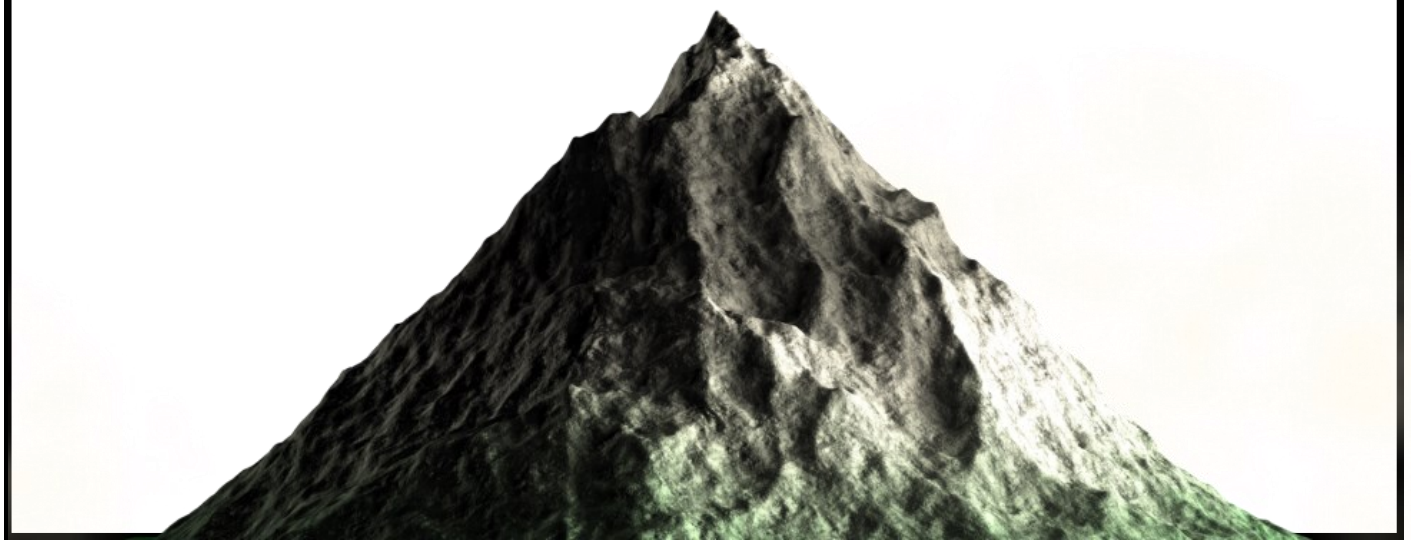
Year 10 Anthology

Term 1

Nature



How I ended up in the jungle with deadly hornets in my hair

George Monbiot

Text A

This story has no message or purpose. It is one of the winter's tales – accounts of the many bizarre incidents that have marked my life – that I tell at this time of year. For once, I am not trying to make a point.

In 1987, I was working with the photographer Adrian Arbib in the occupied territory of West Papua. We had made contact with the Papuan rebels who were trying to fight the Indonesian state with old rifles and bows and arrows. They had told us to wait in a hotel in Jayapura, the sweaty, sagging capital of the stolen province. They would send someone to collect us and take us by sea to their camp on the border with Papua New Guinea.

The town, swarming with soldiers and secret services, was dangerous to them. After a few days, a man in mirrored sunglasses came into the hotel, bundled us into his jeep and took us to a tin hut in the adjoining shanty town, where the local rebel commander sized us up and eventually agreed to send a boat for us. His messengers would stay in touch.

We waited. And waited. Days went by, during which the messengers came and went, always promising to pick us up the following dawn, then producing a reason later in the day why it couldn't happen.

Bored rigid, I set off one morning for a walk. The forest close to the town was in tatters, broken up by shifting cultivation. It was a hot day, and I soon took off my shirt and slung it over my shoulder. I followed a trail that took me down to a small stream. I crossed it and began to climb through the burnt trees on the other side. Halfway up the slope, I brushed against a rotten stump. I took another step and found myself under attack.

Giant hornets swarmed over my body, buzzing frantically. I knew how dangerous they were: plenty of people had died from their stings. I also knew that if I stood stock still, they would eventually fly away. For a while, I managed not to twitch. The buzzing became louder as reinforcements poured out of the stump. One of them was climbing up the inside of my leg, into my shorts.

Suddenly I could bear it no longer. I lunged up the slope, shouting and beating them with my shirt. Every sting felt like being punched with a knuckle duster. I panicked more, lashing at the hornets, screaming. Then I suddenly stopped, aware that I was being stung to death.

Heart pounding, breathing raggedly, I waited until the last of them disentangled themselves from my hair and they returned to the stump. I could feel every sting: there were eight. I suspected I was as good as dead.

I stumbled across the clearings, shouting for help. In a clump of trees I saw a rickety house on stilts. A ladder led to the platform, 10 feet from the ground. I clung to the steps, shouting. No one emerged, so I climbed up and looked in. There were five people inside: two children, their parents and their grandmother. They looked terrified. I remembered that my shirt was off, my eyes were rolling and I was trembling. I had to reassure them.

"Hello," I said. "I'm George." I stepped forward to shake hands with the man, hit my head on the lintel and fell on top of his wife. She screamed. The children began to cry. I picked myself up, babbling apologies. I had to win their trust. I spoke slowly. "It's very important you understand me. I have just been attacked by hundreds of insects." The man's mouth fell open; he didn't seem to believe what I said. "A swarm of insects. They came out of a tree and started flying round my head. Then eight of them bit me."

But instead of *serangga* – which means insects – in my panic I said *semangka*; or watermelons. The grandmother backed away from me, shaking her head and feeling for the back door. The children began to scream more loudly.

I sat down beside the man and tried to explain it carefully. "I need help. I was walking in your field when I was attacked by watermelons. Eight of them bit me, eight watermelons."

He stared at me, unable to move, his eyes becoming bigger and rounder as I nodded assurances at him. "Look –" I began again. The young woman was whimpering with terror. Then her husband suddenly smiled. "Ahh, *serangga*!" He stood up. "You stay there, I have some medicine for you."

I was going to be saved! These people lived with the hornets, didn't they? They must have an antidote, refined over millennia from forest herbs. The man told me to lie on my front. He began to rub something into my back. It felt warm and soothing, and the pain began to ebb. The smell of the medicine was strangely familiar.

I turned my head and saw in his hand a jar of Vicks VapoRub. “No, no! I’m going to die!” I cried. I ran from the room, forgetting that it was 10 feet from the ground. I crashed into the undergrowth, picked myself up and fled. A backward glance revealed the man in his doorway, holding a small jar in one hand, my shirt in the other, staring after me.

Just before I reached the town, the convulsions began. I felt as if I were being picked up by the shoulders and shaken. I began to drool. I stumbled along the streets, shuddering and sobbing, holding on to buildings to stay upright as my legs began to buckle. I fell through the door of the hotel and into our room, where Adrian was sitting on his bed, reading.

He started up. “God you look awful.” I tried to speak, but my mouth didn’t seem to work. I fell face down on to my bed, shivering violently. He must have noticed the welts on my back, because he forced a couple of antihistamines down me. The fit began to subside, and I blacked out almost immediately.

I was gone for 12 hours, and when I woke I felt cleaned out, bereft, as if I had just suffered some great loss. It took me a while to realise that all I had left behind was my shirt.

Writing a comparative summary.

Text A is ‘How I ended up in the jungle...’
Text B is ‘On Nature’

These two texts are set in different locations.

Use details from both sources to write a summary of the different locations described in these two texts.

Extract from the essay 'Nature' by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Text B

I.
NATURE

. . Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, -- no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, -- all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. . . .

slough
noun
a swamp

perennial
adjective
lasting or existing for a long or apparently infinite time

decorum
noun
good taste

sanctity
noun

blithe
adjective
happy or carefree

egotism
noun
the fact of being excessively absorbed in oneself

Sightlines by Kathleen Jamie - extract: silence, icebergs and the aurora borealis

Seven years ago, with Findings, Kathleen Jamie broke the mould of nature writing. Here, she recounts a journey through frozen seas, in search of the Northern Lights.

Text B

By Kathleen Jamie

There's no swell to speak of, just little lapping waves, so landing is just a matter of running the Zodiacs up on to the stony beach, allowing us to jump ashore. Not jump exactly: we swing our legs over the sides of the inflatable, and drop down on to the land, ideally between waves. You don't want to get your feet wet, because they'd soon freeze.

With an outcrop of smooth bare rock to shelter us, we take off our rucksacks, set aside our cameras , crouch or sit down, out of the breeze. It's a stern breeze, blowing from the land, but, like everything here, it carries a sense of enormous strength withheld. Once everyone is settled, the guide makes a suggestion: why don't we keep silent, just for a few minutes, sit still and keep quiet, just listen?

We have the sea, deceptively calm and blue and serene with icebergs, stretching away eastward under an ashy sky. Below in the bay our ship rides at anchor, looking overcomplicated among the smaller, white tufts of ice which drift soundlessly around it. Though white, the ship looks dirty, too, the way sheep suddenly look dirty when it snows. Behind the ship, the far side of the bay rises to a low brown ridge similar to this, and beyond that ridge is arranged a row of white pinnacles – the tips of icebergs grounded in a hidden inlet.

Westward rises a range of brown jagged mountains, and beyond the coastal range there are hints and gleams of something I thought at first was a band of low cloud, but it's ice, maybe the edge of the inland ice cap. The air is extraordinarily clear.

That's what we see. What we listen to, though, is silence. Slowly we enter the most extraordinary silence, a radiant silence. It radiates from the mountains, and the ice and the sky, a mineral silence which presses powerfully on our bodies, coming from very far off. It's deep and quite frightening, and makes my mind seem clamorous as a goose. I want to quell my mind, but I think it would take years. I glance at the others. Some people are looking out at the distant land and sea; others have their heads bowed, as if in church.

A minute passes, maybe two, maybe five, just the breeze and this powering silence – then a raven flies over. The bird, utterly black and alone in the sky, is heading inland on steady wings. It, too, keeps quiet.

They used to navigate by raven, the Vikings, there being no stars visible at such high latitudes in summer. The old sagas say that the Viking settlers of Iceland took ravens. Out of sight of land, wallowing at sea, they would release a raven and watch it climb the air until it was high enough to sight land. Where the raven headed, they followed in their open boats. Maybe ravens had brought them here, too, in their Greenlandic voyages, a thousand years ago. A thousand years.

The blink of an eye.

Be quiet, I tell myself. Listen to the silence. I take my eye off the raven for a moment, and when I look back it's gone.

Now it's after midnight, and dark. We have been to bed, lain in the dark in our cabins, but are up again, jackets and jerseys thrown over our pyjamas, boots, hats and gloves, and are again standing on the ship's foredeck, eight or ten of us, in twos or alone. Some lean on the rail, some stand in the middle of the deck. There is no electric light; the crew must have switched them off, so there is ship's equipment to negotiate in the darkness, winches and a mast. Although there is no wind now, it's deeply cold and we move with care, because the metal deck underfoot is glazed with ice. If we speak at all, it's in whispers.

The land is featureless now, and the water black, but the heavens are vivacious. We are standing with heads tilted back, marvelling.

