AQA
Realising potential

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Reading resource

Paper 2

It was agonising to inch the rope out and let my weight down gradually. I found myself holding my breath, every muscle in my body tensed.

Touching the Void
Joe Simpson

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Reading resources for GCSE English Language:

Writers' viewpoints and perspectives for Paper 2

Assessment objectives

AO1: Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas. Select and synthesise from different texts.

AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.

AO3: Compare writers' ideas and perspectives and how they are conveyed.

Texts on this paper will be drawn from non-fiction and literary non-fiction published in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The sample texts that follow have been grouped based on their subject matter to allow for comparison, and they illustrate the conventions of a variety of genres. Teachers could look to find additional sources of similar length and challenge, and students might benefit from compiling a portfolio of non-fiction texts on subjects that interest them. This material could also be used as the basis for a spoken language presentation.

Using the material in class

These suggested reading activities are suitable for both pair and groupwork.

It is important for students to start by reading and responding independently to the whole passage to understand the viewpoints and perspectives expressed.

This can be followed by close reading, analysis of the writer's craft and comparison with other texts.

In preparation for the writing task in Section B, students should have opportunities to articulate their opinions on the subject of the text.

Texts on the theme of war

The Diaries of Nella Last Writing in War and Peace
(Profile Books ltd. 2012) pages 204 – 205

Introduction
Nella Last was a housewife who lived in Barrow-in-Furness in Cumbria. From 1939 to 1966 she wrote her diary every day, initially as a contribution to the Mass Observation M.O. project. This edited extract is taken from her diary of 1943, during the Second World War. "The Yard" that Nella Last mentions is the shipyard in Barrow. Will is her husband.

First responses
Why do people keep diaries? Do you write one? Why do we find published diaries interesting? Which of Nella's activities does she record in this extract? What thoughts does she express? How much information has she included about the wider world?

Close reading
What do you learn from this extract about Nella's attitude towards the war? How has her life been touched by the war?

What idea does she express in her comment about the golden gorse and larks? What does the **contrast** between these features of the natural world and the 'Nissen huts 'and 'khaki' tell us about the experience of war?

Explain the **metaphor** with which Nella Last opens her diary entry on Thursday 19th August. How does she explain her mood? Summarise the point she makes in the sentence that starts "Fabulous riches …" Why does she think that all these resources have been wasted?

What details does she give about the effects of war on the women in her Centre? Explain the effect of **the short sentence**,"My heart aches." What does she tell us about the many ways in which the families at home are suffering?

Read the final sentence

Explain the effect of Nella's **repetition** of 'and trained'. What does she mean when she refers to 'bodies made to endure'? Who is she referring to when she mentions 'other women's lads'? Explain the **metaphor** 'to wipe all the light from other mothers' faces'.

Now summarise in your own words Nella's view of the war.

As I walked Out One Midsummer Morning
by Laurie Lee (Penguin 1969) pages 165 – 167

Introduction
During the 1930s Laurie Lee travelled from Gloucestershire in England to Spain. He spent the winter of 1935 in the village of Almuñécar and found himself witness to the outbreak of war. El Gato is the leader of the village's militia group.

Read the passage

First responses
What happens in this extract? What is the mood in the village before the warship arrives? How do the villagers react when they see the ship offshore? Explain the terrible mistake that is made. From his final sentence, how do you think the author felt about it?

Close reading
Read the first three paragraphs of the piece and explain how Laurie Lee presents the atmosphere in the village. What role does the weather play in building tension? What impression is created by the **simile** "Fear lay panting in the street like a dog"?

Read the description of the arrival of the destroyer, highlighting words and phrases that make it seen lifelike. How does this description create a sense of its power?

Now read aloud the paragraph that starts with "Silence." How effectively are the sounds described?

How has Lee used sentences to good effect in the paragraph that starts, "The searchlight came on again"?

Identify the **verbs** that Lee has used to show the effect of the bombardment on the villagers in the next paragraph.

How would you describe Lee's **tone** in the sentences, "The destroyer was found to be friendly. It had all been an unfortunate error of war."

Now compare Lee's presentation of the villagers in this extract with Nella Last's account of people in Barrow. What are the similarities and differences between Lee and Last's perspective on war?

I see my wife coming off the field of battle…
by Tim Dowling (*The Guardian* 2007)

Read the article, which appeared in *The Guardian* weekend magazine

First responses
What events is Tim Dowling describing? How has he combined real warfare with the activity of paintballing? Would you describe this as a **satirical** piece? Which parts of the article did you find amusing? Is Dowling making a serious point here? What does the piece lead you to think about the question of playing with guns?

Close reading
What is the effect of the **headline** of the article? How does it prepare the reader for what follows?

Explain how Dowling has used **vocabulary** from the **semantic field** of war and the military to describe his experience and express a point of view.

Which details suggest that the participants ignore the rules laid down by the organisers?

Read the passage again, and highlight examples of **anti-climax** or **contradiction** where Dowling creates a **contrast** between seriousness or urgency and something comical or banal.
With reference to details from the text, explain how Dowling's wife's feelings about the activity changed in the course of the day.

How does his description of the other participants add comedy to the piece?

Explain how Dowling has **structured** the piece to engage the reader and to reflect his changing point of view.

By the end of the piece, how have Dowling's feelings about shooting people changed? Why?

This piece of writing uses guns and war for comic effect. What techniques has the writer used to avoid a sense of real danger and seriousness?

Drawing comparisons between texts
Explain the purpose that you think each of these writers had. For whom were these pieces written?

As a group of texts, what ideas do they convey about war?

Which other subjects do they prompt us to consider or help us to understand?

Accounts of danger in a hostile environment:

Touching the Void
by Joe Simpson (Vintage 1997) pages 132 – 133

Introduction
Joe Simpson and his fellow climber Simon Yates successfully climbed to the summit of the remote Siula Grande mountain in the Peruvian Andes. However, during the descent Joe broke his leg. The two men tried to get back safely to base camp, but when hit by a storm they were separated. Convinced that Joe was dead after falling into a crevasse, Simon cut the rope that

held them together. In this extract, realising that he is now alone, and amazed that he has survived this far, Joe starts the next stage of his journey.

Read the passage

Using the details given by the writer, describe the situation in which Joe finds himself.

How effectively does he describe his physical condition and suffering?

Explore the range of emotions that he describes in this extract. What causes the shifts in his feelings?

What does this account imply about Joe Simpson's character?

Let's talk about the climb up Everest…
interview with Sir Edmund Hillary

Introduction
Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first climbers to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1953.

Read the extract from the interview with Edmund Hillary

Questions
What were the particular challenges that Hillary recalls from climbing Everest? Explain the dangers presented by the ice fall. Identify a **fact** that he includes to illustrate danger.

