in a minute or less, and that consequently my pace was over a year a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the world, and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring.

The unpleasant sensations of the start were less poignant now. They merged at last into a kind of hysterical exhilaration. I remarked indeed a clumsy swaying of the machine, for which I was unable to account. But my mind was too confused to attend to it, so with a kind of madness growing upon me, I flung myself into futurity.

The Time Machine

First response

What is happening in the passage?

Look again at the first paragraph. Identify some of the things the narrator sees as he travels through time.

Close reading

The table below is a quick exercise in language analysis. It has been partially completed.

Selected word/phrase	Language feature/technique	Meaning(s)/effect(s)
“Night followed day like the flapping of a black wing”	Simile	This suggests that day and night were alternating very quickly and that he is travelling at an incredibly high speed. It creates the impression that the darkness of the night is exchanging with the lighter sky at a rapid pace.
“The sun hopping swiftly”		This gives the impression that the sun is moving quickly up and down, and again helps the reader to visualise how fast he is moving.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Crawled”• “Dashed”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verb• Contrast	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Verbs• Present tense	The reader gets a sense of the rapid and varying movements of the time machine. They suggest how unstable and unpredictable the machine is which adds to the overall excitement and tension of this dramatic scene.
“Trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour”		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alliteration• Repetition	

Selected word/ phrase cont.	Language feature/technique cont.	Meaning(s)/effect(s) cont.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Clumsy” • “Jerking” • “Confused” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjectives 	
		<p>This suggests the extreme sense of excitement the narrator is feeling, and hints that what he’s experiencing borders madness/unreality.</p>

Developing a response

Questions could include:

- What do you think has happened before this extract in the novel?
- What sort of person do you think the narrator is? What clues are we given to suggest his character/personality?
- What are the feelings that the narrator experiences throughout the extract? Do these feelings and the overall mood change as the extract develops? If so, how can you tell?
- Look at the first and final paragraphs – how has the sensation of travelling through time changed?
- How do you think the story will unfold? What do you think will happen next?

Concluding task

The narrator seems very confused and shaken by the experience. To what extent do you agree? Remember to support your views with references to the extract.

The Passion

Jeanette Winterson (1998)

Extract 1

How is it that one day life is orderly and you are content, a little cynical perhaps but on the whole just so, and then without warning you find the solid floor is a trapdoor and you are now in another place whose geography is uncertain and whose customs are strange?

Travellers at least have a choice. Those who set sail know that things will not be the same as at home. Explorers are prepared. But for us, who travel to cities of the interior by chance, there is no preparation. We who are fluent find life is a foreign language. Somewhere between the swamp and the mountains. Somewhere between fear and sex. Somewhere between God and the Devil passion is and the way there is sudden and the way back worse.

Extract 2

I didn't know what hate felt like, not the hate that comes after love. It's huge and desperate and it longs to be proved wrong. And every day it's proved right it grows a little more monstrous. If the love was passion, the hate will be obsession. A need to see the once-loved weak and cowed beneath pity. Disgust is close and dignity is far away. The hate is not only for the once loved, it's for yourself too; how could you ever have loved this?

The Passion

First response

You could consider:

- What is the narrator experiencing in these extracts?
- What is she talking about?

Close reading

Consider the following words and phrases taken from the extract:

- “the solid floor is a trapdoor”
- “life is a foreign language”
- “it grows a little more monstrous”

Analyse the writer’s use of language in the above quotations. What can you infer about the way the narrator is feeling?

Developing a response

What’s your impression of the main character based on these extracts?

Split the second extract into single sentences, and write/photocopy these onto separate slips of paper. Try moving the sentences into a different order. What effect does this have on your reading and understanding?

This exercise should start to get you thinking about the decisions writers make about structuring their writing.

Concluding task

Consider both extracts.

How does the writer convey the negative experiences of the narrator? Remember to discuss the writer’s use of language and support your response with references to the text.

The Wide Sargasso Sea

Jean Rhys (1966)

The girl Amalie said this morning, ‘I hope you will be very happy, sir, in your sweet honeymoon house! She was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place.

“It’s only a shower,” Antoinette said anxiously. “It will soon stop.”