Luminous green, teal green, the aurora borealis glows almost directly overhead. It intensifies against the starry night like breath on a mirror, and it moves. Across the whole sky from east to west, the green lights shift and alter. Now it's an emerald veil, now with a surge it remakes itself into a swizzle which reaches toward some faraway place in the east.

We're like an audience – some gaze directly, others have again raised long-lensed cameras – standing in the deep cold, looking up, keeping silence, but it's not a show, it's more like watching fluidity of mind; an intellectualism, after the passivity of icebergs. Not the performance of a finished work but a redrafting and recalculating. In fact, because the aurora's green is exactly the same glowing green as the ship's radar screen, as the readout which gives the latitude and longitude, the aurora looks less like a natural phenomenon, more like a feat of technology.

We stand side by side watching, as the green lights close themselves in, then instantly flare out again like a concertina, like people can do who're really skilled at shuffling cards. It's a movement which ought to whoosh, but there is deep silence. There's something in the lights I recognise – a restlessness, a dissatisfaction with their own arrangements. Once more the lights alter and breathe. Someone gasps, then laughs softly and the cameras click.

Storm on the Island

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees
Which might prove company when it blows full
Blast: you know what I mean – leaves and branches
Can raise a tragic chorus in a gale
So that you can listen to the thing you fear
Forgetting that it pummels your house too.
But there are no trees, no natural shelter.
You might think that the sea is company,
Exploding comfortably down on the cliffs
But no: when it begins, the flung spray hits
The very windows, spits like a tame cat
Turned savage. We just sit tight while wind dives
And strafes invisibly. Space is a salvo,
We are bombarded by the empty air.
Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear.

SEAMUS HEANEY

Blood Brothers

‘Thousands...I’m talking about thousands...’

MRS LYONS: How much?

MRS JOHNSTONE: Nothin’! Nothing. (*Pause.*) You bought me off once before . . .

MRS LYONS: Thousands . . . I’m talking about thousands if you want it. And think what you could do with money like that.

MRS JOHNSTONE: I’d spend it. I’d buy more junk and trash; that’s all. I don’t want your money. I’ve made a life out here. It’s not much of one maybe, but I made it. I’m stayin’ here. You move if you want to.

MRS LYONS: I would. But there’s no point. You’d just follow me again wouldn’t you?

MRS JOHNSTONE: Look I’m not followin’ anybody.

MRS LYONS: Wherever I go you’ll be just behind me. I know that now . . . always and forever and ever like, like a shadow . . . unless I can . . . make . . . you go . . . But you won’t so . . .

We see that throughout the above MRS LYONS *has opened the knife drawer and has a lethal-looking kitchen knife in her hand.* MRS JOHNSTONE, *unaware, has her back to her. On impulse, and punctuated by a note,* MRS JOHNSTONE *wheels. On a punctuated note* MRS LYONS *lunges.* MRS JOHNSTONE *moves and avoids it.* MRS LYONS *lunges again but* MRS JOHNSTONE *manages to get hold of her wrist, rendering the knife hand helpless.* MRS JOHNSTONE *takes the knife from* MRS LYON*’s grasp and moves away.*

MRS JOHNSTONE (*staring at her; knowing*): YOU’RE MAD. MAD.

MRS LYONS (*quietly*): I curse the day I met you. You ruined me.

MRS JOHNSTONE: Go. Just go!

MRS LYONS: Witch. (*Suddenly pointing.*) I curse you. Witch!

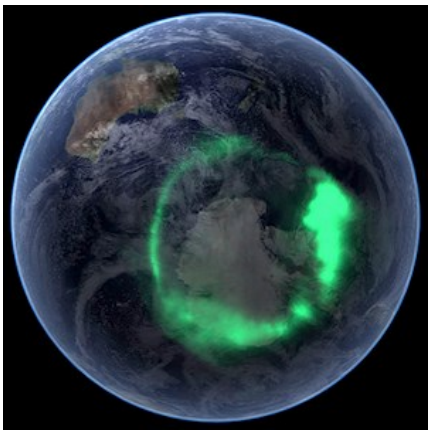
MRS JOHNSTONE (*screaming*): Go!

MRS LYONS *exits to the street.*

SERVICE AURORA—IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LIGHTS!

Text A

WHAT IS THE AURORA BOREALIS?



The Aurora is an incredible light show caused by collisions between electrically charged particles released from the sun that enter the earth's atmosphere and collide with gases such as oxygen and nitrogen. The lights are seen around the magnetic poles of the northern and southern hemispheres.

Auroras that occur in the northern hemisphere are called 'Aurora Borealis' or 'northern lights' and auroras that occur in the southern hempishere are called 'Aurora Australis' or 'southern lights'.

Both Auroras can be seen in the northern or southern hemisphere, in an irregularly shaped oval centred over each magnetic pole. Scientists have learned that in most instances northern and southern auroras are mirror-like images that occur at the same time, with similar shapes and colours. Auroral displays can appear in many vivid colours, although green is the most common. Colours such as red, yellow, green, blue and violet are also seen occasionally. The auroras can appear in many forms, from small patches of light that appear out of nowhere to streamers, arcs, rippling curtains or shooting rays that light up the sky with an incredible glow.

WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO WATCH AURORA?

Because the phenomena occurs near the magnetic poles, getting as close to these poles as possible will rapidly increase the chances of viewing aurora. As the magnetic south pole is in Antarctica, unless your a scientist working there, it usually leaves the northern hemisphere the most sensible option of viewing aurora. It should be mentioned however that during strong solar storms, aurora australis are quite often visible in places south from Australia. But generally speaking, the best places to watch the aurora are usually are North America or Europe.

In North America, the north western parts of Canada, particularly the Yukon, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Alaska are favourable. In Europe, Scandinavia, particularly the Lapland areas of Norway, Sweden and Finland is very good for aurora viewing. Iceland is also a good place for auroras and Auroral displays can also be seen over the southern tip of Greenland.

In terms of what physically makes a place good to view aurora aside from the proximity to the magnetic poles. The most important point is 'light pollution', it will ruin any aurora show, so the best places to watch the auroras should be away from light pollution. In most cases in the north this usually only requires driving for 30 minutes of a city/town and you should be in light pollution free skies.

Those are really the main points to successful aurora viewing, if you get them all right, then you should be in for a good show. Of course if there are clouds, then forget all the above!

Northern Lights—Questions

1. Use details from both ‘Sightlines’ and ‘It’s all about the Northern Lights’ to write a summary of the different information they give about the Aurora.

2. In the section below, how does Kathleen Jamie use language to describe the way people react to seeing the Aurora?

We’re like an audience – some gaze directly, others have again raised long-lensed cameras – standing in the deep cold, looking up, keeping silence, but it’s not a show, it’s more like watching fluidity of mind; an intellectualism, after the passivity of icebergs. Not the performance of a finished work but a redrafting and recalculating. In fact, because the aurora’s green is exactly the same glowing green as the ship’s radar screen, as the readout which gives the latitude and longitude, the aurora looks less like a natural phenomenon, more like a feat of technology.

We stand side by side watching, as the green lights close themselves in, then instantly flare out again like a concertina, like people can do who’re really skilled at shuffling cards. It’s a movement which ought to whoosh, but there is deep silence. There’s something in the lights I recognise – a restlessness, a dissatisfaction with their own arrangements. Once more the lights alter and breathe. Someone gasps, then laughs softly and the cameras click.

I fell through Arctic ice

by Gary Rolfe

I have travelled 11,000 Arctic miles with dogs, summer and winter. They've been my life. There are fewer than 300 purebred Canadian Eskimo dogs left in the world and I had 15 of them. I sank all my love and money into those dogs, proud to keep the breed's working talents alive. I learnt from the best, guys who in the 1980s had crossed Antarctica and made it to the North Pole with dogs, perfectionists who knew all there was to know. I watched, listened, kept my mouth shut, and one day decided to go it alone. It felt a natural progression.

Alone, it's always dangerous. Something was bound to go wrong one day, and on Sunday March 5 last year it did. Moving over Amundsen Gulf in the North-west Passage, sea ice gave way. Everything was sinking: my dogs, my sled and me. We kicked for our lives. Powerful Arctic Ocean currents dragged vast sheets of sea ice. Underwater, I couldn't find the hole I had fallen through and had to make one, punching, then breathing again as ice and sea water clashed against my face.

Polar bears eat people, and swim to kill. We'd crossed bear tracks an hour before going through the ice. I remember thinking, did the bastard follow us? Was he under us now? What will it feel like when he bites? The floe edge was a mile away, this a busy hunting area where bears bludgeon seals twice my size. Frantic, I ripped off my mittens. Trying to save my dogs, I was prepared to lose my hands to savage cold. It wasn't enough. Soon drowning and the cold had killed all but one of them.

Out of the water I stripped off sodden, icingup clothing. The cold was brutal. My limbs and head shook uncontrollably. I stopped shivering, indicating I was severely hypothermic. I was slowly dying. Barely conscious, I pulled on my down suit with fingers that knocked like wood. My blood was freezing. Human consciousness is lost when the body temperature plummets below 30C. I was heading for oblivion.

My satellite phone failed. I always have a phone backed up with a ground to air VHF transceiver, but it made no difference – I knew no plane was flying over. I flipped my location beacon. This is a last resort. To flip it means I'm in a life-threatening situation and want out. In the end three polar bear hunters came out on snowmobiles. What they saw frightened them.

I had fourth-degree frostbite, the worst form. My fingers were covered in deathly black blisters, my hands freezing to the bone. The pain when it thaws is colossal, at the top of the human tolerance scale, like a huge invisible parasite with a million fangs. The agony was suffocating; I writhed with it, wild for relief.

Heavy doses of morphine helped to dull the pain for two months. The side-effects included dreams, hallucinations, flashbacks – and constipation. Just as well because for weeks I couldn't wipe my arse. I went eight days without a crap. When prune juice was administered, I passed a turd the size of a baby's leg.

My fingers were debrided, scalpels cutting dead meat off thumbs and fingers. It hurt. Fingernails dropped off and smelt funny, and tendons stiffened. Physiotherapy was agony, but I wanted my hands back so badly and to endure meant to get better. My fingers looked a bloody mess, distorted and gnarled. They were always disturbingly cold. I was told the longer we waited, the better: even dead-looking fingers can recover. Exercising my hands took up all my days – and within minutes they would stiffen up, giving the impression they were dying on me. I kept going, though, and one day I clasped a cup with my right hand. I was so excited. The first time I went out in the sun, my fingers turned blue. Without fingerprint ridges, picking up coins was difficult. Coins felt freezing, copper ones less so.

Soon the time to thaw before the saw was up. The surgeon cut a tip as if sharpening a pencil. I felt nothing. It jolted me to learn that the fingertip was dead. It was the only part still black, solid and stone-cold; if it wasn't removed, I'd have been susceptible to dry gangrene. It had to go. I left hospital with 27 stitches and a metal plate on one stub-ended finger. Surgeons described my recovery as "inexplicable" – I had been expected to lose both hands.

So what now? My dogs and I were inseparable; I miss them desperately. All I want is dog hairs on my clothes again. The plan is a move to Greenland. It's time to live again.

