

**English A**  
**May – June 2011**

**Section C: Question 5**

**A cold hand grasped his wrist as he slumped to his knees. Write a story that includes this sentence.**

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### Section C

The gold bearing plateau of the Guiana Shield is every miner's destination. But many times, it is also their <sup>doom</sup> ~~destruction~~. The rainforest holds a hellish hatred, a demonic grudge against all intruders, and battles them, strangles them, and eventually, ~~and~~ destroys them. Amazonia is no place for man, and here, Nature reigns supreme.

The men trudge through the mud, in the sunken crater, somewhere in the middle of nowhere. All around them were trees, in excess of fifty metres high, ferns, creepers, moss and banas. The world of vegetation was grey-green, alien to mankind, as the early morning fog hung low among the ferns. This team was here, for gold, but Man cannot tame nature. All of them, faces haggard and mudstreaked, clothes torn with dried blood in dark spots, their rifles and digging tools dreadingly resting with moisture <sup>were on death rows</sup>. They had a fouled compass, no medicine, and half of the original eight-man team was lost. Dead, in the middle of nowhere.

Carl Rayston shook his head, cursed under his breath. He was a young miner from one of the villages in the mountains, but he looked twice as old as he was now, as the men lethargically stumbled through the perpetual gloom in the barely penetrable rainforest. He glanced at Lewis, his number one rival. Lewis

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was a big, burly, bearded buffalo of a man. Lewis stared at him, scowled as they moved deeper into the bowels of the forest. Carl hated Lewis with all his heart, for reasons he chose not to remember. Now they were together, members of the same team in the heather jungle.

"Hold up, rapids," was the call from Mason, up ahead. A cascading torrent was before them, foaming white water thundering around jagged black rocks on the riverbed. Funny, he hadn't heard it before. Carl brushed it aside. He had a fever anyway. The rapids sounded as if the floodgates of God had opened, especially from so close. "It's okay, boys," Mason, the American prospector said. "We're crossing in a minute."

Carl hated Mason's accent. Why couldn't he speak like the rest of them? He stepped closer, to the edge of the water.

From here, it sounded like a bullet-train tearing through a tunnel at three hundred miles per hour. He stared across the water that swirled with unearthly gyrations, to the opposite bank. Fifty feet of raging water, from bank to bank. His head hurt, and everything swam before his eyes for a while, and he felt nausea. The tumult didn't help much, and he staggered.

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"You okay?" Lewis' voice came. Carl glared at him, and snarled.

"If I was..." he began, but Mason cut him short. "Okay men, let's cross."

The next few seconds flashed, then he was knee-deep in foaming water. The rapids unleashed their full fury, and spray flew, and Carl felt himself stagger under the assault, and ~~fl~~ foundered. A cold had grasped his wrist as he slumped to his knees. Lewis! And water, foam and spray flew as the big man hauled him over to the other side, to safety.

## Comments

This story was tightly and economically told. There was strong clear focus on character, event and conflict and also excellent use of descriptive details, atmosphere and suspense. Outstanding features are:

- Setting - the writer instantly created the landscape and weather as if they were aspects of a powerful and cruel character, threatening intruders
- Maintained the air of threat to the end
- Introduced the characters as being potential or certain victims (half of them already dead) attacked by a variety of the weapons of nature
- Maintained the victim-condition - the central character was young, tired suspicious fretful having little hope especially when he saw the water
- On the opposite end, nature was presented as overpowering, strong and dangerous
- Description and narrative details did only what was needed to keep the focus
- Excellent use of descriptive verbs, adverbs, adjectives (lethargically shuffled, scowled, trudge (though mis-spelt) thundering, jagged, haggard, cascading, mud streaked
- Descriptive details were concrete
- Judicious use of figurative techniques ('big, burly, bearded buffalo of a man')
- Excellent characterization - focus on Carl: age group origin, fearful almost defeated, comparison with other important characters, fretful
- The actual deciding event was brief and sharply told - a difference between the attitudes of Carl and his rescuer was shown in the brief question: "are you alright?"
- Unexpected end - if Carl was to be believed, then his rescuer should have been his enemy
- Tension was established in the opening paragraph and intensified throughout
- Climax was economically built - details would have reduced the impact.

The story was not flawlessly told – there were a few spelling errors and instances of flawed syntax. These, however did not interfere with reader understanding.