What does the extract tell us about the techniques that climbers use in these conditions?

Hillary says that "fear really didn't have much time to emerge." What does he mean? How does this compare with Joe Simpson's experience and point of view?

How does Hillary explain why he has more good memories than bad ones of his time on the mountains?

Extract from the diary of Captain Scott

Introduction
In 1911-1912 Scott led an expedition to the South Pole. After reaching the Pole, they faced a 700 mile trek back to their base camp. The weather conditions deteriorated terribly, and the men weakened for want of food and water. Eventually, still with 120 miles to travel, Scott and two of his companions were caught in a blizzard. They died in their tent and this diary was discovered months later with their bodies.

Read the extract

Questions
How does the description in the *Impressions* section convey the scene for the reader? Which details create a sense of the beauty of the scene? Where is there a suggestion of the danger that the explorers face? How does Scott use **metaphors** to create a sinister impression of the power of nature?

What makes the men uncomfortable in their tent?

Look again at the **structure of sentences** in the diary entry for 17th March, 1912. Why has Scott used some **fragment sentences**?

What impression does he convey of the character of Titus Oates?

Who do you think Scott had in mind as his intended **audience** for this piece of writing? What is his purpose in keeping the diary?

I Fell Through Arctic Ice
by Gary Rolfe (*The Guardian* 19/01/2007)

Read the article

Questions
What led to Gary Rolfe's fall through the ice?

Explain the threats he faced. What happened to his dogs? What were the physical effects on him? What treatment did he require to help his recovery? In what way did he feel fortunate?

Highlight the **facts** that Gary Rolfe includes in his account expressed in **numbers** and **statistics**. What is their effect on the reader's understanding?

Analyse the **structure of sentences**. Highlight those which contain five words or fewer. What is their effect? How does he use **question sentences**? Explain what they contribute to the **structure** of the passage.

Look again at the **vocabulary** used in the passage. List the words that Rolfe uses that show his expertise and familiarity with life in the Arctic. Now identify examples of **colloquial language**. How do these features contribute to establishing an authentic **authorial voice**?

Gary Rolfe has been criticised for being reckless and putting his dogs' lives in danger. What does his account imply about his personality? What do you think drives him to spend his time in the Arctic?

Compare his experience with Joe Simpson's, Edmund Hillary's and Captain Scott's. What similarities do you see in their outlook and characters? What similarities do you find in their experiences? Which of these explorers do you respect or admire the most and why?

The explorers have written their accounts in different ways and for different **purposes** and **audiences**. Explain how the features of each piece fulfil its author's intentions.

Travel writing

***The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*,**
2nd edition ed., Mary Moorman (Oxford University Press 1958, 1971)

Dorothy Wordsworth lived with her brother, the poet William Wordsworth, in Cumbria. Her journal is a record of their daily lives and her observations of the natural world around her.

Extracts from *American Notes*
by Charles Dickens (1842)

Charles Dickens is best known as one of the greatest writers of fiction in the history of the English language but he also wrote non-fiction texts. These two extracts are from American Notes, a book Dickens wrote after his first trip to America in 1842. In the extracts he is travelling by train.

Walking Home
by Simon Armitage (Faber and Faber 2012)

The poet Simon Armitage describes his walk along the 256-mile Pennine way. He travelled as a 'modern troubadour', taking no money with him but stopping en route to give poetry readings and accepting contributions from the people he met on the way. The 'Tombstone' that he mentions is a suitcase full of books that is carried by car between each of his stops.

The Places In Between
by Rory Stewart (Picador 2004)

Rory Stewart's book is an account of his walk across Afghanistan in January 2012. He followed inaccessible mountain routes and relied on the help of local guides.

Read the four passages

Questions
How do Dorothy Wordsworth's and Dickens' journals differ from the writing of Armitage and Stewart? Which features of language show that Dickens and Wordsworth were writing during the 19th century? Highlight the names of plants and wildflowers that she describes. How many of these are familiar to you? What does Dorothy's knowledge of their names show about her relationship with the natural world and the kind of life she led? Re-read the description of the daffodils that she saw by the lake. Which **verbs** has she used that give them human qualities?

Which other descriptive detail **personifies** the daffodils?

Simon Armitage's account is written in the **present tense**. What effect has he achieved by reporting the events in this way? Which tense did Dorothy Wordsworth use? How do you explain her choice? Now look at Rory Stewart's piece. How does his choice of tense contribute to the effect of his writing?

Compare the ways in which the four writers have included people in their accounts. Explain how Armitage uses his family to introduce some humour. How does Dickens convey humour in his writing? What is Stewart's attitude towards Dr. Habibullah? What does his description imply about Habibullah's character? What do you understand about Habibullah's status amongst local people? What is Dickens' attitude towards his fellow travellers?

Explain how the four writers convey an impression of the sights and sounds of the areas in which they are travelling. What part does colour play in their descriptions? How do the accounts create an impression of the remoteness of the places described? Which one did you find the most effective?

Why does Armitage tell his daughter the legend of Peg Powler? What legends have you heard associated with places that you know? Explain why people enjoy hearing such legends.

What do the texts show about the writers' purposes in travelling and the enjoyment they derive from it? How do they feel about the areas in which they are walking or travelling? What is Dickens' view of the area around Cairo? How does the tone of the four writers differ? Comment on Dickens' choice of words and phrases to describe the landscape.

Speeches:

President J F Kennedy on going to the moon 1962

President Kennedy made this speech to a large audience at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He was keen to persuade the American people to support NASA's work in sending a manned spaceship to the moon.

Chief Joseph's surrender speech 1877

Joseph was chief of the Nez Perce, a Native American tribe in Northwest Oregon. In 1877 the Nez Perce refused to go to a reservation, a land prescribed by the US government for Native Americans. Instead, Chief Joseph attempted to lead 800 of his people to Canada. They made a journey of 1100 miles, fighting the U.S. Army all the way. Eventually, they were trapped forty miles from their destination, where, after a fight lasting five days, the 431 surviving Nez Perce were beaten. Accepting this defeat, Chief Joseph made his speech of surrender.

Nelson Mandela *Make Poverty History* 2005

Nelson Mandela addressed over 22,000 people who had gathered for the Make Poverty History Campaign in Trafalgar Square.

Read these speeches and identify the **points of view** and **perspectives** in each one. How effective are the speeches by Mandela and Kennedy in persuading their audiences to share their points of view?

How can you tell that each one speaks for a wider group than just himself? Where do they express pride in the people they represent? Joseph is surrendering after losing a long struggle. To what extent do you think he preserves his dignity and gains the respect of his listeners in this speech?

What values and human qualities are important to these speakers? How can you tell?

