

### Source A

This extract is from the beginning of a novel by Ian McEwan, it was first published in 1997.

In this section, the narrator, Gadd and other men are trying to stop a hot air balloon from flying off. Inside the basket is a terrified boy.

*Enduring Love*

1 A mighty fist of wind socked the balloon in two rapid blows, one-two, the second more vicious than  
2 the first. It jerked Gadd right out of the basket on to the ground, and with Gadd's considerable  
3 weight removed from the equation, it lifted the balloon five feet or so, straight into the air. The rope  
4 ran through my grip, scorching my palms, but I managed to keep hold, with two feet of line spare.  
5 The others kept hold too. The basket was right above our heads now, and we stood with arms  
6 upraised like Sunday bell ringers. Into our amazed silence, before the shouting could resume, the  
7 second punch came and knocked the balloon up and westwards. Suddenly we were treading the air  
8 with all our weight in the grip of our fists.

9 Those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey up  
10 an unchartered river. My first impulse was to hang on in order to keep the balloon weighted down.  
11 The child was incapable, and was about to be borne away. Two miles to the left were high-voltage  
12 power lines. A child alone and needing help. It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all  
13 do the same.

14 Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy came other thoughts of  
15 self-preservation and fear. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was  
16 pushed westwards. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked round the rope. But the end of the  
17 line barely reached below my waist and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every  
18 fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would  
19 be impossible or fatal. Then, someone did let go. Immediately, the balloon and its hangers on lurched  
20 upwards another several feet.

21 Because letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. Mostly, we are  
22 good when it makes sense. A good society is one that makes sense of being good. Suddenly, hanging  
23 there below the basket, we were a bad society, we were disintegrating. Suddenly the sensible choice  
24 was to look out for yourself. The child was not my child, and I was not going to die for it. Then I  
25 glimpsed another body fall away and I felt the balloon lurch upwards. The matter was settled.  
26 Altruism had no place. Being good made no sense. I let go and fell, I reckon, about twelve feet. I  
27 landed heavily on my side, I got away with a bruised thigh. Around me - before or after, I'm not so  
28 sure - bodies were thumping to the ground.

29 By the time I got to my feet the balloon was fifty yards away, and one man was still dangling by his  
30 rope. When I stood up and saw him, he was one hundred feet, and rising, just where the ground  
31 itself was falling. He wasn't struggling, he wasn't kicking or trying to claw his way up. He hung  
32 perfectly still along the line of his rope, all his energies concentrated in his weakening grip. He was  
33 already a tiny figure almost black against the sky and as the balloon and its basket lifted away and  
34 westwards, the smaller he became and the more terrible it was.

35 Our silence was a kind of acceptance, a death warrant. Or it was horrified shame. He had been on the  
36 rope so long that I began to think he might stay there until the balloon drifted down. But even as I  
37 had that hope we saw him slip down right to the end of the rope. And still he hung there. For two  
38 seconds, three, four. And then he let go and ruthless gravity played its part. And from somewhere a  
39 thin squawk cut through the stilled air. He fell as he had hung, a stiff little black stick. I've never seen  
40 such a terrible thing as that falling man.

1. Read again the first part of the source, lines 1 – 8.

List **four** details from this part of the text about what is happening to the men.

A.

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B.

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C.

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D.

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[4 marks]

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2. Look in detail at this extract from lines 9 - 20 of the source:

Those one or two ungrounded seconds occupy as much space in memory as might a long journey up an unchartered river. My first impulse was to hang on in order to keep the balloon weighted down. The child was incapable, and was about to be borne away. Two miles to the left were high-voltage power lines. A child alone and needing help. It was my duty to hang on, and I thought we would all do the same.

Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy came other thoughts of self-preservation and fear. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was pushed westwards. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked round the rope. But the end of the line barely reached below my waist and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would be impossible or fatal. Then, someone did let go. Immediately, the balloon and its hangers on lurched upwards another several feet.

How does the writer use language here to describe the thoughts of the narrator?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

3. You now need to think about the **whole** of the **source**.

This text is from the beginning of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer does to create an atmosphere at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes the focus as the extract develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

[8 marks]

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, **from line 21 to the end**.

A student, having read this section of the text said: “The writer vividly conveys the horror of the situation. It is as if you are there with the narrator.”

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you should:

- write about your own impressions of what the narrator witnesses
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with quotations from the text.

[20 marks]

## Section B: Writing

5. Your school or college is asking students to contribute some creative writing for its website.

Either: Write a narrative suggested by this picture:



Or: Describe an occasion when you had to rely on others for help. Focus on the thoughts and feelings you had at the time.

(24 marks for content and organisation

16 marks for accuracy)

**[40 marks]**