I looked at the sad leaning coconut palms, the fishing boats drawn up on the shingly beach, the uneven row of whitewashed huts, and asked the name of the village.

“Massacre.”

“And who was massacred here? Slaves?”

“Oh no.” She sounded shocked. “Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now.”

The rain fell more heavily, huge drops sounded like hail on the leaves of the tree, and the sea crept stealthily forwards and backwards.

So this is Massacre. Not the end of the world, only the last stage of our interminable journey from Jamaica, the start of our sweet honeymoon. And it will all look very different in the sun.

It had been arranged that we would leave Spanish Town immediately after the ceremony and spend some weeks in one of the Windward Islands, at a small estate which had belonged to Antoinette’s mother. I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else.

The windows of the huts were shut, the doors opened into silence and dimness. Then three little boys came to stare at us. The smallest wore nothing but a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a large fisherman’s hat. When I smiled at him, he began to cry. A woman called from one of the huts and he ran away, still howling.

The Wide Sargasso Sea

First response

First response questions include:

- What is the passage about?
- What is your initial impression of the narrator?
- What mood is established?

You could also select words/phrases the narrator uses to describe Amalie.

Close reading

Consider line nine from “I looked at...” to line 24, “And it will all look very different in the sun.”

Select and analyse three words/phrases that the narrator uses to describe his surroundings. What does the writer’s use of language suggest about the place and the narrator’s feelings towards it?

Developing a response

Think about the structure of this extract. Ask yourself:

- How does the narrator’s focus change throughout this extract?
- What, as a reader, is your attention drawn to at different points in the narrative?
- Why do you think the writer chose to include information about Amalie at the start of this extract?

Concluding task

Massacre seems a grim place. To what extent do you agree with this? Support your response with references to the text.

Kangaroo

DH Lawrence (1923)

He was a man with an income of four hundred a year, and a writer of poems and essays. In Europe, he had made up his mind that everything was done for, played out, finished, and he must go to a new country. The newest country: young Australia. Now he had tried Western Australia, and had looked at Adelaide and Melbourne. And the vast, uninhabited land frightened him. It seemed so hoary and lost, so unapproachable. The sky was pure, crystal pure and blue, of a lovely pale blue colour: the air was wonderful, new and unbreathed: and there were great distances. But the bush, the grey, charred bush. It scared him. As a poet, he felt himself entitled to all kinds of emotions and sensations which an ordinary man would have repudiated. Therefore he let himself feel all sorts of things about the bush. It was so phantom-like, so ghostly, with its tall pale trees and many dead trees, like corpses, partly charred by bush fires: and then the foliage so dark, like grey-green iron. And then it was so deathly still. Even the few birds seemed to be swamped in silence. Waiting, waiting — the bush seemed to be hoarily waiting. And he could not penetrate into its secret. He couldn't get at it. Nobody could get at it. What was it waiting for?

And then one night at the time of the full moon he walked alone into the bush. A huge electric moon, huge, and the tree-trunks like naked pale aborigines among the dark-soaked foliage, in the moonlight. And not a sign of life — not a vestige.

Yet something. Something big and aware and hidden! He walked on, had walked a mile or so into the bush, and had just come to a clump of

tall, nude, dead trees, shining almost phosphorescent with the moon, when the terror of the bush overcame him. He had looked so long at the vivid moon, without thinking. And now, there was something among the trees, and his hair began to stir with terror, on his head. There was a presence. He looked at the weird, white, dead trees, and into the hollow distances of the bush. Nothing! Nothing at all. He turned to go home. And then immediately the hair on his scalp stirred and went icy cold with terror. What of? He knew quite well it was nothing. He knew quite well. But with his spine cold like ice, and the roots of his hair seeming to freeze, he walked on home, walked firmly and without haste. For he told himself he refused to be afraid, though he admitted the icy sensation of terror. But then to experience terror is not the same thing as to admit fear into the conscious soul. Therefore he refused to be afraid.

But the horrid thing in the bush! He schemed as to what it would be. It must be the spirit of the place. Something fully evoked to-night, perhaps provoked, by that unnatural West-Australian moon. Provoked by the moon, the roused spirit of the bush. He felt it was watching, and waiting. Following with certainty, just behind his back. It might have reached a long black arm and gripped him. But no, it wanted to wait. It was not tired of watching its victim. An alien people — a victim. It was biding its time with a terrible ageless watchfulness, waiting for a far-off end, watching the myriad intruding white men.