Now look carefully at the ways in which these speakers have used **rhetorical features** and assess the effects they have achieved. Pay attention to the way in which the speeches are **structured** and explain how the speakers have constructed their **arguments**. How do the speakers engage their **audiences** by addressing them directly and appealing to their feelings?

What do you consider to be the impact of the **conclusions** of the speeches?

Florence Nightingale:

Florence Nightingale's letter to *The Times* 1876

Biographical Information for Florence Nightingale

Questions
What do you know about Florence Nightingale and the work she did?

In her letter to *The Times* what do we learn about Nightingale's view of the poor sick in London? Summarise Nightingale's view for the future of nursing. According to her letter, what progress does she say has been made so far? How does Nightingale convey the conditions in which the poor sick live? How has Nightingale structured this text in order to persuade people that this is a very important issue? From reading this letter what are your impressions of Florence Nightingale?

In the second text find words and phrases which show the writer's admiration of Nightingale. According to this text, what were Nightingale's main achievements?

Comparison
What is the purpose of each of the two texts? Look at both texts and highlight the similarities in what they convey about the sort of person Nightingale was and the work she did.

The Diaries of Nella Last

'End of the beginning'

When Nella was on foot in Barrow, she occasionally remarked on the signs of a nation at war. On Sunday, 2 May 1943, she and Will were out enjoying the warm day and saw groups of Dutch and French Canadian soldiers from nearby camps 'strolling along' the roads. 'I looked at the ugly Nissen huts, at the training planes overhead, and at the gorse, so brave and gay. I felt "There will be golden gorse and larks when all the ugliness of huts and torn up country roads are past and when khaki is not general wear." I'd a queer sadness on me somehow that not even the sunshine could dispel. But the battles that were being fought abroad rarely came up in conversation – 'Not one word of the war', she might report after a day spent in the company of others. On 24 June she remarked in her reply to M-O's Directive that month, 'it's surprising how little the war is discussed – even mentioned.' Among her WVS colleagues 'the chatter is of everything but the war. If war is discussed it's in that personal way – sons and daughters in the Services and their needs, leaves, parcels etc., points' values, Home Front recipes', and similar close-to-home concerns. 'Beyond saying "Aren't our lads doing well?" or "We gave 'em it last night again," or occasionally a queer wave passes over the town and an "It won't be long now" attitude is taken up', war news featured little in conversation.

On those infrequent occasions when Nella did dwell explicitly on war, optimism failed her.

Thursday, 19 August.
A shadow falls over me somehow. Maybe the weather, maybe the thoughts of this dreadful invasion of Europe starting. I often think 'It will indeed be a "new world" after the war. All and everyone seem hell bent on destroying everything in the old one.' Sometimes when I sit quiet a chaotic montage whirls through my tired head, the 'civilization' we boast so much about, and where it has led us. Fabulous riches found to train men to destroy each other, to equip them with more and more death dealing weapons, when such a fraction of the thought, energy and money could have done so much good. The world is 'coming to an end' indeed. If all the bad cruel Nazis and the 'wicked' Japs were being wiped out, we could think it for betterment of all, but it seems so many of the flower of all races are going. Two women have sat side by side for four years at Centre sewing at bandages. One has lost two sons at sea – and now learns her airman son has to be 'presumed dead.' The other one's three sons work in the Yard – have good jobs. The daughter of 28 is 'reserved' as she is considered necessary as a secretary to a boss in the Yard. The other woman's daughter had to join the WAAF. I look round the big room at faces I've known and loved for over four years. My heart aches. Even in that small circle, the bravery and courage, the 'going on' when sons have been killed, when letters don't come, when their boys are taught to fight like savages if they are Commandos, when they are trained and trained and trained for bodies to be made to endure, to go kill other women's lads, to wipe all the light from other mothers' faces.

As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning

by Laurie Lee

Early next morning, four truckloads of militia drove off to Altofaro to attack the rebels. They swung singing through the streets in their bright blue shirts, waving their caps as though going to a fair. El Gato was in charge, dynamite strapped to his body; the others shared a musket between three. Once they were over the hill, we expected to hear the sounds of war break out, but the morning passed in silence.

About noon, a white aircraft swinging low from the sea, circled the village, and flew away again – leaving the clear blue sky scarred with a new foreboding above a mass of upturned faces. Many felt, till that moment, their village to be secure and forgotten; now the eye of war had spied them out.

Throughout the afternoon nothing happened. Families ate their meals in the street, seeking the assurance of one another's company. Once again the fierce sunlight obliterated everything it fell on, burning all colours to an ashen glare. When people stepped out of their houses they seemed to evaporate for a moment, as if the light had turned them to vapour; and when they passed into shadow they disappeared again, like stepping into a hole in the ground. That afternoon of waiting was the hottest I've known. Fear lay panting in the street like a dog. It was as though El Gato and his men had been swallowed up in silence, or had followed the war to another country.

But war was not far away, and after nightfall, unexpectedly, it paid its first mad call on Almuñécar. A destroyer crept into the bay, unseen by anyone, and suddenly began probing the shore with its searchlight. The beam swept over the hills, up and down the coast, and finally picked out the village and pinned it against the darkness. Held by the blazing eye, opening so ominously from the sea, the people experienced a moment of naked panic. There seemed nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide, so they hurried down to the beach, and stood motionless in the glare, facing the invisible warship and raising their arms in a kind of massed entreaty. As the searchlight played over them they remained stiffly at attention, just letting themselves be seen. In the face of the unknown, all they could do was offer themselves in this posture of speechless acquiescence. Such pitiless brightness had never lit up their night before: friend or foe, it was a light of terror.

For a while nothing happened. The warship just sat in the darkness stroking its searchlight up and down the shore. To get a better view, I joined a group of boys who'd already climbed on to the castle wall. We could see the whole of Almuñécar below us – the crowds on the beach and the spoke of light turning on its invisible hub. As we watched, it began to play over the nearby hills and move again along the coastal road. Suddenly it picked out a lorry heading towards the village, then three more, all packed with men. The beam lazily followed them, as though escorting them home, lighting up their rifles like little thorns. One could hear distant shouting above the sound of the engines – it was El Gato's militia coming back at last.

The trucks roared into a village, horns stridently blowing, and pulled up in the warship's pool of light. The beam was abruptly switched off, followed by a moment of absolute darkness. Then there came a blinding flash from the sea.

Silence. It was as though a great fuse had blown. Then the mountains behind us thundered, a thunder that boomed and cannoned from peak to peak and tumbled in the valleys like showers of stones. There was another flash, another explosion, another hot blast of air. For a moment we imagined it might be some kind of salute to the militia. Then we heard the tearing scream of a shell.