Extract from Scott's diary

February 2nd, 1911

Impressions

The seductive folds of the sleeping-bag. The hiss of the primus and the fragrant steam of the cooker issuing from the tent ventilator. The small green tent and the great white road. The whine of a dog and the neigh of our steeds. The driving cloud of powdered snow. The crunch of footsteps which break the surface crust. The wind blown furrows. The blue arch beneath the smoky cloud. The crisp ring of the ponies' hoofs and the swish of the following sledge. The droning conversation of the march as the driver encourages or chides his horse. The patter of dog pads. The gentle flutter of our canvas shelter. Its deep booming sound under the full force of a blizzard. The drift snow like finest flour penetrating every hole and corner – flickering up beneath one's head covering, pricking sharply as a sand blast. The sun with blurred image peeping shyly through the wreathing drift giving pale shadowless light. The eternal silence of the great white desert. Cloudy columns of snow drift advancing from the south, pale yellow wraiths, heralding the coming storm, blotting out one by one the sharp-cut lines of the land. The blizzard, Nature's protest – the crevasse, Nature's pitfall – that grim trap for the unwary – no hunter could conceal his snare so perfectly – the light rippled snow bridge gives no hint or sign of the hidden danger, its position unguessable till man or beast is floundering, clawing and struggling for foothold on the brink. The vast silence broken only by the mellow sounds of the marching column.

Saturday, March 25th, 1911

We have had two days of surprisingly warm weather, the sky overcast, snow falling, wind only in light airs. Last night the sky was clearing, with a southerly wind, and this morning the sea was open all about us. It is disappointing to find the ice so reluctant to hold; at the same time one supposes that the cooling of the water is proceeding and therefore that each day makes it easier for the ice to form – the sun seems to have lost all power, but I imagine its rays still tend to warm the surface water about the noon hours. It is only a week now to the date which I thought would see us all at Cape Evans.

The warmth of the air has produced a comparatively uncomfortable state of affairs in the hut. The ice on the inner roof is melting fast, dripping on the floor and streaming down the sides. The increasing cold is checking the evil even as I write. Comfort could only be ensured in the hut either by making a clean sweep of all the ceiling ice or by keeping the interior at a critical temperature little above freezing-point.

Sunday, March 17th, 1912

Lost track of dates, but think the last correct. Tragedy all along the line. At lunch, the day before yesterday, poor Titus Oates said he couldn't go on; he proposed we should leave him in his sleeping-bag. That we could not do, and induced him to come on, on the afternoon march. In spite of its awful nature for him he struggled on and we made a few miles. At night he was worse and we knew the end had come.

Should this be found I want these facts recorded. Oates' last thoughts were of his Mother, but immediately before he took pride in thinking that his regiment would be pleased with the bold way in which he met his death. We can testify to his bravery. He has borne intense suffering for weeks without complaint, and to the very last was able and willing to discuss outside subjects. He did not – would not – give up hope to the very end. He was a brave soul. This was the end. He slept through the night before last, hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning – yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, 'I am just going outside and may be some time.' He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since. I take this opportunity of saying that we have stuck to our sick companions to the last. In case of Edgar Evans, when absolutely out of food and he lay insensible, the safety of the remainder seemed to demand his abandonment, but Providence mercifully removed him at this critical moment. He died a natural death, and we did not leave him till two hours after his death. We knew that poor Oates was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man and an English gentleman. We all hope to meet the end with a similar spirit, and assuredly the end is not far.

I can only write at lunch and then only occasionally. The cold is intense, -40º at midday. My companions are unendingly cheerful, but we are all on the verge of serious frostbites, and though we constantly talk of fetching through I don't think anyone of us believes it in his heart.

R. SCOTT.

Primus (*noun)*

A type of portable cooking stove

BIG WRITE:

In the first entry, entitled 'Impressions', how does Scott use language to present the arctic conditions?

A Winter's Tale

RICK BASS

WHEN I consider whether anything memorable or extraordinary has happened to me up here in the Montana winter, I come up lacking. I don't have a specific winter's tale. Or if I ever had one, it has been wiped clean from the slate; no memory or even hint of a memorable winter event exists. It's as if all the winters of my life have hypnotized me, committing my memory to snowmelt, to runoff.

Mostly I remember the ephemera of winter -- the regular details, hypnotic and soothing in their repetition and their steadfast predictability, which give a peculiar sweetness to the so-short days, the steadiness of the non-events. It's possible that I'm sleeping through most of winter's memorability. (Often in January and February I sleep ten hours a night; I'm exhausted by five in the evening, wobbly by six, longing for the pillow by seven, and snoring by eight.) But I don't think so. I don't believe that it's in winter's nature to live by big events. Winter lacks the pyrotechnics of spring, the brute, strapping joy of summer, the old sugary nostalgia of autumn. It's just cold and elegant, monochromatic, somnolent. Animals are asleep or gone south. I might hear a lone raven croak or caw, and the integrity of that sound, so isolate, can seem almost shattering. For a moment I nearly awaken -- such crispness, amid a time of all-other mutedness, lures my heart up and out of its sleepy resting time. But then the raven is gone. I listen to the cloth-cutting sound of its heavy wingbeats, and then even that is gone, and it doesn't call again.

I remember the sounds in town in early winter, as the trucks go driving past with their rattling, clanking tire chains. But I'm not sure that's memorable.

I remember the sight of a swarm of mayflies hatching along the river during a snowstorm, when the temperature was right around freezing: mayflies rising and disappearing into a descending curtain of snow.

I remember the way the house gets warmer in the middle of the night when it's snowing -- as if someone had laid another blanket over me. I remember what it's like to wake briefly, feel that extra warmth, know without having to look out the window that the snow has begun again, and then go back to sleep.

I remember walking outside one day in midwinter, when my skin was already dry and tight -- going from 60° indoors to -45° outside. When the cold air hit my face, my skin contracted so quickly that the thin skin on the bridge of my nose split, as if a fine knife had been drawn across it, and a spray of blood leaped out from that split.

What I remember about winters past is the sweet and complete loneliness, and the deep rest of down time. The incredible, unyielding slowness. The purple, snow-laden skies dense over the twin humps of Roderick Butte outside my kitchen window: the same view every day.

The routine: up early, eat a bowl of oatmeal, drive my older daughter to school, return home, fix coffee, head out to the cabin to work, shuffling through the new snow, usually ankle-deep. Such stillness: to remember color or sound at that time of year, one must go into the imagination.

Build a fire in the wood stove. Work for three or four hours. Go back to the house. Only a few hours of light left, just enough time to put on snowshoes or cross-country skis and set out for a short trip, which is a necessary thing every day, no matter what the weather -- necessary for the beauty, but also to keep the blood flowing, to keep cabin fever at bay. Down in the depths of winter a fine line distinguishes euphoria from despair for the unpracticed or the extravagant. One has to move carefully, slowly, as if on thin ice above a deep emotional chasm.

While I'm out on snowshoes or skis, even with my heart pounding and my blood running strong, I find that I'll nonetheless fall back into trances, into winter states of near-hypnosis. I can stare for long moments at the stark white of an aspen tree against the day's new snow, with more falling, or at the ice scallop where a deer bedded down, the warmth of its body melting its shape into fallen snow, the cast as yet unfilled by the oncoming snow. And I can be made inexplicably happy by such staring.
Time to push on, gliding on the skis.

Not going anywhere, and not running from anything.

Just going.

Extract from, The Prelude

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,

For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The Strange & Curious Tale of the Last True Hermit

For nearly thirty years, a phantom haunted the woods of Central Maine. Unseen and unknown, he lived in secret, creeping into homes in the dead of night and surviving on what he could steal. To the spooked locals, he became a legend—or maybe a myth. They wondered how he could possibly be real. Until one day last year, the hermit came out of the forest

By Michael Finkel

The hermit set out of camp at midnight, carrying his backpack and his bag of break-in tools, and threaded through the forest, rock to root to rock, every step memorized. Not a boot print left behind. It was cold and nearly moonless, a fine night for a raid, so he hiked about an hour to the Pine Tree summer camp, a few dozen cabins spread along the shoreline of North Pond in central Maine. With an expert twist of a screwdriver, he popped open a door of the dining hall and slipped inside, scanning the pantry shelves with his penlight.

Candy! Always good. Ten rolls of Smarties, stuffed in a pocket. Then, into his backpack, a bag of marshmallows, two tubs of ground coffee, some Humpty Dumpty potato chips. Burgers and bacon were in the locked freezer. On a previous raid at Pine Tree, he'd stolen a key to the walk-in, and now he used it to open the stainless-steel door. The key was attached to a plastic four-leaf-clover key chain, with one of the leaves partially broken off. A three-and-a-half-leaf clover.

He could've used a little more luck. Newly installed in the Pine Tree kitchen, hidden behind the ice machine, was a military-grade motion detector. The device remained silent in the kitchen but sounded an alarm in the home of Sergeant Terry Hughes, a game warden who'd become obsessed with catching the thief. Hughes lived a mile away. He raced to the camp in his pickup truck and sprinted to the rear of the dining hall. He peeked in a window.

And there he was. Probably. The person stealing food appeared entirely too clean, his face freshly shaved. He wore eyeglasses and a wool ski hat. Was this really the North Pond Hermit, a man who'd tormented the surrounding community for years—decades—yet the police still hadn't learned his name?

Hughes used his cell phone, quietly, and asked the Maine State Police to alert trooper Diane Perkins-Vance, who had also been hunting the hermit. Before Perkins-Vance could get there, the burglar, his backpack full, started toward the exit. If the man stepped into the forest, Hughes understood, he might never be found again.

The burglar eased out of the dining hall, and Hughes used his left hand to blind the man with his flashlight; with his right he aimed his .357 square on his nose. "Get on the ground!" he bellowed.

The thief complied, no resistance, and lay facedown, candy spilling out of his pockets. It was one thirty in the morning on April 4, 2013. Perkins-Vance soon arrived, and the burglar was placed, handcuffed, in a plastic chair. The officers asked his name. He refused to answer. His skin was strangely pale; his glasses, with chunky plastic frames, were extremely outdated. But he wore a nice Columbia jacket, new Lands' End blue jeans, and sturdy boots. The officers searched him, and no identification was located.

Hughes left the suspect alone with Perkins-Vance. She removed his handcuffs and gave him a bottle of water. And he started to speak. A little. When Perkins-Vance asked why he didn't want to answer any questions, he said he was ashamed. He spoke haltingly, uncertainly; the connection between his mind and his mouth seemed to have atrophied from disuse. But over the next couple of hours, he gradually opened up.

His name, he revealed, was Christopher Thomas Knight. Born on December 7, 1965. He said he had no address, no vehicle, did not file a tax return, and did not receive mail. He said he lived in the woods.

"For how long?" wondered Perkins-Vance.

Knight thought for a bit, then asked when the Chernobyl nuclear-plant disaster occurred. He had long ago lost the habit of marking time in months or years; this was just a news event he happened to remember. The nuclear meltdown took place in 1986, the same year, Knight said, he went to live in the woods. He was 20 years old at the time, not long out of high school. He was now 47, a middle-aged man.

Knight stated that over all those years he slept only in a tent. He never lit a fire, for fear that smoke would give his camp away. He moved strictly at night. He said he didn't know if his parents were alive or dead. He'd not made one phone call or driven in a car or spent any money. He had never in his life sent an e-mail or even seen the Internet.

He confessed that he'd committed approximately forty robberies a year while in the woods—a total of more than a thousand break-ins. But never when anyone was home. He said he stole only food and kitchenware and propane tanks and reading material and a few other items. Knight admitted that everything he possessed in the world, he'd stolen, including the clothes he was wearing, right down to his underwear. The only exception was his eyeglasses.