Kangaroo

Definition

Hoary	Extremely old, or specifically having grey or white hair on account of age.
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First response

Considerations could include:

- Where is the passage set?
- What do we learn about the man who is the focus of the story?
- What are Lawrence's initial feelings towards this place?

Close reading

Read the first paragraph again.

Look in detail at the way the writer describes the landscape. Identify words/phrases the writer uses to suggest that the Australian bush is a frightening place.

Explore the meanings and effects of these.

Developing a response

Think about the structure of the whole source:

- Do you think this extract appears towards the beginning or the end of the novel? Give reasons for your answer.
- What is the focus of each of the paragraphs? How do the paragraphs link together?
- Pinpoint the pivotal change in the extract? Explain the effects of this shift in the narrative.
- How does the narrator intensify his feeling of fear throughout the extract? Look specifically at the third paragraph here.

Concluding task

Consider the whole source. How does the writer portray the Australian bush as a scary place?

Comment on the writer's use of language and structure, and the effects on the reader. Remember to support your views with references to the text.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Moshin Hamid (2007)

But listen! Did you hear that, sir, a muffled growl, as if of a young lion held captive in a gunnysack? That was my stomach protesting at going unfed. Let us now order our dinner. You would rather wait, you say, and eat upon your return to the hotel? But I insist! You must not pass up such an authentic introduction to Lahori cuisine; it will, given the dishes for which this market is justifiably renowned, be a purely carnivorous feast – one that harks back to an era before man’s knowledge of cholesterol made him fearful of his prey – and all the more delectable for it.

Perhaps because we currently lack wealth, power, or even sporting glory – the occasional brilliance of our temperamental cricket team notwithstanding – commensurate with our status as the world’s sixth most populous country, we Pakistanis tend to take an inordinate pride in our food. Here in Old Anarkali that pride is visible in the purity of the fare on offer; not one of these worthy restaurateurs would consider placing a western dish on his menu. No, we are surrounded instead by the kebab of mutton, the tikka of chicken, the stewed foot of goat, the spiced brain of sheep! These, sir, are predatory delicacies, delicacies imbued with a hint of luxury, of wanton abandon. Not for us the vegetarian recipes one finds across the border to the east, not the sanitized, sterilized, processed meats so common in your homeland! Here we are not squeamish when it comes to facing the consequences of our desire.

For we were not always burdened by debt,

dependent on foreign aid and handouts; in the stories we tell of ourselves we were not the crazed and destitute radicals you see on your television channels but rather saints and poets and – yes – conquering kings. We built the Royal Mosque and the Shalimar Gardens in this city, and we built the Lahore Fort with its mighty walls and wide ramp for our battle-elephants. And we did these things when your country was still a collection of thirteen small colonies, gnawing away at the edge of a continent.

But once more I am raising my voice, and making you rather uncomfortable besides. I apologize; it was not my intention to be rude.

But once more I am raising my voice, and making you rather uncomfortable besides. I apologize; it was not my intention to be rude.

The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Definition

Gunnysack	A large, simple bag made of rough material.
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First response

You could ask:

- What is the passage about?
- According to the narrator, what are the proud achievements of Pakistan?

Close reading

What words would you choose to describe the voice of the narrator? How is he feeling?

The narrator is talking about food. Consider these quotations from the first paragraph, and ask what is interesting/effective about the writer's choice of words:

- "...a muffled growl, as if of a young lion held captive in a gunnysack?"
- "...my stomach protesting at going unfed."

Scan the whole source and highlight any words/phrases that convey the narrator's passion and pride in Pakistani cuisine and their culture.

You might also take note of the writer's use of sentence forms and punctuation.

Developing a response

Questions could include:

- Who do you think the man is speaking to in this passage?
- Only one character speaks, but what clues are we given about the man he is speaking to?
- What do we learn from this passage about the different cultures of the two men?
- How do you think the narrator feels about the other person's culture?
- How does the passage create a sense of tension between the two men?
- Does the mood or language of the narrator change throughout the extract? How?