The searchlight came on again. We could see the crowds on the beaches surging inland like

a muddy wave. The destroyer fired once more, misting its searchlight with smoke, and we were no longer in doubt about its intentions. A house on our right suddenly shuddered, rose a foot in the air, and slowly collapsed like a puff-ball. A bundle of stones and trees leapt up by the river. A pall of dust drifted over the village.

After half a dozen more salvoes, the firing broke off; inexplicably, since we seemed to be at their mercy. Then the shocked silence in the village began to fill with a curious whispering and rustling, the sound of a multitude on the move. In the naked beam of the searchlight we saw them come stumbling up the streets, bent double, crying and moaning, mothers and fathers dragging their children behind them, old folk tottering and falling down.

As the village ran for the hills, looking for patches of darkness, we saw a small boat put out from the shore, with two squat figures inside it sitting hunched at their oars and rowing frantically towards the ship.

And that was the end of the bombardment. The destroyer was found to be friendly. It had been an unfortunate error of war. A case of mistaken identity; the captain sent his apologies, slipped anchor, and sailed quietly away – leaving a few gaps in the houses, a few dead in the streets, and most of the population scattered across the hillsides.

'I see my wife coming off the field of battle, all smiles'

by Tim Dowling

The rain is coming down at a profound slant and I am kneeling in the cold mud behind a stack of tyres. I can't see anything through my spattered goggles, but I can hear the bullets whistling over my head and knifing into the mud around me. I am pinned down in a crossfire. This is a nightmare, I think. But isn't a nightmare. It's my son's birthday party.

In accordance with his wishes, we have come to a paintballing centre, in woods somewhere near the M25, along with seven 12-year-old boys, eight signed liability waivers, a coach-load of Chinese tourists and two large men who, according to my wife, fought together in Kosovo.

"I overhead them talking about it," she says while adjusting her ammunition belt.

"You mean they didn't get enough of this in Kosovo?" I say. I've had enough of this before they've even given us the guns.

Most of the boys have been paintballing before, and during the car journey to the centre they chatted animatedly about how much it hurts to be shot. By the time we arrive, my wife is pale with apprehension and I have gone quiet.

We had hoped to fight as a team, perhaps against a hungover hen party, but the entire afternoon session is split down the middle, odds versus evens, according to the number the organisers have scrawled on your hand. My wife and I are on opposing sides, with four 12-year-olds, half a coach-load of Chinese tourists and a Kosovan apiece.

This group proves to be more than a little trigger-happy. It is difficult to hear the repeated shouted warnings about not firing your weapon in the loading area, because so many people are firing their weapons in the loading area. They're shooting at the ground, chatting, laughing, shooting in the air. It's like a Helmand Province wedding.

We're led into the woods and given a red flag. Somewhere in the trees is the opposing team's green flag. I debate strategy with two of my son's friends, but when the shooting starts we ditch our plan in favour of getting behind a big log and staying there. At some point the guy holding our flag is cut down in a hail of paint. I reach for the flag and the world goes yellow. I've been hit in the goggles.

As I enter the cordoned off holding pen, where the other dead people are chatting and discharging their weapons in breach of an oft-repeated instruction, I see my wife coming off the field of battle, all smiles.

"It's great, isn't it?" she yells. "I shot you!"

Over the course of the afternoon, the children and my wife get chirpier while I repeatedly experience the ambiguity in situational awareness commonly known as The Fog Of War. I exit every round early without shooting anyone. It's not that I don't want to shoot anyone – after the first half-hour, I want to shoot everyone. I take a bullet in the arse while reloading, and find out exactly how much it hurts: a lot.

Finally, with the rain coming down at a profound slant and darkness closing in, I kneel in the mud behind a wall of tyres and prepare for a last stand, my gun full of the extra ammo that I bought off someone between rounds.

I peer above my makeshift parapet, scanning the horizon for enemy movement. The world instantly goes yellow again. I raise my hand in the prescribed manner to show that I am hit, and someone shoots me in the hand. I stand up, and someone else shoots me in the leg.

I walk slowly to the holding pen, imagining an ideal world where no one has a gun except me.

Touching the Void

by Joe Simpson

I glanced at the rope stretched tautly above me. It ran up the wall and disappeared onto the slope above. There was no possibility of getting back to that slope some twenty feet above me. I looked at the wall of the crevasse close by my shoulder. On the other side another wall of ice towered up ten feet away. I was hanging in a shaft of water ice. The decision to look down came as I was in the process of turning. I swung round quickly, catching my smashed knee on the ice wall and howling in a frenzy of pain and fright. Instead of seeing the rope twisting loosely in a void beneath me, I stared blankly at the snow below my feet, not fully believing what I was seeing. A floor! There was a wide snow-covered floor fifteen feet below me. There was no emptiness, and no black void. I swore softly, and heard it whisper off the walls around me. Then I let out a cry of delight and relief which boomed round the crevasse. I yelled again and again, listening to the echoes, and laughed between the yells. I was at the bottom of the crevasse.

When I recovered my wits I looked more carefully at the carpet of snow above which I was dangling. My jubilation was quickly tempered when I spotted dark menacing holes in the surface. It wasn't a floor after all. The crevasse opened up into a pear-shaped dome, its sides curving away from me to a width of fifty feet before narrowing again. The snow floor cut through the flat end of this cavern, while the walls above me tapered in to form the thin end of the pear barely ten feet across and nearly100 feet high. Small fragments of crusty snow patterned down from the roof.

I looked round the enclosed vault of snow and ice, familiarising myself with its shape and size. The walls opposite closed in but didn't meet. A narrow gap had been filled with snow from above to form a cone which rose all the way to the roof. It was about fifteen feet wide at the base and as little as four or five feet across the top.

A pillar of gold light beamed diagonally from a small hole in the roof, spraying bright reflections off the far wall of the crevasse. I was mesmerised by this beam and sunlight burning through the vaulted ceiling from the real world outside. It had me so fixated that I forgot about the uncertain floor below and let myself slide down the rest of the rope. I was going to reach that sunbeam. I knew it then with absolute certainty. How I would do it, and when I would reach it were not considered. I just knew.

In seconds my whole outlook had changed. The weary frightened hours of night were forgotten, and the abseil which had filled me with such claustrophobic dread had been swept away. The twelve despairing hours I had spent in the unnatural hush of this awesome place seemed suddenly to have been nothing like the nightmare I had imagined. I could do something positive. I could crawl and climb, and keep on doing so until I had escaped from this grave. Before, there had been nothing for me to do except lie on the bridge trying not to feel scared and lonely, and that helplessness had been my worst enemy. Now I had a plan.

