

Sec 4 Comprehension Revision Package

Literary Device, Tone and Attitude

Exercise 1: Monfort Sec Prelim 2015

Context: The abstract is taken from a text describing the difficulties faced by the farmers in producing the biggest gooseberry for a local competition

As July slowly ripens into August, a strange fever grips the necklace of villages which adorns the valley of the Esk. Curious arrangements of canvas and wire mesh, some hung with tiny bells, spring up in certain gardens. A great deal of furtive prodding around in the soil will be noticed. A sudden summer shower of rain will bring men racing from their cottages, carrying umbrellas, which they will hang over the bushes. A small squadron of wasps will create near panic.

When a bush produces a promising youngster, the post-natal care it receives has to be seen to be believed. Sheets of polythene are stretched out to reflect more heat and tin lids full of water are balanced beneath the lusty young globe to encourage the absorption of more moisture.

1a. the writer describes the houses in the area as a 'necklace of villages which adorns the valley of the Esk' (lines 1-2). Why do you think the writer chooses to describe the villages as a 'necklace'?

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1b. When a bush produces a promising youngster, the post-natal care it receives has to be seen to be believed' (lines 28-29). Suggest a reason why the writer describes the gooseberry bush as a 'promising youngster'.

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1c. Why is the expression 'post-natal' unusual and effective?

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Exercise 2: Monfort Sec Prelim 2015

But perhaps the most majestic thing about the insects known romantically as scarabs and more descriptively as dung beetles is what they are willing and even delighted to do for a living. Dung beetles venture where many beasts refuse to tread; they descend on the waste matter of their fellow animals and swiftly bury it underground, where it then serves as a rich and leisurely meal for themselves or their offspring.

2. The dung beetles were described as insects which 'venture where many beasts refuse to tread'. What can you infer about the writer's feeling towards them?

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Exercise 3: Zhonghua Sec School MYCT 2015

Pain at last forced itself upon his attention: a dull ache, with a slow warm trickle that ran down his face. Mechanically he put his hand up to his cheek, scarcely realising that he was injured. To his horror his finger went through and touched his teeth. In the river the mare's hoof had cut open his face as a knife slits an orange.

3a. What does the simile 'as a knife slits an orange' tell you about the way the mare's hoof cut his face?

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Lynn had swum across the Wangong with a horse many a time, but never a Wangong such as this! He had crossed it before when it had been in flood, but on a good horse, and himself strong and fit. Now he was almost at breaking-point from weariness, and also he was only too conscious of the limitations of the mare. He thought again of how she had behaved back in the trees, swerving aside at everything and nothing, and his heart failed him for a moment. But what could he do? Things would be no better tomorrow; the river would not be normal again for a week. And on the other side was home, where they were waiting anxiously for news of him.

3b. What does the phrase 'swerving aside at everything and nothing' tell you about the horse's state of mind?

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Exercise 4: Commonwealth Sec School Prelim 2015

Then the storm came. When it hit, it had the impact of a runaway truck. It made walls balloon and totter, then threw the bricks about like confetti. It lifted roofs off schools, ripped power lines away from their pylons and let them blow free, lighting the night with flashes of St Elmo's Fire. Along the edge of the sea, it rained boats and caravans; sixty miles inland, the wind pasted windows with a grey rime of salt from the Atlantic.

No one dared to go outside. You couldn't open the door against that wind, and who in his right mind would want to face the skirl of tiles, dustbins, garden furniture and plant pots? So people sat tight. Soon after dawn, the storm quit London, leaving a high wind blowing under a sky of bad milk. Light-headed from lack of sleep, people stared through their salt-caked windows to see cars crushed by trees and craters of muddy water in the pavements where the trees had been. Broken bricks. Bits of picket fencing. Garden shrubs. Upended tricycles. Glass, tarpaper, fish bones, cardboard boxes strewn all over. During what the radio news now called The Hurricane, everyone's rubbish had mated with everyone else's, and white house fronts were curiously decorated with dribbles of gravy, tomato ketchup and raspberry yogurt.

4a. 'When it hit, it had the impact of a runaway truck. It made walls balloon and totter, then threw the bricks about like confetti' (lines 12 and 13). What two ideas does it suggest about the wind?

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4b. The writer says that after the storm ended in paragraph 5, 'everyone's rubbish had mated with everyone else's, and white house fronts were curiously decorated with dribbles of gravy, tomato ketchup and raspberry yogurt' (lines 30 - 32).

i) With reference to the underlined words, what tone is the author trying to achieve?

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ii) What could his intention be for doing so?

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Exercise 5: Commonwealth Sec School Prelim 2015 (adapted)

The sky had lifted. A paltry ration of diffused sunlight – the first for many days – lit the scene of an anarchic picnic. Children in coloured jackets swarmed in the branches of the humbled trees. Muddy dogs, tongues lolling, scrambled out of the craters.