Perkins-Vance called dispatch and learned that Knight had no criminal record. He said he grew up in a nearby community, and his senior picture was soon located in the 1984 Lawrence High School yearbook. He was wearing the same eyeglasses.

For close to three decades, Knight said, he had not seen a doctor or taken any medicine. He mentioned that he had never once been sick. You had to have contact with other humans, he claimed, in order to get sick.

When, said Perkins-Vance, was the last time he'd had contact with another person?

Sometime in the 1990s, answered Knight, he passed a hiker while walking in the woods.

"What did you say?" asked Perkins-Vance.

"I said, 'Hi,' " Knight replied. Other than that single syllable, he insisted, he had not spoken with or touched another human being, until this night, for twenty-seven years.

Christopher Knight was arrested, charged with burglary and theft, and transported to the Kennebec County jail in Augusta, the state capital. For the first time in nearly 10,000 days, he slept indoors.

News of the capture stunned the citizens of North Pond. For decades, they'd felt haunted by… something. It was hard to say what. At first, in the late 1980s, there were strange occurrences. Flashlights were missing their batteries. Steaks disappeared from the fridge. New propane tanks on the grill had been replaced by old ones. "My grandkids thought I was losing my mind," said David Proulx, whose vacation cabin was broken into at least fifty times.

Then people began noticing other things. Wood shavings near window locks; scratches on doorframes. Was it a neighbor? A gang of teenagers? The robberies continued—boat batteries, frying pans, winter jackets. Fear took hold. "We always felt like he was watching us," one resident said. The police were called, repeatedly, but were unable to help.

Locks were changed, alarm systems installed. Nothing seemed to stop him. Or her. Or them. No one knew. A few desperate residents even left notes on their doors: "Please don't break in. Tell me what you need and I'll leave it out for you." There was never a reply.

Still the robberies persisted. The crimes, after so long, felt almost supernatural. "The legend of the hermit lived on for years and years," said Pete Cogswell, whose jeans and belt were worn by the hermit when he was caught. "Did I believe it? No. Who really could?"

Though hermits have been documented for thousands of years, Knight's feat appears to exist in a cate-

Reporters across Maine, and soon enough across the nation and the world, attempted to contact him. What did he wish to tell us? What secrets had he uncovered? How had he survived? He stayed resolutely silent. Even after his arrest, the North Pond Hermit remained a complete mystery.

Before he slept in the woods for a quarter century straight, Chris never once spent a night in a tent. He was raised in the community of Albion, a forty-five-minute drive east of his camp; he has four older brothers and one younger sister. His father, who died in 2001, worked in a creamery. His mother, now in her eighties, still lives in the same house where Chris grew up, a modest two-story colonial on a wooded fifty-acre plot.

The family is extremely private and did not speak with me. Their next-door neighbor told me that in fourteen years, he hasn't exchanged more than a word with Chris's mom. Sometimes he sees her getting the paper. "Culturally my family is old Yankee," Chris said. "We're not emotionally bleeding all over each other. We're not touchy-feely. Stoicism is expected." Two of Chris's brothers, Joel and Tim, visited him in jail. "I didn't recognize them," Chris admitted.

"My brothers supposed I was dead," said Chris, "but never expressed this to my mom. They always wanted to give her hope. Maybe he's in Texas, they'd say. Or he's in the Rocky Mountains." Chris did not allow his mother to visit. "Look at me, I'm in my prison clothes. That's not how I was raised. I couldn't face her."

He bought a new car, a white 1985 Subaru Brat. His brother Joel co-signed the loan. "I screwed him on that," Chris said. "I still owe him." He worked less than a year before he quit. He drove the Brat to Maine, went through his hometown without stopping—"one last look around"—and kept driving north. Soon he reached the edge of Moosehead Lake, where Maine begins to get truly remote.

"I drove until I was nearly out of gas. I took a small road. Then a small road off that small road. Then a trail off that." He parked the car. He placed the keys in the center console. "I had a backpack and minimal stuff. I had no plans. I had no map. I didn't know where I was going. I just walked away."

It was late summer of 1986. He'd camp in one spot for a week or so, then hike south, following the natural geology of Maine, with its long, glacier-carved valleys. "I lost track of where I was," he said. "I didn't care." For a while, he tried foraging for food. He ate roadkill partridges. Then he began taking corn and potatoes from people's gardens.

"But I wanted more than vegetables," he said. "It took a while to overcome my scruples. I was always scared when stealing. Always." He insists he never encountered anyone during a robbery; he made sure there was no car in the driveway, no sign of anyone inside. "It was usually 1 or 2 A.M. I'd go in, hit the cabinets, the refrigerator. In and out. My heart rate was soaring. It was not a comfortable act. I took no pleasure in it, none at all, and I wanted it over as quickly as possible." A single mistake, he understood, and the outside world would snatch him back.

He roamed about for two years before he discovered the campsite he would call home. He knew at once it was ideal. "Then," he said, "I settled in."

Chris lived by the rhythms of the seasons, but his thoughts were dominated by surviving winter. Preparations began at the end of each summer as the lakeside cabins were shutting down for the year. "It was my busiest time," he said. "Harvest time. A very ancient instinct. Though not usually associated with crime."

His first goal was to get fat. This was a life-or-death necessity. "I gorged myself on sugar and alcohol," he said. "It's the quickest way to gain weight, and I liked the inebriation." The bottles he stole were signs of a man who'd never once, as he admitted, ordered a drink at a bar: Allen's Coffee Flavored Brandy, Seagram's Escapes Strawberry Daiquiri, something called Whipped Chocolate Valley Vines (from the label: "fine chocolate, whipped cream red wine").

As the evenings began to chill, he grew his beard to the ideal length—about an inch, long enough to insulate his face, short enough to prevent ice buildup. He intensified his thieving raids, stocking up on food and propane. The first snow usually came in November. Chris was always fearful about leaving a single boot print anywhere, which is impossible to avoid in a blanket of snow. And so for the next six months, until the spring thaw in April, Chris rarely strayed from his clearing in the woods.

I asked him if he just slept all the time, a human hibernation. "Completely wrong," he replied. "It's dangerous to sleep too long in winter." When seriously frigid weather descended, he conditioned himself to fall asleep at 7:30 P.M. and get up at 2 A.M. "That way, at the depth of cold, I was awake." If he remained in bed any longer, condensation from his body could freeze his sleeping bag. "If you try and sleep through that kind of cold, you might never wake up."

The first thing he'd do at 2 A.M. was light his stove and start melting snow. To get his blood circulating, he'd pace the perimeter of his camp. His feet never seemed to fully thaw, but as long as he had a fresh pair of socks, this wasn't a problem. "It's more important to be dry than warm," Chris said. By dawn, he'd have his day's water supply. "Then, if I had had food, I'd have a meal."

And if he didn't have food? There were, he said, some very hard winters—desperate winters—in which he ran out of propane and finished his food. The suffering was acute. Chris called it "physical, emotional, and psychological pain."

"Once you get below negative twenty, you purposely don't think," he told me. His eyes went wide and fearful from the memory. "That's when you do have religion. You do pray. You pray for warmth."

Following his arrest, the court of public opinion was deeply divided. The man who wanted to live his life as invisibly as possible had become one of the most famous people in Maine. You could not walk into a bar in the Augusta area without stumbling into a debate about what should be done with Christopher Knight.

Some said that he must immediately be released from jail. Stealing cheese and bacon are not serious crimes. The man was apparently never violent. He didn't carry a weapon. He's an introvert, not a criminal. He clearly has no desire to be a part of our world. Let's open a Kickstarter, get him enough cash for a few years' worth of groceries, and allow him to go back to the woods. Some people were willing to let him live on their land, rent-free.

Others countered that it wasn't the physical items he robbed that made his crimes so disturbing—he stole hundreds of people's peace of mind. Their sense of security. How were they supposed to know Knight wasn't armed and dangerous? Even a single break-in can be punishable by a ten-year sentence. If Knight really wanted to live in the woods, he should've done so on public lands, hunting and fishing for food. He's nothing but a lazy man and a thief times a thousand. Lock him up in the state penitentiary.

Before his release, I met with Chris again. He said he'd be returning home, to live with his mother. His beard was unruly—"my crazy hermit beard," he called it. He was alarmingly skinny; he itched all over. We still didn't make much eye contact.

"I don't know your world," he said. "Only my world, and memories of the world before I went into the woods. What life is today? What is proper? I have to figure out how to live." He wished he could return to his camp—"I miss the woods"—but he knew by the rules of his release that this was impossible. "Sitting here in jail, I don't like what I see in the society I'm about to enter. I don't think I'm going to fit in. It's too loud. Too colorful. The lack of aesthetics. The crudeness. The inanities. The trivia."

"But you must have thought about things," I said. "About your life, about the human condition."

Chris became surprisingly introspective. "I did examine myself," he said. "Solitude did increase my perception. But here's the tricky thing—when I applied my increased perception to myself, I lost my identity. With no audience, no one to perform for, I was just there. There was no need to define myself; I became irrelevant. The moon was the minute hand, the seasons the hour hand. I didn't even have a name. I never felt lonely. To put it romantically: I was completely free."

That was nice. But still, I pressed on, there must have been some grand insight revealed to him in the wild.

He returned to silence. Whether he was thinking or fuming or both, I couldn't tell. Though he did arrive at an answer. I felt like some great mystic was about to reveal the Meaning of Life.

"Get enough sleep."

Walden by Henry Thoreau

Henry Thoreau spent two years living in isolation in the woods as a social experiment. His book, *Walden,* is a reflection on this experience. In it, he urges mankind to live in 'simplicity'.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

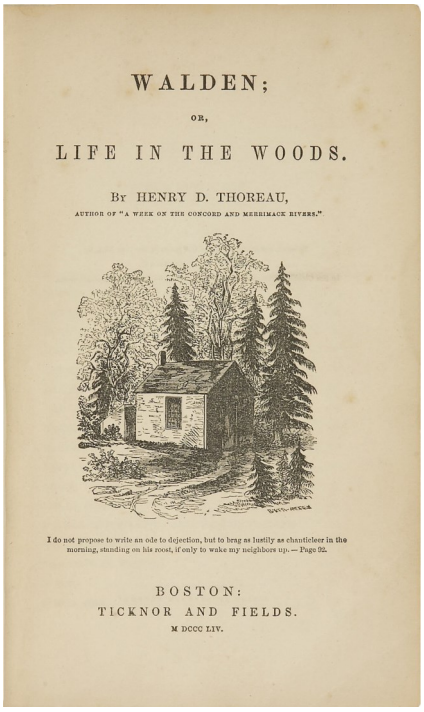
Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!

In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

Glossary

Spartan (adj.)	having no luxuries; strict
Swath (n.)	a broad strip
Excursion (n.)	a trip out
Superfluous (adj.)	more than is necessary
Evitable (adj.)	avoidable
Founder (vb.)	to sink


WALDEN;

OR,

LIFE IN THE WOODS.

By HENRY D. THOREAU,

AUTHOR OF "A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS."

I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up. — Page 92.

BOSTON:

TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

M DCCC LIV.

Compare viewpoints and methods
Life in the woods

Both ‘The Last True Hermit’ and ‘Walden’ present ideas about living in isolation in the woods.

