

# 'I felt as though I was on top of the world.'

## Write about a time when you felt like this.

[2021 GCE O-Level Exam Question]

By Jeremy Au Yong



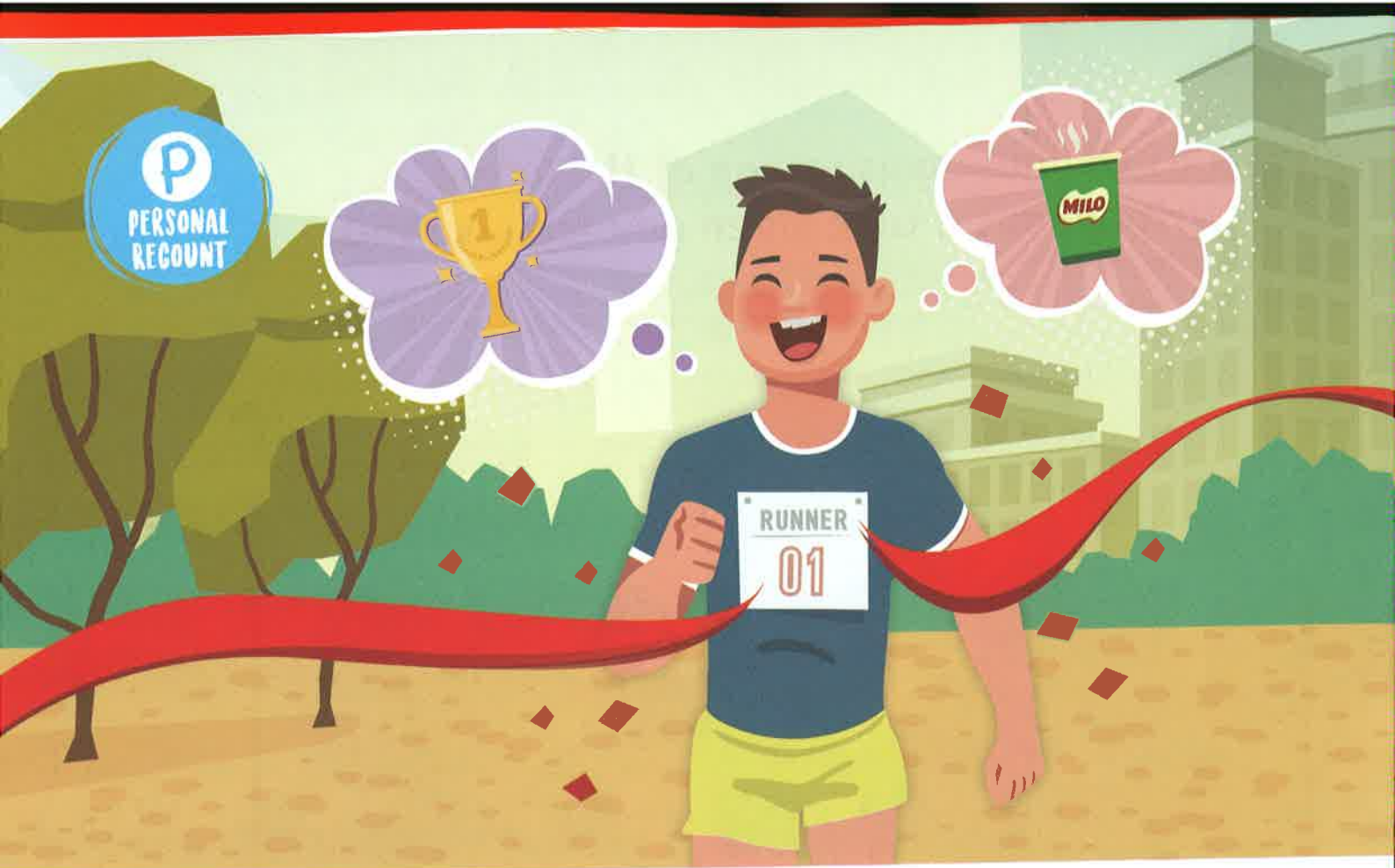
I kept up my pace <sup>1</sup>doggedly, panting and perspiring. I was so <sup>2</sup>engrossed in putting one foot in front of the other that I only just noticed that there was no other runner in front of me. Blinking the sweat from my eyes, I glanced behind - no one there either. Had I really left everyone else in the dust? This was too good to be true! I had clocked my personal best during the previous practice run, but I had never come in first before.

'Self-doubt is for losers; you're a winner now,' my inner voice <sup>3</sup>berated me. There were no footprints in the dirt before me. I really was 'a winner'. The realisation brought forth a surge of adrenalin. I channelled the rebuke by my inner voice into a <sup>4</sup>mantra.

'A winner... a winner... a winner...'

Was it adrenaline or <sup>5</sup>delirium? MacArthur Park's cross-country running route seemed more scenic than ever before. How could this usual combination of trail, pavement and boardwalk that made up the cross country circuit seem so fresh? The birds seemed to be chirping a new tune. The shrubbery seemed to be arranged in new configurations.

If everything seemed new to me, it must have been because I had left the person I once was behind me with the 'losers'. I was the winner of St Jonah's annual inter-class cross country run! After almost four years in the school, I was finally going to be victorious. Just a few more metres and I would be on top of my game. Was that the glimmer of sunshine ahead that signified the end of this grove of trees?