Concluding task

'The narrator of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is angry at the western way of life. He prefers the Pakistani history and culture.'

To what extent do you agree with this statement? Support your response with references to the text.

Travels with My Aunt

Graham Greene (1969)

I met my Aunt Augusta for the first time in more than half a century at my mother's funeral. My mother was approaching eighty-six when she died, and my aunt was some eleven or twelve years younger. I had retired from the bank two years before with an adequate pension and a silver handshake. There had been a take-over by the Westminster and my branch was considered redundant. Everyone thought me lucky, but I found it difficult to occupy my time. I have never married, I have always lived quietly, and, apart from my interest in dahlias, I have no hobby. For those reasons I found myself agreeably excited by my mother's funeral.

My father had been dead for more than forty years. He was a building contractor of a lethargic disposition who used to take afternoon naps in all sorts of curious places. This irritated my mother, who was an energetic woman, and she used to seek him out to disturb him. As a child I remember going to the bathroom – we lived in Highgate then – and finding my father asleep in the bath in his clothes. I am rather short-sighted and I thought that my mother had been cleaning an overcoat, until I heard my father whisper, "Bolt the door on the inside when you go out". He was too lazy to get out of the bath and too sleepy, I suppose, to realize that his order was quite impossible to carry out. At another time, when he was responsible for a new block of flats in Lewisham, he would take his catnap in the cabin of the giant crane, and construction would be halted until he woke. My mother, who had a good head for heights, would climb ladders to the highest scaffolding in the hope of discovering him, when as like as not he would have found a corner in what was to be the

underground garage. I had always thought of them as reasonably happy together: their twin roles of the hunter and the hunted probably suited them, for my mother by the time I first remembered her had developed an alert poise of the head and a wary trotting pace which reminded me of a gun-dog. I must be forgiven these memories of the past: at a funeral they are apt to come unbidden, there is so much waiting about.

Not many people attended the service, which took place at a famous crematorium, but there was that slight stirring of excited expectation which is never experienced at a graveside. Will the oven doors open? Will the coffin stick on the way to the flames? I heard a voice behind me saying in very clear old accents, "I was present once at a premature cremation".

It was, as I recognized, with some difficulty, from a photograph in the family album, my Aunt Augusta, who had arrived late, dressed rather as the late Queen Mary of beloved memory might have dressed if she had still been with us and had adapted herself a little bit towards the present mode. I was surprised by her brilliant red hair, monumentally piled, and her two big front teeth which gave her a vital Neanderthal air. Somebody said, "Hush", and a clergyman began a prayer which I believe he must have composed himself. I had never heard it at any other funeral service, and I have attended a great number in my time. A bank manager is expected to pay his last respects to every old client who is not as we say "in the red", and in any case I have a weakness for funerals. People are generally seen at their best on these occasions, serious and sober, and

Travels with My Aunt (cont.)

optimistic on the subject of personal immortality.

The funeral of my mother went without a hitch. The flowers were moved economically from the coffin, which at a touch of a button slid away from us out of sight. Afterwards in the troubled sunlight, I shook hands with a number of nephews and nieces and cousins whom I hadn't seen for years and could not identify. It was understood that I had to wait for the ashes and wait I did, while the chimney of the crematorium gently smoked overhead.

"You must be Henry," Aunt Augusta said, gazing reflectively at me with her sea-deep blue eyes.

"Yes," I said, "and you must be Aunt Augusta."

Travels with My Aunt

First response

Possible tasks include:

- What is happening in the passage?
- List some things we learn about Aunt Augusta.
- What are your first impressions of the narrator?

Close reading

Look in detail from line 57 to the end of the extract. Three questions come to mind:

- What's your impression of Aunt Augusta?
- What can you infer about Aunt Augusta from the narrator's description of her?
- What can you infer about the narrator's feelings towards her?

Remember to identify specific words and phrases and comment on the writer's use of language.

Developing a response

You could ask:

- How do we know that this is from the opening pages of the novel?
- What type of person do you think Henry is, based on his thoughts in the extract?
- What effect does the inclusion of dialogue have at the end of the extract?

Concluding task

Consider the way the writer has structured the whole extract. How does the narrator's focus change throughout? What effect does this create on you as a reader?