The change in me was astonishing. I felt invigorated, full of energy and optimism. I could see possible dangers, very real risks that could destroy my hopes, but somehow I knew I could overcome them. It was as if I had been given this one blessed chance to get out and I was grasping it with every ounce of strength left in me. A powerful feeling of confidence and pride swept over me as I realised how right I had been to leave the bridge. I had made the right decision against the worst of my fears. I had done it, and I was sure that nothing now could be worse than those hours of torture on the bridge.

My boots touched the snow and I stopped descending. I sat in my harness, hanging free on the rope a few feet from the floor, and examined

the surface cautiously. The snow looked soft and powdery, and I was immediately suspicious of it. I looked along the edge where the floor joined the walls and soon found what I was looking for. In several places there were dark gaps between the ice walls and the snow. It was not a floor so much as a suspended ceiling across the crevasse dividing the abyss below from the upper chamber, where I sat. The start of the snow slope running up to the sunshine lay forty feet from me. The inviting snow-carpet between me and the slope tempted me to run across it. The idea made me chuckle. I had forgotten that my right leg was useless. Okay. Crawl across it… but which way? Straight across, or keeping near to the back wall?

It was a difficult decision. I was less worried about putting my foot through the floor than by the damage such a fall would do to the fragile surface. The last thing I wanted was to destroy the floor and myself stranded on the wrong side of an uncrossable gap. That would be too much to bear. I glanced nervously at the beam of sunlight, trying to draw strength from it, and made my mind up at once. I would cross in the middle. It was the shortest distance and there was nothing to suggest that it would be any riskier than at the sides. I gently lowered myself until I was sitting on the snow but with most of my weight still on the rope. It was agonising to inch the rope out and let my weight down gradually. I found myself holding my breath, every muscle in my body tensed. I became acutely aware of the slightest movement in the snow, and I wondered whether I would end up sinking slowly through the floor. Then some of the tension in the rope relaxed, and I realised that the floor was holding. I breathed deeply, and I released my aching hand from the rope.

Let's talk about the climb up Everest, one step at a time

interview with Sir Edmund Hilary

Sir Edmund Hillary: I never climbed up anything one step at a time. You read so much about how, at extreme altitudes, you take one step and then you stop and pant and puff for a while, and then take one more step. I don't ever remember doing that. You're much slower in higher altitudes because of the lack of oxygen, but I used to keep moving pretty steadily most of the time and I didn't have to stop too often for panting and puffing. I think I was pretty well adapted and acclimatized to altitude and I was very fit in those days, so I could keep moving very freely.

Can you tell us about any specific challenges along the way as you were ascending?

Sir Edmund Hillary: Well there were lots of challenges. Even the route we were climbing Mt. Everest was one of the two easiest routes on the mountain as we know now. Of course, nobody had climbed it then. But even so, there are demanding parts of it. At the bottom of the mountain, there's the ice fall, where it's a great tumbled ruin of ice that's all pouring down and filled with crevasses and ice walls. It's under slow but constant movement. It's a dangerous place because things are always tumbling down. So you have to establish a route up through that which you can get with reasonable safety. But over the years, literally dozens of people have died in the crevasses. They've been engulfed by ice walls falling down and things of that nature. I had one experience on the ice fall with Tenzing. We were actually descending after having been further up the mountain and it was getting close towards dark so we wanted to get through the ice fall before darkness fell. We were roped together, but I was rushing down ahead in the lead. About half-way down there was a narrow crevasse, I guess it was about four feet wide, but just a bit too wide to step across. On the lower lip was a great chunk of ice stuck against the ice wall, and we'd used that as sort of a stepping stone to get over the gap. I came rushing down the hill without thinking too carefully, I just leapt in the air and landed on the chunk of ice, whereupon the chunk of ice broke off and dropped into the crevasse with me on top of it. It was interesting how everything seemed to start going slowly, even though I was free-falling into the crevasse. My mind, obviously, was working very quickly indeed. The great chunk of ice started tipping over and I realized, if I wasn't careful, I'd be crushed between the ice and the wall of the crevasse. So I just sort of bent my knees and leapt in the air. I was still falling, but now I was a couple of feet clear of the chunk of ice. Time really seemed to pass even though I was falling clear and I realized that unless the rope came tight fairly soon, I would come to a rather sticky end on the bottom of the crevasse. Up top, Tenzing had acted very quickly. He had thrust his ice axe into the snow, whipped the rope around it, and the rope came tight with a twang and I was stopped and swung in against the ice wall. The great chunk of ice just carried on and smashed to smithereens at the bottom of the crevasse. Then really the rest was what I would have called a routine mountaineering matter. I had my ice axe and my crampons on my feet, so I chipped steps in the side, I was able to bridge the crevasse, and I worked my way up to the top and got safely out. I wouldn't have said at any stage, because it all happened so quickly, fear really didn't have much opportunity to emerge. My only idea was to get safely out of this unfortunate predicament. And of course, without Tenzing's very competent mountaineer's response, I certainly wouldn't have made it. But once he had stopped me, then I was able to, using the techniques of mountaineering, to get myself safely to the top, again. When you've been going as long as I have, many of them have happened during the course of your life, but you tend to forget them, really. I think nature tricks us a little bit because you tend to remember the good moments rather than the uncomfortable ones. So when you leave the mountain, you remember the great moments on the mountain, and as soon as you leave the mountain, you want to go back 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, -40° 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.

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 Northwest 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, icing-up 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.

Travel writing

The Grasmere Journals

2nd edition ed. Mary Moorman

Wednesday 14th
William did not rise till dinner time. I walked with Mrs C. I was ill out of spirits – disheartened. Wm and I took a long walk in the Rain.

Thursday 15th.
It was a threatening misty morning – but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs Clarkson went a short way with us but turned back. The wind was furious and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large Boat-house, then under a furze Bush opposite Mr Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath; the Lake was rough. There was a Boat by itself floating in the middle of the Bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the Twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows – people working, a few primroses by the roadside, wood-sorrell flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry yellow flower which Mrs C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the lake had floated the seeds ashore and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more and at last under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow, for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The Bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances and in the middle of the water like the sea.

Extracts from *American Notes*

by Charles Dickens

A description of his trip on a train from Boston to Lowell in the USA:
A great many newspapers are pulled out, and a few of them are read. Everybody talks to you, or to anybody else who hits his fancy. If you are an Englishman, he expects that that railroad is pretty much like an English railroad. If you say 'No,' he says 'Yes?' (interrogatively), and asks in what respect they differ.

You enumerate the heads of difference, one by one, and he says 'Yes?' (still interrogatively) to each. Then he guesses you don't travel faster in England; and on your replying that you do, says 'Yes?' again (still interrogatively), and, it is quite evident, doesn't believe it.