Feverish with joy, I imagined the treats that awaited me. Firstly, there was the finish line ribbon (I had seen others break through but I had never personally experienced it). After that, the gilded champion's trophy (it may not be real gold, but it sure does <sup>6</sup>glisten). Best of all, there would be iced Milo (cool and chocolatey, as sweet as victory). I could almost taste it on the tip of my parched tongue.

The distant glimmer burst into a <sup>7</sup>supernova as I closed the distance. Unbroken ribbon, golden trophy and iced Milo... here I come!

I stepped into the light.

For a brief, shining moment, I felt as though I was on top of the world. For the first time in my life, I was a winner! My feet felt weightless, as if my Nike runners were airborne. I was <sup>8</sup>Hermes, the fleet-footed messenger of the gods. I was a god looking down upon mere mortals.

Then suddenly I froze, as a new realisation came upon me. From the top of the world, I plummeted to the very bottom. There was no finish line ribbon. There was no gilded trophy. There was no iced Milo dispenser. In fact, there was no one and nothing around me at all except a <sup>9</sup>forlorn sign that said 'Carpark C'. The finishing point was supposed to be 'Carpark A'. My Nike runners were now blocks of concrete. I was no god; I was a mere mortal who had taken the wrong detour in the MacArthur wilderness!



### METACOGNITIVE checkPOINT

What are my thoughts  
at this point?

## Word Bank:

**1 doggedly:**

having or showing tenacity and grim persistence

**2 engrossed:**

absorbed all the attention or interest of

**3 berated:**

scolded

**4 mantra:**

a statement or slogan repeated frequently

**5 delirium:**

a disturbed state of mind or consciousness, especially an acute, transient condition associated with fever, intoxication, and certain other physical disorders, characterised by symptoms such as confusion, disorientation, agitation and hallucinations

**6 glisten:**

sparkle; glitter

**7 supernova:**

a star that suddenly increases greatly in brightness because of a catastrophic explosion that ejects most of its mass

**8 Hermes:**

in Greek mythology, Hermes was the son of Zeus and Maia, the messenger of the gods, and god of merchants, thieves, and oratory. He was portrayed as a herald equipped for travelling, with broad-brimmed hat, winged shoes and a winged rod

**9 forlorn:**

pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely

**10 albeit:**

though

Earthbound, I trudged towards the correct carpark. Hopefully, my schoolmates would be kind enough to save me a cup or two of iced Milo. The birds were no longer chirping. The sun was starting to set. Still, I could not help but smile ruefully despite my fall from grace. Thanks to this ridiculous run, I had finally felt the high of being a winner, <sup>10</sup>albeit only in my misguided imagination. It was an addictive high. I knew that I would surely chase it again, but down the correct route next time.

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METACOGNITIVE POINT:

**REFLECTION**

What is the most surprising idea here?



## How to use Figurative Language

Figurative language allows writers to effectively communicate ideas that are abstract or complex to readers. Figurative language also helps to elicit emotions from readers and enable them to form mental images, thus drawing them into the story.

Some common types of figurative language that are used are similes, metaphors, personification and idioms. Let's look at how the writer uses some of these in his personal recount.

### Paragraph 6

Feverish with joy, I imagined the treats that awaited me. Firstly, there was the finish line ribbon (I had seen others break through but I had never personally experienced it). After that, the gilded champion's trophy (it may not be real gold, but it sure does glisten). Best of all, there would be iced Milo (cool and chocolatey, as sweet as victory). I could almost taste it on the tip of my parched tongue.

### Figurative Language: Simile

Milo is sweet and flavourful and iced Milo is especially refreshing after a run. Here, victory is likened to Milo that one can taste. This description triggers the readers' sense of taste and intensifies the pleasurable feeling of victory.

Can you think of other suitable comparisons for victory?





## Paragraphs 9-10

For a brief, shining moment, I felt as though I was on top of the world. For the first time in my life, I was a winner! My feet felt weightless, as if my Nike runners were airborne. I was Hermes, the fleet-footed messenger of the gods. I was a god looking down upon mere mortals.

Then suddenly I froze...From the top of the world, I plummeted to the very bottom. There was no finish line ribbon. There was no gilded trophy. There was no iced Milo dispenser. In fact, there was no one and nothing around me at all except a forlorn sign that said 'Carpark C'. The finishing point was supposed to be 'Carpark A'. I was no god; I was a mere mortal who had taken the wrong detour in the MacArthur wilderness.

## Figurative Language: Metaphor

The writer uses a metaphor that runs through the essay – that the protagonist was Hermes, a god. The repetition of 'top of the world' throughout the essay reinforces this idea that the protagonist was a god-like figure. This metaphor creates humour and makes the story memorable as readers visualise the protagonist's fall to a 'mere mortal' when he reached the wrong destination.

The next time you write a personal recount essay, try to create a metaphor that runs through your essay.

## Paragraph 1:

Had I really left everyone else in the dust?

## Figurative Language: Idioms

An idiom is an expression that contains a figurative meaning. In this idiom, the description cannot be taken literally to mean that the other runners are left in the dust but that the protagonist was well ahead of everyone. Using an idiom instead of literal language provides readers with a mental image of the race.

What other idioms may be suitable in this context?