Using these two extracts, compare how the writers convey different ideas and perspectives about life in the woods.

The Last True Hermit

"But you must have thought about things," I said. "About your life, about the human condition.“

Chris became surprisingly introspective. "I did examine myself," he said. "Solitude did increase my perception. But here’s the tricky thing—when I applied my increased perception to myself, I lost my identity. With no audience, no one to perform for, I was just there. There was no need to define myself; I became irrelevant. The moon was the minute hand, the seasons the hour hand. I didn’t even have a name. I never felt lonely. To put it romantically: I was completely free.“

That was nice. But still, I pressed on, there must have been some grand insight revealed to him in the wild.

He returned to silence. Whether he was thinking or fuming or both, I couldn’t tell. Though he did arrive at an answer.

I felt like some great mystic was about to reveal the Meaning of Life.

"Get enough sleep."

Walden

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach[]. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life…to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it.

Still we live meanly, like ants[]. Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity!

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams…he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

LEVEL 4 Detailed and perceptive	• Analyses viewpoints and effect of methods
LEVEL 3 Clear and relevant	• Explains viewpoints and effect of methods clearly
LEVEL 2 Some understanding	• Makes some comment on viewpoints and effect of methods
LEVEL 1 Simple, limited comment	• Makes simple identification viewpoints and effect of methods

Source A – 20th Century literary non-fiction

This is an extract from an essay written in 1967 called *The Village that Lost its Children* by Laurie Lee. Aberfan was a small mining village in Wales. In 1966, many of its people, including children at a local school, were killed when heavy rain caused a landslide.

Few people had ever heard of Aberfan until disaster struck it. It was just another of the small mining villages lying tucked away in the South Wales valleys – a huddle of anonymous terraced houses of uniform ugliness unrelieved except for chapel and pub.

Its heart was the coal-pit, and its environment like the others – the debris of a slowly exhausting industry: a disused canal, some decaying rail-tracks, a river black as the Styx[1], a general coating of grime over roofs and gardens, and the hills above blistered with a century of mining waste.

Such villages learned to accept a twilight world where most of the menfolk worked down the pits. Many died early, with their lungs full of coal-dust, and the life was traditionally grim and perilous. Disaster, in fact, was about the only news that ever came out of the valleys – the sudden explosion underground, miners entombed alive, or the silent death in the dark from gas. Wales and the world were long hardened to such news. But not to what happened in Aberfan.

A coal-mine sends to the surface more waste than coal, and a mining village has to learn to live with it. It must be put somewhere or the mine would close, and it's too expensive to carry it far. So the tips grow everywhere, straddling the hillsides, nudging the houses like black-furred beasts. Almost everyone, from time to time, has seen danger in them, but mostly they are endured as a fact of life.

On the mountain above Aberfan there were seven such tips. The evening sun sank early behind them. To some of the younger generation they had always been there, as though dumped by the hand of God. They could be seen from the school windows, immediately below them, rising like black pyramids in the western sky. But they were not as solid as they looked; it was known that several had moved in the past, inching ominously down the mountain.

What was not known however was that the newest tip, number 7, was a killer with a rotten heart. It had been begun in Easter 1958, and was built on a mountain spring, most treacherous of all foundations. Gradually, over the years, the fatal seeping of water was turning Tip 7 into a mountain of moving muck.

Then one morning, out of the mist, the unthinkable happened, and the tip came down on the village. The children of Pantglas Junior School had just arrived in their classrooms and were right in the path of it. They were the first to be hit by the wave of stupifying filth which instantly smothered more than a hundred of them.

The catastrophe was not only the worst ion Wales, but an event of such wanton and indifferent cruelty it seemed to put to shame both man and God.

Glossary

Styx – the Styx was a river in Greek mythology that was supposed to separate the world of the living from the world of the dead.

Source B – 19th Century non-fiction

This is an extract from a Victorian newspaper article published in October 1863. A minor earthquake had been felt in some parts of Great Britain.

We have had an Earthquake. The men of science all tell us that we have every right to expect earthquakes. This country lies on the great volcanic belt. There runs under us a huge crack in the earth's crust, – who knows how deep or how wide? A few flimsy strata[1] have fallen in and now, who knows what enormous voids, what huge quantities of imprisoned gas, what seas of molten metal, there may be only a few miles below this fair surface?

The scientists tell us that there are probably many earthquakes which we do not feel. But if a small earthquake, even an imperceptible one, why not an earthquake to destroy a metropolis[2]?

But, the earth-wave has been faint, and only a feeble echo of some distant shock, for it was not everywhere, nor was it everybody that was waked by the earthquake of Tuesday, October 6. More than half the nation has to accept the word of the rest. Yet many felt it that will never forget the feeling; and many even heard it that will carry the "awful" sound in the ear to their dying day. In some places it even did damage. It upset furniture and broke crockery. It displaced bricks, and even revealed a crack in a wall. We should not be surprised to hear of more serious damage. But if this much, why not more?

BRITANNIA'S[3] fabled rock has been shaken from its basis. Be it only an inch or two, the ocean throne has been tilted up. Throughout the Midland counties, the earthquake appears to have been felt the most. At Birmingham walls were seen to move, and people rose from their beds to see what damage had been done. At Edgbaston successive shocks were plainly felt, houses were shaken to their foundations, "a dreadful rattle" was rather felt than heard, and people woke one another to ask the meaning. Everything around was violently agitated. The houses cracked and groaned as if the timbers had been strained. The policemen on duty saw the walls vibrate, heard everything rattle about them, and were witnesses to the universal terror of the roused sleepers.

In London, we are situated on a deep bed of clay, where our houses are well built, and where we are so accustomed to noises, shocks, and tremors that we are almost startled to find it calm and quiet. Noises from vast warehouses along the river banks, bathed by the muddy and dull water of the great river, while trains rush past at full speed or rumble underground uttering horrible cries and vomiting waves of smoke. London: where men work in darkness, scarcely seeing their own hands and not knowing the meaning of their labour. London: a rainy, colossal city smelling of molten metal and of soot, ceaselessly streaming and smoking in the night fog. Fog which persists and assumes different hues – sometimes ashen – sometimes black. With the lighting of the fires, it soon becomes yellow and pungent, irritating the throat and eyes.

Here, on this day, a large proportion of us felt a sort of shock and shiver, and the feeling of being upheaved; but very few of us could trust our own sensations, and be sure it was something out of the usual course.

Who can say what strange trial of shaking or upheaving, sinking, dividing, or drying up, may await us? We know by science these isles have gone through many a strange metamorphosis[4], and science cannot assure us that there are none more to come.

GLOSSARY

[1]strata – layers of rock

[2]metropolis – a major city

[3]Britannia – Great Britain

[4]metamorphosis – change

Choose **four** statements below which are TRUE.

- Shade the boxes of the ones that you think are true
- Choose a maximum of four statements.

A	Aberfan was a well-known place in Wales.	⬭
B	The village did not have a chapel or a pub.	⬭
C	Pit waste had been building up for at least 100 years.	⬭
D	Village life centred around the coal pit.	⬭
E	Mining was a new and thriving industry.	⬭
F	Life for miners and their families was tough.	⬭
G	There wasn't much good news in Aberfan.	⬭
H	The men lived long and healthy lives.	⬭

[4 marks]

You need to refer to **source A** and **source B** for this question:

Both sources give details about the places where the events occur.

Use details from **both** sources to write a summary of the differences between Aberfan and London.

[8 marks]

You now need to refer **only** to **source A**, **lines 27 to 40**.

How does the writer use language to describe the coal tips?

[12 marks]

For this question, you need to refer to the **whole of source A** together with the **whole of source B**.

Compare how the writers convey their different ideas and perspectives of the events that they describe.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different ideas and perspectives
- compare the methods they use to convey their ideas and perspectives
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

Paper 2 Reading—Mark Scheme

PAPER 2	Question 2 SUMMARY /8 (AO1)	Question 3 LANGUAGE /12 (AO2)	Question 4 COMPARE METHODS /16 (AO3)
LEVEL 4 Detailed and perceptive	7-8 marks • Makes perceptive inferences from both texts • Makes judicious references/use of textual detail relevant to the focus of the question • Statements show perceptive understanding of differences.	10-12 Marks -Analyses the effects of the writer's choices of language -Selects a judicious range of textual detail -Makes sophisticated and accurate use of subject terminology	13-16 marks • Analyses how writers' methods are used • Selects a range of judicious supporting detail from both texts • Shows a detailed understanding of the different ideas and perspectives in both texts
LEVEL 3 Clear and relevant	5-6 marks • Makes clear inferences from both texts • Selects clear references / textual detail relevant to the focus of the question • Statements show clear understanding of differences	7-9 marks -Explains clearly the effects of the writer's choices of language -Selects a range of relevant textual detail -Makes clear and accurate use of subject terminology	9-12 marks • Explains clearly how writers' methods are used • Selects relevant detail to support from both texts • Shows a clear understanding of the different ideas and perspectives in both texts
LEVEL 2 Some understanding	3-4 marks • Attempts some inference (s) from one / both texts • Selects some appropriate references / textual detail from one / both texts • Statements show some understanding of differences	4-6 marks -Attempts to comment on the effect of language -Selects some appropriate textual detail -Makes some use of subject terminology, mainly appropriately	5-8 marks • Makes some comment on how writers' methods are used • Selects some appropriate textual detail/references, not always supporting from one or both texts • Identifies some different ideas and perspectives
LEVEL 1 Simple, limited comment	1-2 Marks • Offers paraphrase rather than inference • Makes simple reference / textual details from one / both texts • Statement(s) show a simple understanding of differences	1-3 marks -Offers simple comment on the effect of language -Selects simple references or textual details -Makes simple use of subject terminology, not always appropriately	1-4 marks • Makes simple identification of writers' methods • Makes simple references/ textual details from one or both texts • Shows simple awareness of ideas and/or perspectives

Arguments For Hunting

By: Sally Aquire - www.ruralsports.co.uk

Hunting (especially fox hunting) is a controversial issue. On the one hand animal rights groups protest that maiming and killing defenceless animals is inhumane. On the other hand, hunters argue that it is an essential part of traditional rural life, and that banning it altogether will collapse the infrastructure of life in the country. Here, we outline the arguments in favour of hunting.

"It's Traditional"

Fox hunting became popular in the 18th century. Before that, hunting hares, wild deer and wild boars were the main blood sports in Britain, but the extinction of the wild boars and the almost extinction of wild deer turned attention to foxes instead.

"Protesters don't Understand Hunting"

Hunters often argue that protesters don't have any idea of what a hunt actually involves, even going as far as to say they only turn up after the hunt has finished. They suggest that those who are against hunting should take the time to understand the exact nature of hunting before they air their views.

"Hunting Gives Jobs"

According the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), hunting provides jobs for around 750 people. Hunters argue that these people would be unemployed if hunting was banned. It's not a huge amount in the grand scheme of UK employment, but it would undoubtedly be a big blow to those involved, who would obviously then need to find alternative ways to support themselves and their families.

The British Field Sports Society (BFSS) suggest that more than 750 would be out of a job, but not of all these would be strictly unemployed, as jobs like horse riding and providing riding equipment and services would still be in demand.

"Hunting is Natural"

Pro-hunters claim that hunting and other blood sports are inevitable because of our biological make-up. To them, death and suffering are an unavoidable part of life, and the foxes would die anyway.

