

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes reading the question paper and planning your answer.

Answer **either** Question 1 **or** Question 2.

EITHER

- 1 Read carefully the poem opposite. The poet stops his car to admire a double rainbow. This is a rare phenomenon in which two rainbows appear at once.

How does the poet's writing vividly convey his developing thoughts and feelings during this experience?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- his thoughts and feelings while driving through the rain
- his description of the moment he first sees the rainbows
- how he conveys what the rainbows mean to him.

Double Rainbow

Speeding, without destination, after dark
torrents have poured & been returned
at home, the skies above mirror my mood,

windshield wipers knifing through sheets,
back roads slick with pooling, when a shard
of cloudlessness opens. Pulling over, cutting

the ignition, I unstitch myself from the humid
seat, still fuming, to greet a full spectrum
of color arcing past the treetops in lockstep¹

with its fainter inverse. Archer's bow, hem
of the sun god's coat, bridge between worlds,
reconciliation & pardon. They don't last.

¹ *lockstep*: fitting closely together

OR

- 2 Read carefully the following extract from a short story. A man is hunting for rare scorpions in a desert.

How does the writer strikingly convey the man's growing sense of anticipation?

To help you answer this question, you might consider:

- how the writer conveys the experience of travelling into the desert
- the man's feelings as he reaches his destination
- how the writer conveys the excitement of the hunt.

Back in the shop, I bought six oranges, a small watermelon, and a slab of well-wrapped English chocolate. Then I returned to the Lagonda.¹ Now at last I was away.

A few minutes later, I had crossed the sliding bridge that went over the Suez Canal just above Lake Timsah, and ahead of me lay the flat blazing desert and the little tarmac road stretching out before me like a black ribbon all the way to the horizon. I settled the Lagonda to the usual steady sixty-five miles an hour, and I opened the windows wide. The air that came in was like the breath of an oven. The time was almost noon, and the sun was throwing its heat directly on to the roof of the car. My thermometer inside registered 103°.

I was now driving through some of the finest scorpion country in the world, and I was eager to stop and make a search before I reached the halfway filling-station at B'ir Rawd Salim. I had so far met not a single vehicle or seen a living creature since leaving Ismailia an hour before. This pleased me. Sinai was authentic desert. I pulled up on the side of the road and switched off the engine. I was thirsty, so I ate an orange. Then I put my white topee² on my head, and eased myself slowly out of the car, out of my comfortable hermit-crab shell, and into the sunlight. For a full minute I stood motionless in the middle of the road, blinking at the brilliance of the surroundings.

There was a blazing sun, a vast hot sky, and beneath it all on every side a great pale sea of yellow sand that was not quite of this world. There were mountains now in the distance on the south side of the road, bare, pale-brown, tanagra-coloured³ mountains faintly glazed with blue and purple, that rose up suddenly out of the desert and faded away in a haze of heat against the sky. The stillness was overpowering. There was no sound at all, no voice of a bird or insect anywhere, and it gave me a queer godlike feeling to be standing there alone in the middle of such a splendid, hot, inhuman landscape – as though I were on another planet altogether, on Jupiter or Mars, or in some place more distant and desolate still, where never would the grass grow or the clouds turn red.

I went to the boot of the car and took out my killing-box, my net, and my trowel. Then I stepped off the road into the soft burning sand. I walked slowly for about a hundred yards into the desert, my eyes searching the ground. I was not looking for scorpions but the lairs of scorpions. The scorpion is a cryptozoic⁴ and nocturnal creature that hides all through the day either under a stone or in a burrow, according to its type. Only after the sun has gone down does it come out to hunt for food.

The one I wanted, opisthophthalmus, was a burrower, so I wasted no time turning over stones. I searched only for burrows. After ten or fifteen minutes, I had found none; but already the heat was getting to be too much for me, and I decided reluctantly to return to the car. I walked back very slowly, still watching the ground, and I had reached the road and was in the act of stepping on to it when all at once, in the sand, not more than twelve inches from the edge of the tarmac, I caught sight of a scorpion's burrow.

I put the killing-box and the net on the ground beside me. Then, with my little trowel, I began very cautiously to scrape away the sand all around the hole. This was an operation that never failed to excite me. It was like a treasure hunt – a treasure hunt with just the right amount of danger accompanying it to stir the blood. I could feel my heart beating away in my chest as I probed deeper and deeper into the sand.

And suddenly ... there she was!

¹ *Lagonda*: type of car

² *topee*: sunhat

³ *tanagra-coloured*: colour of terracotta or clay

⁴ *cryptozoic*: living under rocks or leaves on the ground

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