After a long pause he remarks, partly to you and partly to his stick, that 'Yankees are reckoned to be considerable go-ahead people too,' upon which you say 'Yes,' and then he says 'Yes' again (affirmatively this time); and upon your looking out of the window, tells you that behind that hill, and some three miles from the next station, there is a clever town in a smart lo-ca-tion, where he expects you have concluded to stop.

Your answer in the negative naturally leads to more questions in reference to your intended route (always pronounced rout); and wherever you are going, you invariably learn that you can't get there without immense difficulty and danger, and that all the great sights are somewhere else.

A visit to scenic Cairo, Illinois USA!
I'm going to send this passage to the Cairo, Illinois, tourism bureau; they may want to use it in some of their promotional material:

The scenery as we approached the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, was not at all inspiring in its influence. The trees were stunted in their growth; the banks were low and flat; the settlements and log cabins fewer in number; their inhabitants more wan and wretched than any we had encountered yet.

No songs of birds were in the air, no pleasant scents, no moving lights and shadows from swift-passing clouds. Hour after hour, the changeless glare of the hot, unwinking sky shone upon the same monotonous objects. Hour after hour, the river rolled along as wearily and slowly as the time itself.

At length, upon the morning of the third day, we arrived at a spot so much more desolate than any we had yet beheld that the forlornest places we had passed were, in comparison with it, full of interest.

At the junction of the two rivers, on ground so flat and low that at certain seasons of the year it is inundated to the housetops, lies a breeding place of fever, ague, and death.

A dismal swamp, on which the half-built houses rot away; cleared here and there for the space of a few yards; and teeming then with rank, unwholesome vegetation, in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers who are tempted hither droop, and die, and lay their bones.

The hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course, a slimy monster hideous to behold; a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without one single quality, in earth or air or water to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo."

Walking Home

by Simon Armitage

Today's walk, or at least the first half of it, is reckoned by many to be the most pleasant and least taxing section of the whole trail, a saunter through pretty Teesdale along the banks of the Tees with no route-finding difficulties whatsoever and several picturesque and iconic landmarks to tick off along the way. That's a relief, given that I'm still reeling from what happened on Cross Fell. On the other hand it's going to give my wife and daughter, walking with me today, the impression that for the last nine days I've done nothing more than wander through buttercup meadows from one public house to the next, making friends and showing off along the way and being paid for the privilege.

To counter that notion, I go through an elaborate performance before breakfast, pulling heaps of filthy clothes from the Tombstone, describing to my wife how and where each garment came to be blackened, bloodied or saturated, and giving a mile-by-mile, blow-by-blow account of my most hair-railing experiences thus far. But she pulls back the curtains and the sun is blazing across the valley, and in a T-shirt and trainers she waits for me in the car park while I tie the very long laces of my very big boots and secure all toggles and zips. My daughter has also taken the casual rather than cautious approach, and strides out ahead of us in pink leggings, white iPod earphones, a pair of canvas shoes that are not far from being slippers, and a vest. Her coat, which she wears tied around her waist, was given to her by a man called Charles in a pub car park in West Yorkshire, who also gave me several items of clothing made entirely from organic, natural fibres to 'trial' during my walk including a very nice fleece, a luminous orange anorak and a top made out of recycled wood chippings. The exchange, even though it had been pre-arranged and was all above board, must have looked very suspicious from the street, with two cars pulling up boot to boot, two strangers shaking hands, one man producing a range of clothes from the back of his car while the other man and his daughter tried them on, followed by another handshake and the vehicles shooting off in opposite directions. Even though she wears it around her middle rather than in the prescribed manner, my daughter was particularly thrilled with her acquisition when she learned that it was 'bombproof'. Army green and slightly sinister-looking, it's made from a fabric called Ventile, developed in the Second World War for pilots at risk of being shot down over the sea. When it becomes wet the cotton in it expands, making it waterproof, apparently.

It is also windproof and much coveted by 'bushcraft' people who need to sneak up on birds and animals, because it doesn't rustle. Modelling it in the car park outside the Co-op that day, my daughter had the look of a special forces trainee, and responded to that suggestion by giving me a highly convincing karate kick between the legs (and while I was getting my breath back, a punch in the kidneys).

We're not expecting bombshells today, or even rain. The first stretch of the path loops up and over a set of crags with juniper bushes to each side, then down a grassy embankment before rejoining the river. My daughter might be out in front, proving that no map is necessary, but we're actually following Shane Harris, a colleague of Chris's from North Pennines AONB, and his wife, Cath. The juniper is a particular and peculiar feature of this area, Shane explains, and as we brush past the spiky leaves I convince myself I can smell gin. With their knotted, wrenched trunks and bleached, desiccated branches, the junipers are reminiscent of wild olive trees, giving the immediate landscape a biblical feel, as if we're walking through the Holy Land, an atmosphere which lasts until the appearance of Dine Holm quarry and stone-cutting plant on the left-hand side, which explains the fine yellowy powder coating the shrubs, the grass and eventually our feet.

Less than quarter of an hour later we're standing above High Force, silent as we approached it from upstream, but now a roaring, drumming volley of white water hurling itself over a cliff face and thundering into the deep pool seventy or so feet below. Standing on the ridge above, I can feel the pulsing power of the water in the

soles of my feet and my solar plexus, and there's an even better view thirty yards downstream, looking back at the full spectacle of the falls from a stone outcrop which provides a natural viewing gallery and a photo opportunity. The noise of High Force is amplified by the semicircular gorge into which the river is delivered, a feature which also magnifies its visual appeal. It's so perfect it could have been designed, and those Darwinism-deniers who seem to be finding increasing employment opportunities in American schools might even argue it was. To keep my daughter away from the edge I've told her the legend of Peg Powler, a green-haired water hag who is said to inhabit this valley. Wherever she goes she leaves a frothy substance on the surface, known as Peg Powler Suds, and she feeds on children, grabbing them by the ankle if they stray too close to the river.

The Places in Between

by Rory Stewart

A man called Gul Agha Karimi had written some letters to introduce me to people in Ghor. Gul Agha was a wealthy businessman, originally from this district, who owned a pizza restaurant and shop in Kabul. I was very grateful for the letters, but I did not know how he was perceived in Ghor or how his introductions would be received.

He had told me that people from one village would accompany me to the next village. The custom of escorting visitors was once common throughout Asia. In Iran, Pakistan and India, city dwellers often said to me, 'Don't worry… someone from one village will always walk with you and hand you to someone in the next… they won't let you walk alone.' But such traditions and social structures had, in reality, vanished, and in eighteen months of walking, no one had ever offered to accompany me to a neighbouring village.