The Beach

Alex Garland (1996)

I lit up and crawled back to the cliff edge.

If, I reasoned, the waterfall had been pounding down into the pool below for a thousand years, then it was likely that a basin had been eroded into the rock. A basin deep enough to accommodate my leaping into it. But if the island had been created relatively recently, maybe the result of volcanic activity two hundred years ago, then there might not have been time for a deep enough pool to have formed.

'But what do I know?' I said, exhaling slowly, and Françoise looked up to see if I was talking to her.

The pebbles in the water were smooth. The trees below were tall and old.

'OK,' I whispered.

I stood up cautiously, one foot an inch from the cliff, the other set back at a stabilizing angle. A memory appeared of making Airfix aeroplanes, filling them with cotton wool, covering them in lighter fuel, setting fire to them, dropping them from the top window of my house.

'Are you jumping?' called Étienne nervously.

'Just taking a better look.'

As the planes fell, they would arc outwards, then appear to curve back towards the wall. The point where they landed, exploding into sticky, burning pieces, always seemed to be nearer to the edge of the house than I expected. The distance was difficult to judge;

the model planes always needed a harder shove than seemed necessary if they were to clear the doorstep, and the head of anyone coming to investigate the patches of flame around the yard.

I was turning this memory over when something happened. An overwhelming sensation washed over me, almost boredom, a strange listlessness. I was suddenly sick of how difficult this journey had become. There was too much effort, too many shocks and dilemmas to dissect. And this sickness had an effect. For a vital few seconds it liberated me from a fear of consequences. I'd had enough. I just wanted it over with.

So near and so far.

'So jump,' I heard my voice say.

I paused, wondering if I'd heard myself correctly, and then I did. I jumped.

The Beach

First response

Two initial questions are:

- Where do you think the passage is set?
- What happens in this passage?

Close reading

What do the following words/phrases suggest about the way the narrator is feeling at that moment in the passage?

- “I [...] crawled back to the cliff edge” (line 1).
- “...exhaling slowly” (line 12).
- “I stood up cautiously” (line 18).

Consider the whole passage. How does the writer convey the narrator’s feelings as he builds himself up to jump off the cliff edge?

You could explore in detail the writer’s use of:

- Direct speech.
- The significance of his memory of Airfix aeroplanes.
- The varying lengths of paragraphs.
- The description of the sensation seconds before he jumps.
- Any other words/phrases you find relevant/ interesting.

Developing a response

Possible questions span:

- What is happening in each stage of this extract?
- How does the narrator’s focus shift during these moments?
- Why do you think the author included Françoise and Étienne’s comments?
- What is the purpose of the narrator’s flashback to his childhood when he made Airfix aeroplanes?
- How does the writer build suspense throughout the extract?
- Reading from “An overwhelming sensation washed over me” (line 38), to the end of the extract, two contrasting emotions seem to emerge. What are they and why does the writer include both of these states of mind?

Concluding task

Consider the whole source. “The reader experiences the moments leading up to the jump almost as though in slow motion.”

To what extent do you agree with this interpretation?

Consider the writer’s use of structure and language. Remember to support your response with references to the text.

The Artist of Disappearance

Anita Desai (2011)

The boulder presented a block to others but not Ravi: he would slip around and let himself through the crease between it and the hillside, and so into the hollow below where only the merest trickle of water made its way from the lip of the cliff above, if the weather was not too dry. Then he had only to part the branches of the chestnut tree that drooped over the opening to the glade, curtain-like, and let them come together again to conceal him. The liquid flow of this path then entered into the hidden pool of the glade that no one else knew existed.

All signs of the outer world vanished: the distant halloos criss-crossing the terraced fields in the valley below, the barking of a dog in the village on the other side of the stream, the grinding of the stones of the watermill. Only a bird sang, with piercing sweetness, till it noted Ravi's appearance, and took off.

He then prowled around like an animal returning to its shelter: some ferns might have unfolded their tight knots of brown fur and transformed themselves into waving green fans; the family of pallid mushrooms of the day before might now be scattered and lie in shreds of fawn suede tinged with mauve.