Whoever you were, the wrecked landscape had something in it for you personally. For some people, it was simply an enjoyable reminder of their grace – they'd got away with it; they were survivors. They strode across the skyline of the park like generals on a battlefield after a famous victory. Others stood still, gazing, hands in pockets. Exiles, from Beirut, Kampala, Prague, Budapest, felt a proud glow of kinship with the uprooted trees. Saturday fathers, borrowing children from their one-time wives, dwelled, with a pleasure

they couldn't explain to themselves, on the ragged pits in the earth, the torn turf, the canopies of exposed roots; while their children saw the park as a territory at last made fit for all-out war, and zapped their fathers with death-ray guns from behind safe jungle cover. Everyone was irrationally happier that Saturday, even the people who'd lost their roofs, who saw themselves as heroes of the hurricane and came to the park to enjoy disaster on a scale grand enough to match their own. *Isn't it sad?* They said, their voices drowned by shrilling gulls circling the trees that still survived.

5a. Explain the use of the metaphor 'a paltry ration' to describe the sunlight.

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5b. The writer states that 'They strode across the skyline of the park like generals on a battlefield after a famous victory'.

i) Paying attention to the simile used, explain how the people behaved and why they behaved this way.

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ii) Why does the writer say that the exiles felt a kinship with the 'uprooted trees'.

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iii) Why does the writer describe the fathers in the paragraph as 'Saturday fathers'?

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Exercise 6: adapted from Commonwealth Sec Sch Prelim 2015

Meirelles had planned the pictures in order to demonstrate to the world that there are still tribes living, and thriving, in complete isolation. He did this in order to stop the steady encroachment into the Amazon jungle, which is gradually forcing these tribes into ever narrower pockets of land, and endangering them. One of the most remarkable group of people on Earth must be the Sentinelese, who live on North Sentinel Island within the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, nominally part of India. It is commonly said that this tribe has descended from a population that has lived on the island for 60,000 years, although what we know about them today is limited by the fact that contact is no longer permitted with them. "They are commonly described as 'Stone Age', a term that angered many campaigners who believe it denigrates the achievements of tribal people," says Gibbon. "And the tribe is often presented as an example of man living in a natural, pristine state.

6a. 'Meirelles had planned the pictures in order to demonstrate to the world that there are *still* tribes living, and thriving, in complete isolation'. What does this suggest about the people's attitude towards the tribes, paying attention to the italicised word?

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6b. why do you think the Sentinelese are commonly described as people living in the 'Stone Age'?

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Exercise 7: Dunman Sec School MYCT 2015

In spite of the benefits, the successful implementation of sports programme aimed at gender equity and participation of females in such programmes involves many challenges and obstacles. Not only do girls and women have limited time available for sports, but there is often little value placed on sports activities for girls and women by their families and by their communities.

7. What is the attitude towards sports participation for girls and women?

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Exercise 8: Nan Chiau High School Prelim 2015

The rain returned. So did the hairpin turns, leading us past a burnt forest where trees looked like matchsticks. Whenever a car approached, I switched off the lights, though in the process I would inadvertently switch in the turn signal. If I tried to shut it off, I ended up signalling in the other direction. Thus, we drove through the woods, the Subaru blinking dumbly in the dark. I didn't know that I cut it a little close on a couple cliffs. It wasn't until later that Dan debriefed me: "You only almost killed us once."

8a. 'You only almost killed us once.' Why do you think Dan had said this?

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8b. What is Dan's tone?

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Exercise 9: Nan Chiau High school Prelim 2015

On a cold January day I was surrounded by hundreds of black-and-white killer whales—Orcinus orca—streaking like wolves through the waters of Norway’s Andfjorden, 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Their backs and tall dorsal fins glistened in the Arctic twilight as they dived and surfaced and worked in teams to corral, stun, and devour silver herring.

At times an orca would smack the surface with its tail, as if playing patty-cake with the sea. Orcas make similar tail strikes underwater—death knells for herring, said Tiu Similä, a cetacean biologist who helped pioneer the study of orcas in Norway. The force of the blows doesn’t always kill the fish, she said, but it does stun many, making them easy pickings. “What we’re seeing here at the surface only gives a hint of what’s happening below,” she said. “Each whale has a role. It’s like a ballet, so they have to move in a very coordinated way and communicate and make decisions about what to do next.”

a. What does the expression ‘streaking like wolves’ (lines 2) suggest about the way orcas hunt?

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b. ‘Orcas make similar tail strikes underwater—death knells for herring...’ (lines 7-8)

What does the expression ‘death knells’ suggest about the fate of the herring?

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