Gul Agha's first letter was addressed to Dr Habibullah Sherwal, who owned the inn in Darai-e-Takht where I had just met the young commandant. I found Dr Habibullah; he glanced at the letter and simply said, 'Give me a minute to change my shoes.'

He reappeared a minute later in sunglasses with a Kalashnikov on his shoulder, locked the door and we set off. He had not been warned that I was coming, and yet without hesitating or asking any questions he set out with a stranger on a two-night journey.

Dr Habibullah was a portly man of thirty-six. He had to keep hitching his rifle up on his round shoulders, and he took small, quick steps in his tasselled brown loafers. He did not speak to me at all in the first twenty minutes walking together. I liked Abdul Haq but I preferred travelling without him. He had dominated my view of the landscape. The dangers and the geography of the country and the villages had been filtered through the mind of a man who was a Mujahid of Ismail Khan, based in Herat. Habibullah was a local. The fields through which we were walking belonged to him. The people on the road recognized him. I was pleased at last to have reached the hills and be moving further away from the vehicles and deeper into Ghor. The valleys were narrow and the Hari Rud River ran through gorges. It had not snowed for two days, but there was still a dusting of white in the hollows and on the upper slopes. Above our path were pillars of sand, and high in the cliff walls were caves used as sheep pens in the winter.

We passed a large, round fort by the river. Habibullah waited patiently outside while I wandered among the crumbling walls, half buried in snow, and climbed into a round tower to look across the valley. The castle seemed to dominate the path from every direction. I had no way of finding out how old it was: mud bricks could be almost any age. Then, having checked I couldn't be seen from the path, I squatted down in the snow.

I had had diarrhoea for a day. I tried to avoid it by drinking only tea or purifying my water with chlorine tablets. The breads and soups, which were the staple diet, were relatively safe, but no one washed their hands and we all shared the same bowls. I was surprised that I had not caught it three days earlier when Aziz and Abdul Haq complained of stomach cramps. But I had it now and I knew that it was dehydrating me and would weaken me for walking. I still felt quite strong but, if it persisted, I would have to try some antibiotics.

When I reappeared, Habibullah was squatting on his heels in the afternoon sun. I apologized for taking so much time but he just shrugged. We started walking again, with me trying to adjust to his short steps after a week of Abdul Haq's stretched and rapid pacing. We crossed the ford below Darai-e-Takht on a small bridge marked 'ECHO – built with funds from the European Community'. It had been built five years earlier and was already crumbling, but it was an important contribution, since this ford had been frequently impassable.

When we reached the far end of the bridge, Dr Habibullah pointed at a large black rock, high

on the slope behind us and said, ‘Commandant Mustafa – the young man whom you just met and who shot at you – shot two Taliban from there. They died here on this ground, which is my wheat field. Before that he was nothing – a small-time mullah – but because he was the only man in this village to fight the Taliban he is now a commander.’

‘And you?’

‘I didn’t fight the Taliban. I fought the Russians from when I was fourteen for ten years with Rabbani’s Jamiat, but when the Taliban came I went to work in Iran and Herat.

We walked that afternoon for four hours along the Hari Rud River without a break. Everyone we met greeted Habibullah with respect, wariness. Dr Habibullah embraced some of the men; others bowed over his hand and kissed it, while he looked fastidious and uninterested.

Speeches

Going to the moon

extract from President Kennedy's speech at Rice University, Texas

Those who came before us made certain that this country rode the first waves of the industrial revolutions, the first waves of modern invention, and the first wave of nuclear power, and this generation does not intend to founder in the backwash of the coming age of space. We mean to be a part of it--we mean to lead it. For the eyes of the world now look into space, to the moon and to the planets beyond, and we have vowed that we shall not see it governed by a hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner of freedom and peace. We have vowed that we shall not see space filled with weapons of mass destruction, but with instruments of knowledge and understanding.

Yet the vows of this Nation can only be fulfilled if we in this Nation are first, and, therefore, we intend to be first.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theatre of war.

There is no strife, no prejudice, no national conflict in outer space as yet. Its hazards are hostile to us all. Its conquest deserves the best of all mankind, and its opportunity for peaceful cooperation may never come again.

But why, some say, the moon? Why choose this as our goal? And they may well ask why climb the highest mountain? Why, 35 years ago, fly the Atlantic? Why does Rice play Texas[1]?

We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too.

It is for these reasons that I regard the decision last year to shift our efforts in space from low to high gear as among the most important decisions that will be made during my incumbency in the office of the Presidency.

1 The President was speaking at Rice University which was not known for the success of its football team. Texas University's team was much stronger.

Chief Joseph's surrender speech

"I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohulhulsote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led the young men is dead.

It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are – perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead.

Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever."

Nelson Mandela's speech at the Make Poverty History Campaign in London

I am privileged to be here today at the invitation of The Campaign to Make Poverty History.

As you know, I recently formally announced my retirement from public life and should really not be here.

However, as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest. Moreover, the Global Campaign for Action Against Poverty represents such a noble cause that we could not decline the invitation.

Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times – times in which the world boasts breathtaking advances in science, technology, industry and wealth accumulation – that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils.

The Global Campaign for Action Against Poverty can take its place as a public movement alongside the movement to abolish slavery and the international solidarity against apartheid. And I can never thank the people of Britain enough for their support through those days of the struggle against apartheid. Many stood in solidarity with us, just a few yards from this spot.

Through your will and passion, you assisted in consigning that evil system forever to history. But in this new century, millions of people in the world's poorest countries remain imprisoned, enslaved, and in chains.

They are trapped in the prison of poverty. It is time to set them free.

Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.

And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.

While poverty persists, there is no true freedom. The steps that are needed from the developed nations are clear. The first is ensuring trade justice. I have said before that trade justice is a truly meaningful way for the developed countries to show commitment to bringing about an end to global poverty.

The second is an end to the debt crisis for the poorest countries. The third is to deliver much more aid and make sure it is of the highest quality.

In 2005, there is a unique opportunity for making an impact. In September, world leaders will gather in New York to measure progress since they made the Millennium Declaration in the year 2000. That declaration promised to halve extreme poverty.

But at the moment, the promise is falling tragically behind. Those leaders must now honour their promises to the world's poorest citizens.

Tomorrow, here in London, the G7 finance ministers can make a significant beginning. I am happy to have been invited to meet with them. The G8 leaders, when they meet in Scotland in July, have already promised to focus on the issue of poverty, especially in Africa.

I say to all those leaders: do not look the other way; do not hesitate. Recognise that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision.

I am proud to wear the symbol of this global call to action in 2005. This white band is from my country. In a moment, I want to give this band to you – young people of Britain – and ask you to take it forward along with millions of others to the G8 summit in July. I entrust it to you. I will be watching with anticipation.

