



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**
- 5 zebras, gnus and water buffaloes, and not only the old or the infirm in a herd but full-grown members too. They are hardy attackers, rising up from buttings and kickings**
- 10 immediately, never giving up for simple lack of will. And they are clever; anything that can be**
- 13 distracted from its mother is good.**

I could hear the hyena whining.

15 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 other
20 end of the lifeboat.

21 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
25 ugly beyond redemption. Its shaggy, coarse coat is a bungled mix of colours, with the spots having none of the classy ostentation of a leopard's, they look rather like the
30 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 hairline, and with ears that look

[Turn over]

35 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
40 unwagging. All the parts put
together look doglike, but like no
42 dog anyone would want as a pet.

43 I was hoping the hyena would stay
under the tarpaulin. I was
45 disappointed. Nearly immediately it
leapt over the zebra and onto the
stern bench. There it turned on itself
a few times, whimpering and
hesitating. I wondered what it was
50 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 and the cross bench
55 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
60 went yip yip yip yip yip in a
high-pitched way.

My reaction, once again, was very
slow. I was seized by fear and could
only watch. The beast was going at
65 a good clip, and it was no small
animal. The beating of its legs
against the benches made the whole
boat shake, and its claws were
loudly clicking on their surface.

70 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.

75 After a number of laps it stopped
short at the stern bench and
crouched, directing its gaze

[Turn over]

downwards, to the space below the tarpaulin. It lifted its eyes and rested
80 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 bright and black. I prepared for my end.
85 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
90 in circles going yip yip yip yip yip. Every time the 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
95 salvation lay, it kept straying back to this maniacal beast.

Things ended in typical hyena fashion. It stopped at the stern and started producing deep groans

**100 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.**

**105 A gush landed 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**

**110 furthest confines of animal anguish.
It did not move from the restricted
space for the rest of the day.**

END OF SOURCE

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