"Meat Eaters Shouldn't Oppose Hunting"

Hunters claim that if you eat meat, you have no right to offer arguments against hunting. As far as they are concerned, meat eaters who oppose hunting are hypocritical. There can be no doubt that animals are killed for meat, but not all forms of blood sport involve the hunted animals dying. Wearing leather and other materials that are made from animals can also be seen as hypocritical.

"The Animals don't Suffer"

Pro-hunters reckon that foxes and other hunted animals don't actually suffer during a hunt.

"Foxes Terrorise the Countryside"

Hunters argue that foxes are a nuisance and run amok in rural areas, killing and maiming large numbers of chicken and lamb. This is one of their arguments for why fox hunting in particular is so common in the countryside.

"A Hunting Ban Will be Impossible and Impractical"

The majority of the police are not trained to be able to police hunts, and so would not be in a position to make sure that no hunts take place anywhere in the UK.

These arguments are some of the main ones put forward by those in favour of hunting (particularly fox hunting) to justify why hunting is such as a common activity in rural areas. See our article entitled Arguments Against Hunting for the arguments put forward by those in favour of a total ban on hunting.

Care about horses?
Then you should boycott the Grand National

If you saw your neighbour whipping a dog, you'd be on the phone to the police immediately, right? Of course, anyone with a shred of decency condemns hurting animals. Yet, inexplicably, some still turn a blind eye to the cruelty to horses during the Grand National, in which riders are required to carry a whip. Nearly every year, racehorses sustain injuries. Many have paid with their lives.

When 40 skittish horses are jammed onto a treacherous obstacle course, viciously whipped, and forced into jumping, breakdowns are inevitable. Last year, only 17 – fewer than half – finished the Grand National, and while the race organisers were quick to highlight an absence of fatalities after last year's main event, they conveniently failed to mention that two horses died at the same course earlier in the week. According to research by Animal Aid in 2012, Aintree was the most lethal of all of Britain's racecourses, claiming the lives of six horses in just eight days of racing.

Treated like wind-up toys – their fragile limbs pushed to and sometimes beyond breaking point – many horses sustain fractured legs or necks or severed tendons, while others have heart attacks. Every year, hundreds of horses die on British racetracks. More are turned into dog food when they stop winning. The mindset that horses are little more than tools to be used, abused and discarded is entrenched in the racing industry. Ruby Walsh's comment that horses are "replaceable" is deeply offensive. Horses are not unfeeling – they experience joy, anxiety, fear and affection. They are also clever and perceptive, as anyone who has seen a horse figure out how to open stable-door latches will tell you. However, Walsh's comments were prophetic: the very next day, two more horses died on the Cheltenham track.

Horses are sometimes drugged to mask pain and keep them running when they should be resting or receiving treatment. Raced too young and too hard, when their bones are not up to the pounding and stress, horses used in racing endure injuries, lameness and exhaustion. Last year, Godolphin trainer Mahmood al-Zarooni was banned from racing for eight years after being found guilty of doping offences.

People who care about horses should turn their backs on the Grand National and every other race in which horses are being run to death. This cruelty will end only when the public realises that there is no such thing as a "harmless flutter" when it comes to funding the cruel and exploitative horse-racing industry.

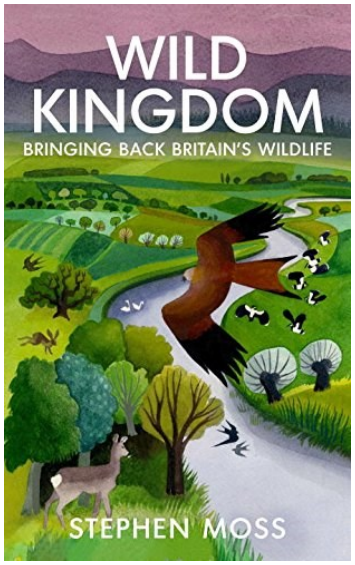
Extract from ‘Wild Kingdom’ by Stephen Moss

How much is a view worth? How do you cost account a landscape? Can a computer be programmed to evaluate bird song and the brief choreography of a young beech plantation against a May sky, a kestrel hovering in winter air? Is there a method of reckoning up the percentage in a person’s inner replenishment from wild country?

Kenneth Allsop, In the Country (1972)

Ten years ago, I moved with my young family down to Somerset from London. When we exchanged the metropolitan rat race for a more tranquil and fulfilling life in the English countryside, I knew that I was also swapping swifts for swallows, parakeets for lapwings, and insolent urban foxes for shy rural ones. What I didn’t realise was that, before a decade was out, I would witness a complete transformation of this landscape and its wildlife.

As I write, a buzzard is perched on our garden goalpost, where my children practise their football skills. On a December bike ride around the fields behind our house I see barn owls and bullfinches, bouncing roe deer and lithe, fast-moving stoats, and the occasional peregrine, cruising over the fields in search of its prey. In June the verges of the lanes are awash with cow parsley and the pinkish-purple flowers of great willowherb; while introduction whitethroats shoot up from the hedgerows to deliver their scratchy song, and skylarks hang even higher in the azure skies. If there is a better place to live in Britain – an even more wildlife-rich landscape, with so many exciting new inhabitants – then I’d love to know about it. In the meantime, for me, this is pretty close to paradise.



And yet . . . In the wider world, beyond my immediate horizons, I know that nature is not faring so well. The newspaper headlines, the reports and surveys, and the anecdotal evidence of so many people I meet and talk to, tell a very different tale. In much of Britain's countryside, our wildlife is in big trouble. Species that have lived here for thousands of years are disappearing, under threat from pollution and persecution, competition with alien invaders, changing farming and forestry practices, and climate change.

During my own lifetime – barely fifty years since I first became aware of the wild creatures with which we share this small island – I have seen changes that could never have been foreseen. Who would have thought that house sparrows and hedgehogs, both so common and widespread that we simply took them for granted, would have suffered such catastrophic population declines? Who would have believed that generations of children would now be growing up without ever hearing the call of introduction the cuckoo, a sound that for our rural ancestors marked the coming of spring? And who would ever have imagined that hares and skylarks, water voles and bumblebees, turtle doves and partridges, would all be in danger of disappearing from our rural landscape? It is clear that if we don't do something to stem these declines – and soon – we may lose some of our most charismatic creatures for ever.

What has happened to Britain's countryside and its wildlife? How have we managed to create new landscapes, and attract such exciting new arrivals, at a time when so many of our wild creatures are under threat? Why and how did much of the British countryside turn into a wildlife-free zone? And now, at the eleventh hour, what can we do to turn the tide of decline and disappearance, bring these species back from the brink, and restore the special places where they live?

A Landmark Day for the Earth

Leonardo DiCaprio

Thank you, Mr. Secretary General, for the honor to address this body once more. And thanks to the distinguished climate leaders assembled here today who are ready to take action.

President Abraham Lincoln was also thinking of bold action 150 years ago when he said:

The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country."

He was speaking before the US Congress to confront the defining issue of his time – slavery.

Everyone knew it had to end but no one had the political will to stop it. Remarkably, his words ring as true today when applied to the defining crisis of our time – Climate Change.

As a UN Messenger of Peace, I have been travelling all over the world for the last two years documenting how this crisis is changing the natural balance of our planet. I have seen cities like Beijing choked by industrial pollution. Ancient Boreal forests in Canada that have been clear cut and rainforests in Indonesia that have been incinerated. In India I met farmers whose crops have literally been washed away by historic flooding. In America I have witnessed unprecedented droughts in California and sea level rise flooding the streets of Miami. In Greenland and in the Arctic I was astonished to see that ancient glaciers are rapidly disappearing well ahead of scientific predictions. All that I have seen and learned on this journey has terrified me.

There is no doubt in the world's scientific community that this a direct result of human activity and that the effects of climate change will become astronomically worse in the future.

I do not need to throw statistics at you. You know them better than I do, and more importantly, you know what will happen if this scourge is left unchecked. You know that climate change is happening faster than even the most pessimistic of scientists warned us decades ago. It has become a runaway freight train bringing with it an impending disaster for all living things.

Now think about the shame that each of us will carry when our children and grandchildren look back and realize that we had the means of stopping this devastation, but simply lacked the political will to do so.

Our planet cannot be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong. An upheaval and massive change is required, now. One that leads to a new collective consciousness. A new collective evolution of the human race, inspired and enabled by a sense of urgency from all of you.

We all know that reversing the course of climate change will not be easy, but the tools are in our hands – if we apply them before it is too late.

Renewable energy, clean fuels, and putting a price on carbon pollution are beginning to turn the tide. This transition is not only the right thing for our world, but it also makes clear economic sense, and is possible within our lifetime.

But it is now upon you to do what great leaders have always done: to lead, inspire, and empower as President Lincoln did in his time.

My friends, look at the delegates around you. It is time to ask each other – which side of history will you be on?

As a citizen of our planet who has witnessed so much on this journey I thank you for all you have done to lay the foundation of a solution to this crisis, but after 21 years of debates and conferences it is time to declare no more talk. No more excuses. No more ten-year studies. No more allowing the fossil fuel companies to manipulate and dictate the science and policies that effect our future. This is the only body that can do what is needed. You, sitting in this very hall.

The world is now watching. You will either be lauded by future generations, or vilified by them.

Lincoln's words still resonate to all of us here today:

"We will be remembered in spite of ourselves. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the last generation… We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth."

That is our charge now – you are the last best hope of Earth. We ask you to protect it. Or we – and all living things we cherish – are history.

Thank you

The Natural World in Christmas Carol

Stave 3

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped -- whither. Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed clung to its base, and storm-birds -- born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water -- rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loop-hole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea -- on, on -- until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

Nature in Romeo and Juliet

CAPULET
My child is yet a stranger in the world;
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years,
Let two more summers wither in their pride,
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
PARIS
Younger than she are happy mothers made.

Act 1, Scene 2

JULIET

What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.

Act 2 Scene 2

FRIAR LAURENCE

O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities:
For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
But to the earth some special good doth give,
Nor aught so good but strain'd from that fair use
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;
And vice sometimes by action dignified.

Act 2 Scene 3

JULIET
Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO
It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Act 3 Scene 5

Forces of Nature – Dealing with Weather in the Trenches of WW1

One of the most important battlegrounds of WW1 was the battle in the trenches. It was gruesome, for many reasons. At times the soldiers would be hunkered in the trenches for several days, waiting for something to happen. Then a conflict would occur, creating death and destruction.

The remains of trenches at the site of the Battle of Verdun

One thing that is overlooked and not thought about is what the weather was like in the trenches. Weather plays a huge role in our everyday lives, and in the trenches, troops had no way to evade it. Whether it was the summer heat, fall rains or winter's cold bite, soldiers had to deal with what mother nature gave them.

What was the weather like in the trenches? How did it affect those fighting in them?

Background on Trenches

In WWI the trenches were home to some fierce battles. More than 6,000 miles of trenches were dug, with the average trench being 10 feet deep and six feet wide.

On the left side of this trench, you can see the wood has been stacked to hold back the dirt.

Trenches were usually dug out, with wood or metal holding up the sides. Sometimes more expensive material, like stone, was used. They were also lined with sandbags, as a form of reinforcement.

The trenches followed no particular pattern; they could be straight or have lots of curves and were perhaps fitted with a bunker. In general, German trenches were built much better than the Allied ones.