We thank you for coming here today. Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.

Of course the task will not be easy. But not to do this would be a crime against humanity, against which I ask all humanity now to rise up.

Make Poverty History in 2005. Make History in 2005. Then we can all stand with our heads held high.

Thank you.

Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale's letter to *The Times* on 'Trained Nurses for the Sick Poor'

The beginning has been made, the first crusade has been fought and won, to bring real nursing, trained nursing to the bedsides of cases wanting real nursing among the London sick poor, in the only way in which real nurses can be so brought to the sick poor, and this by providing a real home within reach of their work for the nurses to live in – a home which gives what real family homes are supposed to give:- materially, a bedroom for each, dining and sitting rooms in common, all meals prepared and eaten in the home; morally, direction, support, sympathy in a common work, further training and instruction in it, proper rest and recreation, and a head of the home, who is also and pre-eminently trained and skilled head of the nursing.

Nursing requires the most undivided attention of anything I know, and all the health and strength both of mind and body. The very thing that we find in these poor sick is that they lose the feeling of what it is to be clean. The district nurse has to show them their room clean for once; in other words, to do it herself; to sweep and dust away, to empty and wash out all the appalling dirt and foulness; to air and disinfect; rub the windows, sweep the fireplace, carry out and shake the bits of old sacking and carpet, and lay them down again; fetch fresh water and fill the kettle; wash the patient and the children, and make the bed. Every home she has thus cleaned has always been kept so. She found it a pigsty, she left it a tidy, airy room.

The present Association wants to foster the spirit of work (not relief) in the district nurse, and for her to foster the same in her sick poor.

If a hospital must first of all be a place which shall do the sick no harm, how much more must the sick poor's room be made a place not to render impossible recovery from the sickness which it has probably bred? This is what the London District Nurses do; they nurse the room as well as the patient, and teach the family to nurse the room.

Hospitals are but an intermediate stage of civilization. At present, hospitals are the only place where the sick poor can be nursed, or, indeed, often the sick rich. But the ultimate object is to nurse all sick at home.

The district nurse costs money, and the district homes cost money. Each district nurse must have, before she is qualified:

1. a month's trial in district work;
2. a year's training in hospital nursing;
3. three months' training in district nursing, under the Superintendant-General.

For anything like a "National," or even a "Metropolitan" concern, a capital of £20,000 and an income of £5,000 a year are wanted. Of this a great part is wanted at once, to set on foot three district homes; to pay and maintain their superintendents, nurses, and probationers; to create a hospital training school in which to train.

What has been done at present is to establish one district home under the charge and training of Miss Florence Lees, as Superintendent-General, with five hospital trained nurses and three nurse candidates, and to carry on the previously existing work of the East London Nursing Society with six nurses.

The Central Home was opened at 23, Bloomsbury-Square, in December last, the nursing work having been begun in the neighbourhood from a temporary abode, in July. The Nightingale Training School at St Thomas's Hospital is at present giving the year's hospital training to six, to be increased to 12, admitted candidates.

I ask the public not to add one more charity or relief agency to the many that are already, but to support a charity—truly "metropolitan" in its scope, and truly "national" if carried out—which never has been before.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

The most influential woman in Victorian Britain after Queen Victoria herself

Biographical information for Florence Nightingale

Famous for being the 'Lady with the Lamp' who organised the nursing of sick and wounded soldiers during the Crimean War, Florence Nightingale's far-sighted ideas and reforms have influenced the very nature of modern healthcare.

Her greatest achievement was to transform nursing into a respectable profession for women and in 1860, she established the first professional training school for nurses, the Nightingale Training School at St Thomas' Hospital.

She campaigned tirelessly to improve health standards, publishing over 200 books, reports and pamphlets on hospital planning and organisation which are still widely read and respected today, including her most famous work *Notes on Nursing: What It Is and What It Is Not*.

Florence's influence on today's nursing, ranges from her ward designs (known as Nightingale Wards) which were developed in response to her realisation that hospital buildings themselves could affect the health and recovery of patients, through to pioneering infection control measures and the championing of a healthy diet as a key factor for recovery. Florence also believed in the need for specialist midwifery nurses and established a School of Midwifery nursing at King's College Hospital which became a model for the country.

Florence is also credited with inventing the pie chart and was the first woman to be elected to the Royal Statistical Society. She was also the first woman to be awarded the Freedom of the City of London, which she received in 1909. She inspired the founding of the International Red Cross which still awards the Florence Nightingale Medal for nurses who have given exceptional care to the sick and wounded in war or peace.

Early years

Born in an era when middle-class women were expected to simply make a good marriage and raise a family, Florence sensed a 'calling' from God at an early age and believed she was destined to do something greater with her life. As a child, she was very academic and particularly interested in mathematics. Her religion gave her a strong sense of moral duty to help the poor and, over time, she held a growing belief that nursing was her God-given vocation. She was also perhaps set to follow the family tradition of reform mindedness, such as the example set by her maternal grandfather who was an anti-slavery campaigner.

Paid nursing suffered a reputation as a job for poor, often elderly women, and the popular image was one of drunkenness, bad language and a casual attitude to patients. Despite parental concern, she persisted in her ambition, reading anything she could about health and hospitals. Eventually she persuaded them to allow her to take three months nursing training at an inspirational hospital and school in Dusseldorf. Aged 33, she then became superintendent of a hospital for 'gentlewomen' in Harley Street, London.

The Crimean War

In March 1854, reports flooded in about the dreadful conditions and lack of medical supplies suffered by injured soldiers fighting the Crimean War. The Minister at War, a social acquaintance, invited Florence to oversee the introduction of female nurses into the military hospitals in Turkey. With a party of 38 nurses, Florence arrived in Scutari that November and set about organising the hospitals to improve supplies of food, blankets and beds, as well as the general conditions and cleanliness. The comforting sight

of her checking all was well at night earned her the name “Lady of the Lamp”, along with the undying respect of the British soldiers.

Reforming spirit

The introduction of female nurses to the military hospitals was deemed an outstanding success, Florence returned to Britain a heroine and donations poured in to the Nightingale Fund. The money collected enabled Florence to continue her reform of nursing in the civil hospitals of Britain after the war. Determined that the medical mistakes of the two-year long war were never repeated, she vividly communicated the needs for medical reform using statistical charts which showed that more men had died from disease than from their wounds. She then instigated a Royal Commission into the health of the army which led to a large number of improvements and saved the lives of many.

The Nightingale Training School was established in 1860 using donations from the Nightingale Fund. Its reputation soon spread and Nightingale nurses were requested to start new schools all over the world, including Australia, America and Africa.

Florence died aged 90, on 13 August 1910, and was buried with her family in East Wellow, Hampshire.

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