



GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

8700/2

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

SOURCE A:

20th Century literary non-fiction

'Touching the Void'

An extract from an autobiographical account by Joe Simpson published in 1988

SOURCE B:

19th Century non-fiction

'Climbing the Meije'

An extract from a letter written by explorer Gertrude Bell in 1899

[Turn over]

SOURCE A

Source A is an extract from ‘Touching the Void’, in which experienced climber Joe Simpson describes how he and fellow climber Simon Yates scaled a 21 000 foot mountain in Peru. On the way down, Joe fell and broke his leg. In this extract, Joe explains how, because of his broken leg, Simon had to lower him down the mountain using a rope.

**1 The col was exposed and windy. Directly beneath
us the glacier we had walked up five days ago
curved away towards the crevasses which led to
base camp, nearly 3 000 feet below us. It would
5 take many long lowerings, but it was all downhill,
and we had lost the sense of hopelessness that had
7 invaded us at the ice cliff.**

‘What time is it?’ Simon asked.

‘Just gone four. We don’t have much time, do we?’

**10 I could see him weighing up the possibilities. I
wanted to carry on down, but it was Simon’s
decision. I waited for him to make up his mind.**

‘I think we should keep going,’ he said at last.

**15 Simon let me slide faster than I had expected and,
despite my cries of alarm and pain, he had kept the
pace of descent going. I stopped shouting to him
after fifty feet. The rising wind and continuous
avalanches drowned out all communications.**

20 Instead I concentrated on keeping my leg clear of
the snow. It was an impossible task. Despite lying
on my good leg, the right boot snagged in the snow
as the weight of my body pushed down. Each
abrupt jerk caused searing pain in my knee. I
sobbed and gasped, swore at the snow and the
25 cold, and most of all at Simon. At the change-over
point, I hopped on to my left leg, trying to think the
pain away. It ebbed slowly, leaving a dreadful
throbbing ache and a leaden tiredness.

30 The tugs came again far too soon, and carelessly I
slumped against the rope and let myself go. The
drop went on until I could bear it no longer, yet
there was nothing that I could do to bring the agony
to an end. Howling and screaming for Simon to
stop achieved nothing; the blame had to lie
35 somewhere, so I swore Simon's character to the
devil.

37 The terrible sliding stopped, and I hung silently
against the slope. Three faint tugs trembled the
taut rope, and I hopped up on to my leg. A wave of
40 nausea and pain swept over me. I was glad of the
freezing blasts of snow biting into my face. My
head cleared as I waited for the burning to subside
from my knee. Several times I had felt it twist
sideways when my boot snagged. There would be
45 a flare of agony as the knee kinked back, and parts
within the joint seemed to shear past each other
with a sickening gristly crunch. I had barely ceased

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sobbing before my boot snagged again. At the end
my leg shook uncontrollably. I tried to stop it
50 shaking, but the harder I tried, the more it shook. I
pressed my face into the snow, gritted my teeth,
52 and waited. At last it eased.

Simon had already started to climb down. I looked
up but failed to make out where he was. I began
55 digging Simon's belay* seat. It was warming work
and distracted attention from my knee. When I
looked up again Simon could be seen descending
quickly.

'At this rate we should be down by nine o'clock,' he
60 said cheerfully.

'I hope so.' I said no more. It wouldn't help to harp
on about how I felt.

'Right, let's do it again.' He had seated himself in
the hole and had the ropes ready for another
65 lowering.

'You're not hanging around, are you?'

'Nothing to wait for. Come on.'

He was still grinning, and his confidence was
infectious. Who said one man can't rescue another,
70 I thought. We had changed from climbing to
rescue, and the partnership had worked just as
effectively. We hadn't dwelt on the accident. There
had been an element of uncertainty at first, but as

75 soon as we had started to act positively everything
had come together.

‘Okay, ready when you are,’ I said, lying down on
my side again. ‘Slow down a bit this time. You’ll
have my leg off otherwise.’

80 He didn’t seem to hear me for I went down at an
even faster pace than before, and the hammering
torture began again with a vengeance. My
optimism evaporated.

Glossary

* belay – a secure point to fix a rope

[Turn over]

SOURCE B

In 1899, British explorer Gertrude Bell set out to climb one of the most dangerous mountains in the Alps, the Meije. Source B is an extract from the letter she sent home describing the climb. An aerial photograph shows a steep mountain range with large patches of snow and ice.

Monday 28th August, 1899

- 1** I thought you would gather from my last letter that I meant to have a shot at climbing the Meije and would be glad to hear that I had descended safely. Well, I'll tell you – it's awful! I think if I had known
- 5** exactly what was before me I should not have faced it, but fortunately I did not, and I look back on it with complete satisfaction — and I look forward to other things with no further apprehension. . .



10 I left here on Friday, having hired a local guide,
Marius, and we walked up to the Refuge. I went
out to watch the beautiful red sunlight fading
from the snow and rocks. The Meije looked
dreadfully forbidding in the dusk. When I came in
15 I found that Marius had kindly put my rug in a
corner of the floor, and what with the straw and
my cloak for a pillow, I made myself very
comfortable.

20 The night lasted from 8 till 12, but I didn't sleep at
all. We got up soon after 12 and I went down to
the river and washed a little. It was a perfect
night, clear stars and the moon not yet over the
hills. We left just as the moon shone into the
valley. Marius always went ahead and carried a
25 lantern till we got on to the snow when it was
light enough with only the moon.

At 1.30 we reached the glacier and put on our
ropes. It wasn't really cold, though there was an
icy little breath of wind. We had about three
30 hours up very nice rock. I had been in high
spirits for it was so easy, but before long my
hopes were dashed! We had about two hours
and a half of awfully difficult rock. There were
two places where Marius literally pulled me up
35 like a parcel. He has the strength of a bear. And
it was absolutely sheer down. The first half-hour
I gave myself up for lost. It didn't seem possible
that I could get up all that wall without ever

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40 making a slip. You see, I had practically never
been on a rock before. However, I didn't let on to
Marius and presently it began to seem quite
natural to be hanging by my eyelids over an
abyss. . .

45 We stayed on the summit until 11. It was
gorgeous, quite cloudless. I went to sleep for
half-an-hour. It's a very long way up but it's a
longer way down – unless you take the way
Marius's axe took. The cord by which it was
carefully tied to his wrist broke and it
50 disappeared forever into space.

Here comes the worst place on the whole Meije.
Marius vanished, carrying a very long rope, and I
waited. Presently I felt a little tug on the rope.
"Mademoiselle," called Marius calmly, and
55 obediently off I went. There were two little humps
to hold on to on an overhanging rock and there
was me in mid-air and Marius round the corner
steadfastly holding the rope tight. . . perfectly
fearful. I thought at the time how very well I was
60 climbing and how odd it was that I should not be
afraid.

The worst was over then, and the most tedious
part was to come. There was no difficulty, but
there was also no moment when you had not to
65 pay the strictest attention. There was an hour of
ice and rock till at last Marius and I found
ourselves, with thankfulness, back on the glacier.

70 When I got in, I found everyone in the hotel on
the doorstep waiting for me and the hotel owner
let off crackers, to my great surprise.

75 I went to bed and knew no more till 6 this
morning, when I had five cups of tea and read
your letters and then went to sleep again until
ten. I'm really not tired but my shoulders and
neck and arms feel rather sore and stiff and my
knees are awfully bruised.

END OF SOURCES

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