The leaves of the chestnut could be studied for signs of turning and he would watch and wait for the precise shade of dark honey that he wanted before he collected the leaves and filled the clearing he was making round the strange conical stone at the centre of the hollow. And the broken branch he had found on the way and dragged in with him, once dried and bleached to suggest a skeleton, could be added to the design. The berries he picked

along the way could be worked into the creases of the rock so it might seem inlaid with strands of gleaming gems or as if it had sprung veins of precious ore.

He considered enlarging the design by bringing enough pebbles, or perhaps some sand from the stream-bed below, to see how they could be arranged to suggest a pool in which the rock formed an island.

Spider-like, Ravi set to work spinning the web of his vision over the hidden glade. And each day it had to be done before night fell.

The Artist of Disappearance

First response

Starting points might be:

- What is the passage about?
- What, in the first paragraph, has Ravi discovered that no one else knew existed?

Close reading

Students could identify words/phrases that suggest no one else knew the “hidden” glade existed. For example, the branches of the chestnut tree are described as “curtain-like”. What makes this an effective description?

Ravi is described in the passage as having “prowled around like an animal”, as well as being “spider-like”. What does this suggest about the effect the glade has had on him?

Developing a response

You could ask:

- In the second paragraph which of the senses does the writer draw the reader’s attention to? Why is this effective at this point in the passage?
- In the third paragraph the writer makes reference to different colours? Identify these references and consider the effect this has on the reader.
- Why has the writer chosen to include such sensory description in her narrative?

Concluding task

The writer creates the impression that the glade is Ravi’s palace. Can you find evidence in the passage that supports this view? How is this similar or different to your impression?

Tip: look again at the second to last paragraph.

Dust

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor (2013)

Ajany and Isaiah are the last to leave Wuoth Ogik. They leave so the fire burning down the house can finish its work. The house glows. Resin-infused flames. Everything – wood, books, art, chairs, memories – turns to ash. At first the fire had mesmerized them. They watched it from their campsite, and Isiah dragged out his battered camera to take pictures. But then, seduced by the fire's frenzied freedom, they had danced before it giddy as children, and in their dancing there was fire and the spirit in the fire found bodies stripped bare to weave into replete landscapes, into which untiring desire roared in visceral rites of exorcism. The next night – just after midnight, when it was coolest – they set out for North Horr. They walked into the morning and past the evening. If they had left even here days after the others had, or if they had waited at Wuoth Ogik one more hour, they might have escaped the weight and waves of the flash flood. The mighty water was from a deluge that had ripped apart an ancient bridge, and caused the Ewaso Nyiro to rise and spread inland over a fifty-kilometer radius for the first time in remembered history.

A rushed endless plunge.

Later, at the tip of the water, the woman called out to the man. Her voice was smooth, as if newborn. Her eyes contained the shine that marked those who emerge out of chasms. It took an eternity before he answered. Dripping water he asked if this was the road that led to the place where his journeys ended.

Twelve days later, in the northern reaches of Kenya, rain clouds withdraw. The earth gulps

down and saves water for later. A congregation of birds chirp, a raucous choir in need of a sane conductor. Transient storm-rivers disappear as the Ewaso Nyiro starts its reluctant crawl back to old boundaries. Oryx gamble; giraffes browse on the extended banks of streams, among pockets of flowering shrubs of all hues, mostly peach, a desert supernova of frozen flame, fragile blossoms, frantic in bloom, as if they were angels relishing a temporary reprieve from celestial certainty. A golden finger-of-God stirs the clouds.

A hundred kilometers away, a helicopter hovers. A Cajun-accented foreigner surveys the area. The Jacobses' mission station is underwater. The helicopter drifts to where the house should have been and circles the area at least thirteen times before setting course again for Nairobi. It is assumed that the Jacobses, together with an elderly intelligence man, a local named Petrus Keah, were some of the many human, floral, and animal casualties of a sudden desert storm in Africa: *Requiescant in pacem*.

Dust

Definition

Requiescant in pacem	Rest in peace.
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First response

Can students identify what the passage is about? Looking again from line 35, what indicates that life was returning to normal 12 days after the flood?

Close reading

Completing the table below is a quick exercise in language analysis.

We've selected some interesting words or phrases. Students could identify the language technique the writer has used and comment on the meaning(s) and effect(s).