The trenches caused a stalemate for nearly four years during the war, as it was extremely difficult to advance. As well as everything else going on around the trench like shelling, mustard gas attacks, and snipers, troops also had to deal with the weather, which caused major issues for them.

Rain

Rain brought many problems for forces in the trenches, particularly in the fall and winter months. Water weakened the structural integrity of the wood by being soaked up and not having a chance to dry. It made the metal rust, eroding it. It also caused mud issues.

Trying to navigate through the muddy trenches, whether walking or trying to get out of them was horrendous. It was heightened by water drainage problems within the trenches. Water that collected in the trenches could get as high as waste-deep. The water formed pools that attracted bugs, disease, and rats. It also caused trench foot, one of the more well-known ailments of WWI.

Prolonged exposure to moisture and cold air lead to trench foot. Soldiers' feet got soaked, and the longer their feet were exposed to those conditions, the more likely they were to get trench foot. At first, their feet turned red due to poor blood supply. Once they began to decay, they produced an odor. As the symptoms developed the feet became swollen with blisters and sores. If untreated it led to gangrene and amputation.

The impact of rain on the trenches was worse at the beginning of the war than it was at the end. As the war raged on, the design of the trenches changed leading to better drainage, but the weather continued to affect the trenches, especially during the winter months.

Winter in the Trench

Winter in the trench combined the worst of the fall with cold weather. There was still rain but also below freezing weather and snow.

Frostbite was rampant sometimes leading to amputation. Trenches did not provide any warmth. Everything froze; clothing, blankets, food, etc. It also caused the walls of the trench to freeze, making them hard as a rock.

Vehicles and machinery were effected as well, making them inoperable. Troops had to use heated water to try and fix the problem.

Summer Weather

The summer combined heat with rain. Troops still had to deal with muddy trenches, but they also had other issues. Excrement and dead bodies within the trenches produced an unbearable stink. Lice were also a problem which had a major impact on the soldiers.

It could get hot, but it was not as bad as the freezing winter.

Wilfred Owen: Poet of the Trenches

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) - who was born in Oswestry on the Welsh borders, and brought up in Birkenhead and Shrewsbury - is widely recognised as one of the greatest voices of the First World War. At the time of his death he was virtually unknown - only four of his poems were published during his lifetime - but he had always been determined to be a poet, and had experimented with verse from an early age. In 1913-1915, whilst teaching at Bordeaux and Bagnères-de-Bigorre in France, he worked on the rhyming patterns which became characteristic of his poetry; but it was not until the summer of 1917 that he found his true voice.

In 1915 Owen enlisted in the British Army. His first experiences of active service at Serre and St. Quentin in January-April 1917 led to shell-shock and his return to Britain. Whilst he was undergoing treatment at the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, he met one of his literary heroes, Siegfried Sassoon, who provided him with guidance, and encouragement to bring his war experiences into his poetry.

When Owen returned to the Western Front, after more than a year away, he took part in the breaking of the Hindenburg Line at Joncourt (October 1918) for which he was awarded the Military Cross in recognition of his courage and leadership. He was killed on 4 November 1918 during the battle to cross the Sambre-Oise canal at Ors.

Virtually all the poems for which he is now remembered were written in a creative burst between August 1917 and September 1918. His self-appointed task was to speak for the men in his care, to show the 'Pity of War', which he also expressed in vivid letters home. His bleak realism, his energy and indignation, his compassion and his great technical skill are evident in many well-known poems, and phrases or lines from his work ("Each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds" … "The Old Lie: Dulce et decorum est …") are frequently quoted.

Wilfred Owen's reputation has grown steadily, helped over the years by Edmund Blunden's edition with a biographical memoir in 1931, and by later editions, biographies and critical analyses by C.Day Lewis, Jon Stallworthy, Dominic Hibberd and others. Modern scholarship regards Owen's work as the most significant poetry to come out of the 1914-1918 war years, and his influence on later generations of poets and readers is widely acknowledged. In 1961 several of his poems were included in Benjamin Britten's War Requiem.

Exposure

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that kniveus ...

Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent ...

Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient ...

Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,

But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,

Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.

Northward, incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,

Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.

What are we doing here?

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow ...

We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.

Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army

Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,

But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.

Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,

With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,

We watch them wandering up and down the wind's

nonchalance,

But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces -
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare,
snow-dazed,
Deep into grassier ditches.So we drowse, sun-dozed,
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
– Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed, -
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,
Shrivelling many hands.puckering foreheads crisp.
The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
But nothing happens.

WILFRED OWEN

438 Days

A fishing trip turns into a terrifying test of survival after Salvador Alvarenga becomes one man against the sea.

BY **JONATHAN FRANKLIN**

Salvador Alvarenga loved the simple lines of the fiberglass craft. No cabin or roof. Just a 25-foot-long narrow, canoe-shaped boat designed to carve up the waves like a huge surfboard, agile and fast, with the engine mounted on the back.

Alvarenga was a 37-year-old Salvadoran fisherman living and working in Mexico. A heavy drinker quick to pick up the tab, he had no family tying him down—his 13-year-old daughter lived with her mother in El Salvador.

On this day, November 18, 2012, Alvarenga planned to head out into the Pacific at 10 a.m. and work straight through until 4 p.m. the next day. His crewman was Ezequiel Córdoba, a 22-year-old rookie. Loading the boat involved over a thousand pounds of equipment, including a five-foot-long and four-foot-high icebox that would soon be filled with tuna, shark, and mahimahi.

Alvarenga had been warned that a storm was coming, but there was little that would keep him from embarking. In one day, he'd make enough money to survive for a full week.

As he blasted through the waves some 75 miles from land, Alvarenga let out his two-mile-long fishing line. The storm was gaining strength on land but had yet to reach the men far offshore. That changed around 1 a.m. Waves rocked the small boat, which began to tilt sideways like an amusement park ride. "Get us out of here!" Córdoba screamed to Alvarenga. "Let's go back!"

With the winds and waves kicking up, the boat began to fill with water. Alvarenga had Córdoba bail, while he pulled in the fishing line. But the crashing waves filled their boat with water faster than they could empty it, forcing Alvarenga to make a radical decision. He cut the line, dumping thousands of dollars' worth of equipment and fish into the sea. He then pointed the boat toward his home port, Chocohuital, six hours away. Then Alvarenga called his boss, Willie, to report his position.

With the coming dawn, Alvarenga spotted the rise of the mountains on the horizon. He was figuring out a route through the vicious shoreline surf when the motor coughed. "I couldn't believe it," says Alvarenga. "We were 15 miles off the coast, and the motor died."

He yanked on the cord of the outboard motor. Then he yanked again and again until the cord snapped.

High waves raised and dropped the boat, sending the men crashing into the sides. "Willie, Willie!" Alvarenga yelled into the radio. "If you are coming to get me, come now!"

It was five days before the winds finally eased. Alvarenga and Córdoba were now around 280 miles offshore. The only likely rescue was by being spotted by another boat. But that was difficult, as the craft sat low in the water. From more than a half mile away, they were virtually invisible. “We are going to die,” moaned Córdoba.

“Stop it. Don’t think that way,” said Alvarenga. “A rescue mission will find us.” But the men had no flare gun and no way to call for help. “That’s when I knew. We were very far from the coast,” says Alvarenga. “A place where no fishermen go.”

The sun during the day made it feel as if they were being cooked alive. During the cold nights, they would climb inside the icebox and huddle for warmth. Thirst had become an obsession, as had starvation. “I was so hungry that I was eating my own fingernails,” says Alvarenga.

When the rain finally came, four days later, the men stripped off their clothes and showered in a glorious deluge of freshwater, laughing and lapping it up. By the time it stopped, they had collected five gallons of freshwater in plastic bottles they’d found floating in the ocean. It was enough for at least a week if rations were kept to a minimum.

Roughly 11 days after losing the engine and subsisting on small, bony triggerfish he caught by hand, Alvarenga heard a thunk in the night. It was a turtle. He eagerly hauled it aboard. They could eat the turtle and drink the merlot-colored blood to quench their thirst.

Alvarenga now spent entire days hunting for turtles. Córdoba, however, was disgusted by the congealed blood and ate sparingly of the meat. Alvarenga seduced his mate into eating by presenting the turtle steaks as a delicacy. He cut the meat into thin strips, dripped on salt water for flavoring, and toasted them in the sun on the outboard motor housing. Using the vertebrae of triggerfish as toothpicks, he served his meal on a turtle shell.

Turtle meat staved off the worst effects of starvation, but the two men were living off survival rations, which drove their fertile imaginations to run wild.

“Oranges … Bring me oranges,” a delusional Córdoba pleaded.

“OK, I am going to the store. I will see if it is open,” Alvarenga answered, striding the length of the boat. After five minutes, he strode back. “The store is closed, but they open in an hour, and they have fresh tortillas.”

To his surprise, it worked. Córdoba stopped moaning and fell asleep.

After a couple of months adrift, Alvarenga had settled into a routine. By 5 a.m., he was awake and sitting on the deck. “It was joyous because the sun rose up in the east, and I knew somewhere back there was land,” he says. “That was where my world lay.” He then hauled in the traps, curious to see if any fish had been caught overnight. Regardless of the haul, he always waited for Córdoba to awake before dividing the meager catch. Naps followed, and then for most of the day, they sat entombed in the icebox.

Despite being strangers when they set out, Alvarenga and Córdoba had formed a friendship. Like adolescents on an adventure, the two men would lie down at night, faces skyward, and doodle with the stars. Night after night, they tried to outdo each other as they invented constellations, each man trying to create a more fantastic drawing. They even fantasized that the planes they tracked across the heavens had been sent to rescue them. At other times, Córdoba sang proud renditions of his favorite hymns, often from inside the icebox, where the acoustics were better. “I loved to listen to him sing,” says Alvarenga.

On the evening they estimated was Christmas Eve, the men chatted as they prepared their holiday feast. By now, Alvarenga had expanded their menu by hunting the seabirds that perched on their boat. Suddenly, Córdoba groaned: “My stomach!” Bubbles and liquid dribbled from his mouth, and he looked as if he would be sick. The men dissected the bird Córdoba had eaten part of earlier. Inside the stomach was a poisonous snake. Though Córdoba recovered, in the realm of psychological terror, the venom had taken possession of him. He retched at the thought of eating another raw seabird and withdrew from the world of food.

Over the next two months, as Córdoba withered and shriveled, his arms looked like sticks, and his thighs were reduced to the size of his forearm. He imagined it was better to die in the ocean than starve to death.

“Goodbye, Chancha,” he said, using Alvarenga’s nickname, then prepared to throw himself over the rail and into the shark-infested waters.
Alvarenga overpowered Córdoba. He dragged him along the floor, stuffed him into the icebox, and sat on the lid. Córdoba bashed and thrashed. “Stop thinking about killing yourself,” Alvarenga yelled.

When Córdoba calmed, Alvarenga slid off the icebox and crawled inside. “We have to fight,” he told his friend. “To tell our story.”
But the depression had sunk in. A few days later, Córdoba announced, “I am dying.” Alvarenga put freshwater to Córdoba’s mouth, but his mate did not swallow.

“Don’t die,” said Alvarenga, panicked. “Don’t leave me alone!”

Moments later, Córdoba was dead. “I propped him on the bench to keep him out of the water,” says Alvarenga.

