



GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

8700/1

Insert

The source that follows is:

SOURCE A: 21st Century prose-fiction

‘The Life of Pi’ by Yann Martel

**An extract from the middle of a novel
written in 2001**

[Turn over]

SOURCE A

This extract is from the middle of a novel. The narrator, a teenage boy called Pi, is in a large lifeboat in the Pacific Ocean. There are no people with him in the lifeboat but there are several animals, including an orang-utan, a zebra and a hyena.

1 It was the hyena that worried me. I had not
forgotten Father's words. Hyenas attack in packs
whatever animal can be run down. They go for
zebras, gnus and water buffaloes, and not only the
5 old or the infirm in a herd but full-grown members
too. They are hardy attackers, rising up from
buttings and kickings immediately, never giving up
for simple lack of will. And they are clever;
anything that can be distracted from its mother is
10 good.

I could hear the hyena whining. I clung to the hope
that a zebra, a familiar prey, and an orang-utan, an
unfamiliar one, would distract it from thoughts of
me. I kept one eye on the horizon, one eye on the
15 other end of the lifeboat.

16 I am not one to hold a prejudice against any animal,
but it is a plain fact that the spotted hyena is not
well served by its appearance. It is ugly beyond
redemption. Its shaggy, coarse coat is a bungled
20 mix of colours, with the spots having none of the

classy ostentation of a leopard's, they look rather
 like the symptoms of a skin disease. The head is
 broad and too massive, with a high forehead, like
 that of a bear, but suffering from a receding
 25 hairline, and with ears that look ridiculously
 mouse-like, large and round, when they haven't
 been torn off in battle. The mouth is forever open
 and panting. The nostrils are too big. The tail is
 scraggly and unwagging. All the parts put together
 30 look doglike, but like no dog anyone would want as
 31 a pet.

32 I was hoping the hyena would stay under the
 tarpaulin. I was disappointed. Nearly immediately
 it leapt over the zebra and onto the stern bench.
 35 There it turned on itself a few times, whimpering
 and hesitating. I wondered what it was going to do
 next. The answer came quickly: it brought its head
 low and ran around the zebra in a circle,
 transforming the stern bench, the side benches
 40 and the cross bench just beyond the tarpaulin into
 a twenty-five-foot indoor track. It did one lap-two-
 three-four-five-and onwards, non-stop, till I lost
 count. And the whole time, lap after lap, it went yip
 yip yip yip yip in a high-pitched way.

45 My reaction, once again, was very slow. I was
 seized by fear and could only watch. The beast
 was going at a good clip, and it was no small

[Turn over]

animal. The beating of its legs against the benches made the whole boat shake, and its claws were
50 loudly clicking on their surface. Each time it came from the stern I tensed. It was hair-raising enough to see the thing racing my way; worse still was the fear that it would keep going straight.

After a number of laps it stopped short at the stern
55 bench and crouched, directing its gaze downwards, to the space below the tarpaulin. It lifted its eyes and rested them upon me. The look was nearly the typical look of a hyena – blank and frank, jaw hanging open, big ears sticking up rigidly, eyes
60 bright and black. I prepared for my end. For nothing. It started running in circles again.

When an animal decides to do something, it can do it for a very long time. All morning the hyena ran in circles going yip yip yip yip yip. Every time the
65 hyena paused at the stern bench, my heart jumped. And as much as I wanted to direct my attention to the horizon, to where my salvation lay, it kept straying back to this maniacal beast.

Things ended in typical hyena fashion. It stopped
70 at the stern and started producing deep groans interrupted by fits of heavy panting. I pushed myself away on the oar till only the tips of my feet were holding on to the boat. The animal hacked and coughed. Abruptly it vomited. A gush landed
75 behind the zebra. The hyena dropped into what it

had just produced. It stayed there, shaking and whining and turning around on itself, exploring the furthest confines of animal anguish. It did not move from the restricted space for the rest of the
80 day.

END OF SOURCE

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