Selected word/phrase	Language feature/technique	Meaning(s)/effect(s)
"Mesmerized"	Verb	This suggests that Ajany and Isaiah couldn't help but look at the fire, almost as though it was against their power or will. It creates the impression that they were captivated by it, entranced, or perhaps even paralysed.
"Seduced by the fire's frenzied freedom"		
"Mighty water...ripped apart"		
"A rushed endless plunge"		
"The earth gulps down and saves water for later"		

Selected word/ phrase cont.	Language feature/technique cont.	Meaning(s)/effect(s) cont.
"Reluctant crawl"		
"Flowering shrubs of all hues, mostly peach, a desert supernova of frozen flame, fragile blossoms, frantic in bloom"		
"A golden finger-of-God stirs the clouds"		

Developing a response

Several questions arise from the extract:

- Explain what happens in each paragraph of the extract?
- How does the mood or emotions of the narrator change throughout the extract?
- Why has the author used a single statement paragraph in the middle of the extract?
- What do you notice about the first and final paragraphs? How are they linked?
- The writer reveals the cause of the fire and flood at the end of the passage. What is the cause and why do you think the writer decided to tell the reader at the end?
- How does the ending phrase "Requiescant in pacem" leave the reader feeling?

Concluding task

Focus on the structure of the whole source. Throughout the passage the writer makes many references to the passing of time and distances. Highlight these references.

What effect(s) do these references to time and space/distance create?

The Man Who Saw Himself Drown

Anita Desai (2000)

Paying off the taxi in the portico in front of the hotel, he went up the steps, nodded to the doorman, picked up his key at the desk where the receptionist was talking dreamily on the telephone, evidently to a friend not a customer, and took the small elevator up to the second floor. Letting himself into his room, he saw it had been cleaned during the day so that it looked uninhabited: everything was put in its place, out of sight, and the bedcover had been stretched over the bed and smoothed immaculately. He tossed his briefcase into the armchair — there, now the room knew someone had entered it and made it his own — and went into the bathroom to wash. It was what he had looked forward to all through the long drive from the business centre to the hotel. In the creaking old taxi with its seats slick with usage, going through streets where people and traffic pressed in from both sides, and from front and behind too, so that he felt they were being carried forward by it. All the grime and soot of the city had seeped in at the windows and under his clothes, filling in every crevice and fissure of his body. Now he luxuriated in soaping his hands and face and then washing off the suds and splashing his ears and neck as well. 'Ahh,' he sighed, wiping himself with a clean, rough towel. Ahh, now he was himself again.

He went back into the room, drew aside the curtains and opened the door which led to a veranda. Here there were wicker chairs and potted palms lined up against the white wall, and he chose one under a slowly revolving fan.

Lowering himself into it, he uttered another 'Ahh'. But immediately he realised that he lacked something and had to get up and go back to the room to ring the reception desk and ask for a bottle of beer to be sent up. Then he went out onto the veranda again and settled down to wait.

He spent the evening on that veranda, drinking the cold beer that was brought to him on a tray. Gradually it grew dark. Small bats began to skim through the veranda and out into the garden that lay below, the crowns of trees filling it first with shadows, then with darkness. Small electric lights were strung from one to the next; these came on like buds opening all at once. He could see some of the hotel guests sitting in their light with drinks. Music was being played, but softly, unobtrusively, as he liked it.

The Man Who Saw Himself Drown

First response

Tasks could include:

- What is the passage about?
- Look again at lines 1-7. Identify the things that the man did before letting himself into the room.
- What did the man so look forward to?

Close reading

Students could look again at lines 18–25. Consider how the man feels on the way to the hotel and then once he arrives at the hotel:

- In what ways does the writer's description of the journey reflect the man's feeling of discomfort/unease?
- How does the writer suggest the man is more relaxed once he's in the hotel room?

Developing a response

Three tasks present themselves:

- How does the mood of the man change throughout the passage?
- How do the physical surroundings change throughout the extract? Why do you think the writer does this?
- How does the writer suggest a change of pace once the man arrives at the hotel?

Concluding task

Focus on the second part of the passage from line 40 where he goes out on the veranda. One reader said that "he was content to sit there for a long time." To what extent do you agree?

Consider the writer's description of the evening. Support your response with references to the text.

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