The next morning, Alvarenga climbed out of the icebox and stared at Córdoba, sitting on the bench like a sunbather. “How do you feel?” Alvarenga asked the corpse. “How was your sleep?”

“I slept good. Have you had breakfast?” Alvarenga said, as if he were Córdoba speaking from the afterlife.

“Yes, I already ate.”

“Me too. I ate in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Alvarenga had decided the easiest way to deal with losing his companion was to simply pretend he hadn’t died.

“How is death? Is it painful?”

“Death is beautiful. I am waiting for you.”

“I don’t want to go,” retorted Alvarenga. “I am not headed that way.”

Six days after Córdoba died, Alvarenga slid his friend into the water. Alvarenga was alone, a tiny speck in the vast Pacific. “I climbed inside the icebox and cried,” says Alvarenga.

With Córdoba gone, Alvarenga concentrated on keeping himself occupied. Hunting distracted him from his daily isolation, as did the fantasy of being rescued. And because his psyche required a change of scenery, he designed a shark-detection system that permitted him to take brief swims. First, he tossed a half-dozen birds’ feet into the water. If no sharks appeared, he lowered himself in and went for a refreshing, albeit nerve-racking, swim. When the smaller fish that lived under his boat were relaxed, he was relaxed, and when they panicked, he scampered back aboard. “I would imagine I was at the beach with my friends, going for a swim,” he says. “Getting off the boat allowed me to relax, even if it was for five minutes.”

But more and more, Alvarenga found strength from the long-abandoned relationship with Fatima, his now 14-year-old daughter whom he hadn’t seen in years. “I started thinking about her for entire days. I dreamed that she was screaming, ‘Papi!’ and that made me so happy.”

Alvarenga imagined his life if he could ever make it home. He would be a family man with a clutch of children and a field full of animals. He begged to the heavens for a final chance, an opportunity to salvage the relationship with Fatima.

The container vessel that appeared on the horizon was heading directly toward him. It advanced until it was so close, Alvarenga feared it might slice his boat in half. Fifty yards astern, the ship crossed his path. “Help! Here! Here!” Alvarenga screamed at the three figures standing near the stern, fishing rods in hand. The men waved. He had been spotted.

But the men didn’t move. No one ran for help. And not only was the giant ship not slowing, but the casual waving continued even as they pulled away.

Do you think I'm out here on a day trip?" Alvarenga screamed.

The near miss devastated Alvarenga. His mind began to weaken, and his reflexes slowed. His desire to eat was succumbing to a more basic craving: to close his eyes. Alvarenga remembered Córdoba's bored stare and lack of interest in food. That same lethargy now contaminated his mind.

In 11 months at sea, Alvarenga had drifted 5,000 miles at an average speed of less than one mile an hour. His clothes were shredded. Only a sweatshirt that had belonged to Córdoba protected him from the sun. From the waist down, he was naked except for a pair of ratty underwear and the random floating sneaker snatched from the sea. Atop his head, a burled mane of copper- colored hair rose in coils. From his face, a thick beard exploded outward.

Alvarenga questioned if his journey was a life lesson sent by God. By all reasonable standards, he should have been dead months earlier. Was he being allowed to live for a reason? Had he been chosen to bring a message of hope to those considering suicide? "What could be worse than being alone at sea? That's what I could tell someone thinking about suicide. What further suffering could there be than this?" he says.

On January 30, 2014, coconuts bobbed in the water, and the sky was filled with shorebirds. A cold rain limited visibility. Alvarenga stood on the deck, staring out. A tiny tropical island was emerging from the rainy mist. It looked wild, without roads, cars, or homes.His first urge was to dive overboard and swim to shore. But leery of sharks, he waited. It took him half a day to reach land. When he was ten yards from shore, he dived off the deck and let a wave carry him in. As the wave pulled away, Alvarenga was left facedown on the beach. "I held a handful of sand in my hand like it was a treasure," he said.

Alvarenga was discovered by the lone couple who inhabited the island. He had washed ashore on the Ebon Atoll, the southern tip of the Marshall Islands, one of the most remote spots on Earth. Had Alvarenga missed Ebon, the next likely stop was the Philippines, 3,000 miles away.

After 11 days, Alvarenga's health had stabilized enough for him to travel home to El Salvador. When Alvarenga saw Fatima, he grabbed his daughter. "I love you," he said, sobbing. Fatima hugged him even harder. "I know I didn't raise you and that all those years are lost. But Dad is here to give you advice, to help you learn right from wrong."

Alvarenga had completed one of the most remarkable voyages in the history of seafaring. He didn't navigate, sail, row, or paddle—he drifted. Unable to alter course, he had been forced to build a world of survival. He was extremely unlucky and terribly fortunate at the same time.

And now he was home.

How is my reading assessed?

	AO1 - Interpret	AO2 – Language and Structure	AO3/AO4 Compare / Evaluate
T Working towards 1	• I can recall obvious points, though with some misunderstandings.	•I can show some awareness of organisation •I can recognise basic word classes	• I can make simple connections between texts. •I can make a personal comment on the text
1 Identifying, simple	•I can paraphrase. •I can pick simple information and make simple links.	•I can make simple comments on the effects of language or structure. •I can use simple terminology to help me explain.	•I can try to compare two texts.
			•I can say how a writer has tried to get their message across.
2 Commenting	•I can sometimes infer. •I can select some quotations and try to link evidence.	•I can comment on the effect of language or structure. •I can use some subject terminology but not always appropriately	•I can try to compare ideas and
			•I can make some comments on
3 Developing explanation	•I can accurately infer. •I can select quotations that are occasionally relevant and link evidence with some success	•I can explain the effect of language or structure with some accuracy •I can use subject terminology with occasional errors	•I can sometimes compare perspectives in a clear and relevant
			•I can try to explain the effects of methods.
4 Secure explanation	•I can clearly interpret. •I can select relevant quotations and show clear connections.	•I can clearly explain the effect of language or structure. •I can use subject terminology accurately	•I can compare ideas and perspectives in a clear, relevant way.
			•I can clearly explain the effects
5 Developing analysis	•I can sometimes interpret perceptively •I can select a range of relevant quotations and show some perceptive connections.	•I can analyse the effects of language or structure with clear and developed explanation. •I can begin to use a wide range of subject terminology.	•I can sometimes compare ideas and perspectives in a detailed,
			•I can begin to analyse the effects of methods
6 Secure analysis	•I can offer a perceptive interpretation. •I can select a range of well-chosen quotations and consistently show perceptive connections.	•I can analyse the effects of language or structure in a detailed and perceptive way. •I can use a wide range of subject terminology.	•I can compare ideas and perspectives in a detailed, percep-
			•I can analyse the effects of
7 Developing sophistication	•I can interpret with some sophistication •I can thoughtfully select a range of quotations and attempt to synthesise information.	•I can analyse the effect of language and structure with some sophistication. •I am beginning to use terminology in a sophisticated way.	•I can sometimes give a sophisticated comparison of ideas and
			•I can begin to analyse the effects of methods in a sophisti-
8 Sophisticated critical	•I can offer a sophisticated and creative interpretation. •I can select a range of judicious quotations from the text/s and synthesise with confidence.	•I can show a sophisticated and analytical understanding of language or structure •I can use a full range of sophisticated subject terminology.	•I can give a sophisticated comparison of ideas and perspec-
			•I can analyse and evaluate the effects of methods in a sophisti-

How is my writing assessed?

	Content AO5	Organisation AO5	Accuracy AO5
T Working Towards 1	•I can demonstrate a basic ability to adapt writing to the reader •I can show some intention to structure sentences for effect e.g. Short sen-	• I can experiment with connectives, generally relying on 'and' and 'but' • I can describe events, sometimes in order	•I can make accurate use of full stops and question marks •I can usually spell basic words correctly and my basic grammatical structure is correct
1 Simple, undeveloped	•I can occasionally show awareness of my audience •I can try change my writing to suit its purpose. •I can use simple vocabulary.	•I can write without using structural features •I can have different ideas without linking them. •I can write without using paragraphs	•I can use a simple range of sentence forms and punctuation with occasional accuracy. •I can spell basic words correctly. •I can sometimes use Standard
2 Basic development	•I can show a simple awareness of my audience. •I can communicate with a basic sense of purpose. •I can make some thoughtful choices of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can use some simple structural features. •I can organise my writing to show one or two ideas, simply linked. •I can attempt to use paragraphs in my writing	•I can use a simple range of sentence forms and punctuation with some accuracy. •I can spell basic words and some complex words accurately. •I can show some use of Standard English and some
3 Attempts, clear	•I can try to use register to communicate with my audience. •I can communicate with a clear sense of purpose. •I can make consistently thoughtful choices of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can confidently use simple structural features •I can organise my writing to show two or more ideas with developed links. •I can use paragraphs in most of my writing with some simple discourse markers	•I can attempt a variety of sentence forms and punctuation that are mostly accurate. •I can spell basic words consistently and some complex words accurately. •I can show confident use of Standard English and increasing control
4 Clear, varied	•I can use an appropriate register consistently. •I can show a sustained attempt to match purpose and attempt to control the tone of my writing. •I can demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can use some structural features accurately. •I can organise my writing with a variety of linked and relevant ideas. •I can use paragraphs in most of my response and use discourse markers.	•I can use a variety of sentence forms and punctuation for effect and with secure accuracy. •I can spell basic words with rare errors and some complex words accurately. •I can use Standard English consistently with mostly controlled grammatical structures.
5 Accurate Effective	•My register is usually well-matched to my audience. •I can sometimes use tone, style and register to match purpose •I can demonstrate some extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can mostly use structural features effectively. •I can sometimes write with a range of detailed, connected ideas. •I can write in mostly coherent paragraphs with an emerging range of discourse markers.	•I can consistently use a variety of sentence forms and punctuation for effect that are consistently accurate. •I can spell most complex words accurately and consistently. •I can use Standard English consistently with controlled grammatical structures.
6 Coherent, controlled	•My register is consistently well-matched to my audience. •I can use tone, style and register to match the purpose. •I can demonstrate an extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can use structural features effectively. •I can write with a range of detailed, connected ideas. •I can write in coherent paragraphs with a range of discourse markers.	•I can use a wide range of sentence forms and punctuation for effect. Consistently accurate and controlled. •I can spell complex words correctly and consistently. •I can use Standard English consistently with some control of complex
7 Ambitious, engaging	•My register is convincing throughout. •I can begin to use tone, style and register to convincingly match purpose. •I can show some imaginative and sophisticated use of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can use structural features in a varied and effective way. • I can begin to integrate complex ideas into my writing. • I can begin to show fluent paragraphing with integrated discourse markers	•I can use an ambitious range of sentence forms and punctuation. Consistent accuracy including complex forms. • I can spell complex words with rare errors. • I can use Standard English with control of complex grammatical structures
8 Compelling, convincing	•My register is compelling throughout. •I can use tone, style and register to convincingly match purpose. •I can demonstrate a consistently imaginative and sophisticated use of vocabulary and linguistic devices.	•I can use structural features in an inventive and varied way. •I can write a highly structured and developed response, incorporating a range of integrated and complex ideas. •I can write in fluent paragraphs with discourse markers fully integrated.	•I can use complex sentence forms and punctuation with a high degree of accuracy. •I can spell all words correctly and consistently. •I can sustain Standard English throughout.