

## Fiction: Comprehension Practice 2

### Text A, part 1

Extract from 'Mysterious Traveller' by Mal Peet

*Issa, an old and blind\* man, is a desert guide. He is in the desert with his granddaughter searching for three important travellers from the East who have gone missing.*

*Characters:*

*Issa, the Grandfather, also known as Baba;*

*Mariama, the Granddaughter;*

*Jin-Jin, the camel.*

In the morning, her grandfather shook Mariama awake. The stars were fading into the dawn. She blew life back into the fire and she and Issa sat close to it wrapped in their blankets.

After a while, Issa said, 'Is it light enough to see yet?'

'Yes, Grandfather, just.'

5

He pointed with his stick. 'Can you see a little path over there, going up? Yes? Follow it to the top of the cliff, then come back and tell me what you saw. And be careful.'

Mariama climbed the steep path. It was just a crack in the rock. When at last she reached the top, she stood wide-eyed.

10

The mountains stretched before her to the very edge of distance. Some had peaks that were flat-topped and grooved like huge and ancient teeth. Others were bent and twisted like goats' horns. And they were all a deep, dark blue, like the scarves of the camel-traders who came from the north. But then, as Mariama watched, the light of the rising sun touched the tips of the mountains and painted them a glowing, burning gold.

15

She cried out aloud. And as the sun climbed higher, the golden light slid down. The blue drained away, and now she saw the dark valleys curled among the mountains like the roots of a tree. And from one of these valleys, not far away, arose a little twist of smoke.

20

She turned and hurried down the path.

\*Glossary

blind: cannot see

## Text A, part 2

Issa was standing waiting for her. 'What did you see?'

'I cannot describe it, Baba. I do not have the words.'

Her grandfather smiled. 'No. I have stood where you stood, trying to think in words. But tell me, did you see smoke?' 25

'Yes.'

'In which direction?'

Mariama told him.

Issa said. 'These valleys are a maze. They are lost. Now, let us make coffee.'

'But Grandfather, should we not set off after the travellers, if they are lost?' 30

'No. That valley is a dead end. They will have to come back the way they came. We have time for breakfast.'

Issa was wrong. They had been riding for one hour when he said, 'Jin-Jin. Stop.'

'What is it, Baba?'

'The wind is wrong. What colour is the sky?'

Looking up, Mariama saw that it was as white as paper. A flock of desert sparrows flew across it, panicking.

Jin-Jin tossed his head and groaned. Suddenly Mariama was afraid.

'On,' Issa said. 'Hurry.'

Mariama urged Jin-Jin onwards, but he resisted. He groaned deep in his throat and tried to turn back. 40

And then Mariama saw why.

The lower edge of the sky had changed again; now it was yellow-purple, the colour of an old bruise. A hot and sudden gust of wind, full of grit, hit Mariama in the face. A boiling, brown cloud loomed over the valley. 45

'A sandstorm, Grandfather!' Mariama cried. 'A sandstorm, coming at us!'

## Section A: Reading

*Spend 30 minutes on this section.*

Read **Text A, part 1**, in the insert, and answer questions 1–7.

1 Look at lines 1–5.

(a) How do Grandfather and the girl stay warm?

---

 [1]

(b) Give **one** quotation that shows us that Grandfather is blind.

---

 [1]

2 Look at lines 6–16.

(a) Give **one** phrase that tells us the little path is narrow.

---

 [1]

(b) How do you think Mariama feels when she gets to the top of the cliff?

Give **one** quotation from the text to support your answer.

Feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

Quotation: \_\_\_\_\_

[2]

(c) Which **two** features are used in this section of the text? Tick (✓) **two** boxes.

simile

repetition

alliteration

onomatopoeia

powerful adverbs

[2]

3 Look at lines 13–16.

Explain why commas ( , ) are used in these lines. Give **two** reasons.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

[2]

4 Look at lines 17–21. After a short while, Mariama has a clearer view of the valleys below.

Why?

---

[1]

5 At the end of Text A, part 1, Mariama sees a *twist of smoke*.

Why is this important?

---

[1]

6 Look at the first line of the story. *In the morning* is a time phrase.

Give **two** more time phrases from the text.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

[2]

7 What does the writer use to structure the text?

---

[1]

Now read **Text A, part 2**, in the insert, and answer questions 8–16.

**8** Look at lines 22–25.

Why do you think Grandfather smiles at Mariama's answer? Tick (✓) **one** box.

He thinks she's saying something funny.

Mariama is acting as if she's stupid.

He understands how she is feeling.

Mariama is giving the wrong answer.

[1]

**9** One character says, '*In which direction?*'. Who says it?

---

[1]

**10** Why is it so easy to get lost in the area where the story takes place?

---

[1]

**11** Grandfather thinks they have time for breakfast before setting off to find the travellers.

Why?

---

[1]

**12** How does Grandfather first know the weather is changing?

---

[1]

13 (a) Look at lines 38–41.

What do you think this shows about the relationship between Mariama and the camel? Tick (✓) **one** box.

She thinks he is scary.

She is very fond of him.

She understands his feelings.

She is unsure what he will do next.

[1]

(b) Why does Jin-Jin not want to do as he is told?

---

[1]

14 Look at lines 40–45.

Give **two** words that make the storm seem dangerous.

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_ [2]

15 Look at the last line of text (line 46). The exclamation marks ( ! ) are used for emphasis.

What emotion are they emphasising?

---

[1]

16 The structures of **part 1** and **part 2** are different.

How are the two parts different?

---

[1]

## Section B: Writing

*Spend 30 minutes on this section.*

17 Write a story about a day out which is affected by a sudden change in the weather.

Think about:

- Characters      a family?  
                         a school class?  
                         friends?
- Setting            a day outside the town or city?  
                         a day at the park?  
                         a day at the beach?  
                         a day somewhere else?
- Plot                What happens because of the sudden change in weather?  
                         What do the characters do?

Space for your plan:

Write your story on the next page.

[25 marks]