

A



GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

**Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and
perspectives**

8700/2

Insert

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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

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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
5 led to base camp, nearly 3 000 feet below us. It would take many long lowerings, but it was all downhill, and we had lost the sense of
hopelessness that had invaded us at
10 the ice cliff.**

‘What time is it?’ Simon asked.

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

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.

20 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. Instead I concentrated on keeping my leg clear of the snow. It was an impossible

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task. Despite lying on my good leg,
30 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
35 the 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
40 leaden tiredness.

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
45 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 somewhere, so I
50 swore Simon's character to the devil.

51 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.

55 A wave of 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.

60 Several times I had felt it twist sideways when my boot snagged. There would be a flare of agony as the knee kinked back, and parts within the joint seemed to shear past

65 each other with a sickening gristly crunch. I had barely ceased sobbing before my boot snagged again. At the end my leg shook uncontrollably. I tried to stop it shaking, but the

70 harder I tried, the more it shook. I pressed my face into the snow, gritted my teeth, and waited. At last

73 it eased.

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

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

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

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

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

‘Nothing to wait for. Come on.’

**95 He was still grinning, and his
confidence was infectious. Who
said one man can’t rescue another, I
thought. We had changed from
climbing to rescue, and the
partnership had worked just as
100 effectively. We hadn’t dwelt on the
accident. There had been an
element of uncertainty at first, but
as soon as we had started to act
positively everything had come
105 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.’**

[Turn over]

110 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**

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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, on the opposite page, 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
5 safely. Well, I'll tell you – it's awful! I think if I had known 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
10 — and I look forward to other things with no further apprehension. . .



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

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The night lasted from 8 till 12, but I didn't sleep at all. We got up soon
25 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
30 always went ahead and carried a 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
35 on our ropes. It wasn't really cold, though there was an icy little breath of wind. We had about three hours up very nice rock. I had been in high spirits for it was so easy, but before
40 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 like a parcel. He has the strength of a
45 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 making a slip. You
50 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. . . .

55 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
60 Marius's axe took. The cord by which it was carefully tied to his wrist broke and it disappeared forever into space.

Here comes the worst place on the whole Meije. Marius vanished,
65 carrying a very long rope, and I

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waited. Presently I felt a little tug on the rope. “Mademoiselle,” called Marius calmly, and obediently off I went. There were two little humps to
70 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
75 well I was 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
80 no moment when you had not to 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.

85 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.

**I went to bed and knew no more till 6
90 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
95 stiff and my knees are awfully bruised.**

END OF SOURCES

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