

Touching the Void  
Higher Tier

The purpose of this pack is to provide centres with the question paper, mark scheme and a set of exemplar materials with commentaries.

The individual documents can be found on our website at [www.edexcel.com](http://www.edexcel.com)

Included in this pack:

- Question and extract from Summer 2012 Paper
- Marked scripts with the mark and band
- Examiner commentary and mark scheme

**Use this extract to answer Question 1.**

***Touching the Void***

**Extract taken from Chapter 11.**

When I at last tired of the game, the silence was overwhelming. My boisterous mood vanished and I felt despairingly lonely and silly. I thought of what the words meant, and of the dream, and was close to tears.

My feet had been buried by drifting snow and I yelled at the burning stabs in my knee when I tried to kick them free. While I struggled to roll the wet clinging sleeping bag back over my lower legs I accidentally broke a hole in the cave roof. Bright sunshine suddenly burnt away the snow shadows in the cave and I knew at once that the storm was over. I reached for my axe and swept away the rest of the roof. It was going to be a hot day. The sun rapidly melted away the cold night shivers, and I sat in the hole that was left of the cave gazing around me. At my feet, a slope ran down to an old snow-filled crevasse. I was facing the moraines but I couldn't see them from the glacier. Everything was white and alarmingly smooth. The storm had made a good job of covering the footprints I had been following the previous night. For as far as I could see, the surface of the glacier undulated away in unblemished waves of fresh snow.

As I slowly packed the bag into my sack and fumbled to roll up my Karrimat with numb fingers, I realised how desperately thirsty I was. If it had been bad yesterday I couldn't imagine what it would be like today. I tried to think where the nearest flowing water might be. I could remember seeing water only at Bomb Alley, and that was miles away. I would be lucky to reach it today. As soon as the thought struck me I was shocked to see how planned everything had become. I couldn't remember consciously deciding how long it would take to get to camp, yet there was no doubt that I had done so for I had already dismissed any hope of reaching Bomb Alley. Strange things seemed to be going on in my head. I had no clear memory of the sequence of events on the previous day. Vague snatches of unconnected memories came to me – the hollow floor in the crevasse and the sunbeam, an avalanche blast in the storm, falling down the slope where I snow-holed, and that obscene ice cliff – but where had the rest of the day gone? Was this due to lack of food and water? How many days had I been without them? Three days, no, two days and three nights! God Almighty! The thought appalled me. I knew that at this height I needed to consume at least one and a half litres of fluid each day, just to combat the dehydration of altitude. I was running on empty.

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## Touching the Void – Higher Tier – part (a)

1 Answer all parts of the following question.

- (a) Explore how the language in the extract influences your view of how Joe copes with loneliness and hardship.

You **must** include examples of language features in your answer.

(16)

### Script 1 response to part (a)

Band 5 – 15 marks

Within this extract the narrator articulates in great detail Joe's loneliness and the extract begins to illustrate this within the first sentence when Joe describes the silence as being overwhelming, which immediately strikes the reader as impactful powerful language as ~~silence~~ the adjective 'overwhelming' would not normally be associated with silence as silence is something people treasure as golden and enjoyable. This ~~short~~ short phrase immediately immerses us into Joe's degree of loneliness and hardship and implies the narrative perspective is going to continue to display this throughout the remainder of the text.

The narrator tells about how his 'boisterous mood' disappears, which also implies that Joe is disillusioned and confused from the very start as the situation he is in is by no means mood enhancing in any way.

The narrator's use of adjectives adds to the dramatic drama of the situation with words such as 'despairingly' and 'desperately' which again brings the reader to recognise with brutal honesty the hardship Joe has to endure.

The narrator (Joe) tells about how he 'was close to tears' which allows us to empathise with Joe and his situation and also ~~allows~~ draws the reader into thinking about Joe as not just the daring climber but as a human being also.

The narrated perspective used to describe the snow hole ~~and~~ he paints a clear or yet ~~an~~ almost beautiful picture in our minds about the ~~see~~ surroundings Joe is exposed to. The imagery around the white 'the glacier undulated away ~~under~~ in unblemished waves of fresh snow' almost allows the reader to be there in the serene, crisp view of the glacier but this description is ~~almost~~ almost the antithesis of the actual predicament ~~Joe~~ Joe finds himself in.

How confused Joe has become is clear when he starts to recall the events of the previous day, the almost ~~are~~ incomplete and short phrases such as 'the sunbeam, an avalanche blast in the storm' and the 'obsence ice cliff' tells the reader he does recall some of the events that have happened to him, however they are muddled and ~~time~~ Joe's perspective of things has disappeared, although he does ~~he~~ realise this being the case and question after question spills through his mind 'three ~~nights~~ lack of food and water?' and 'how many days had I been without them?' which again alerts the reader to believing

although Joe is suffering hardship and  
 loneliness he is aware of why he  
 might be confused and continually questions  
 judgements he makes throughout his journey  
 back to the camp. This type of  
 questioning reassures the reader that  
 Joe is still partly in control and  
~~will~~ <sup>enables</sup> he reader to will him  
 on to obtaining his ~~great~~ goal of  
 reaching camp.

### Examiner summary:

The candidate picks out points on how language is used and these are well supported with quotations from the extract. The second half of this response strays from the extract and becomes a generalised response.

### Band this response achieves in the mark scheme:

5	14-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptive understanding of the text</li> <li>• Perceptive understanding of the writer's ideas</li> <li>• Perceptive understanding of how the writer uses language</li> <li>• Discriminating reference to the extract to support response.</li> </ul>
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**To move up the band:** This response is close to achieving maximum marks; it would benefit from a discriminating selection of evidence from the extract for a closer analysis of the writer's use of language.

## Touching the Void – Higher Tier – part (b)

(b) In this extract, Joe is alone.

Explore **one other** part of *Touching the Void* in which Joe has to cope with being alone on the mountain.

You **must** use examples of the language the writer uses to support your ideas.

(24)

### Script 1 response to part (b)

#### Band 5 – 24 marks

(Section A continued)

(B) An extremely dark and disturbing lonely time on the mountain for Joe is when he first experiences the thought of that he may be alone stuck and in the crevasse. The narrator describes Joe's thoughts as the realisation that ~~the~~ Simon may also be dead. (Chapter 7 pg. 111) 'the enormity of it struck me. Dead?' The use of the word 'dead' brings the thought of a shocking thing into Joe's mind although the reader experiences dramatic irony as we know for a fact Simon is actually ok, but this thought allows us to empathise further with Joe ~~as~~ as he is is not aware of this, and the strength of the text and situation almost draws the reader in further to the darkening situation for Joe.

The narrator talks about Joe's initial absorption of his surroundings and highlights to the reader the space that surrounds him, ~~the text to~~ Joe uses ~~verbs~~ <sup>verbs</sup> such as 'bombs' which implies Joe thinks this maybe where he will die, the descriptors such 'chill silence' and 'coldly impersonal' & utilise dramatic adjectives (chill) and adverbs (coldly).



to again build the picture in ~~and~~ the readers minds of the dark crevasse highlighting to the reader that Joe is scared, disorientated and has just begun the realisation that this 'tomb' may indeed be his final resting place.

The reader is again drawn into the story further by Joe's seemingly mad state of mind. He 'began to giggle again' which implies he is in shock although he is trying to restrain his madness 'despite my efforts I couldn't prevent it' it leads the reader to thinking this may only be temporary and makes the reader empathise with his situation further almost willing him to get his motivational voice back and start fighting for his life yet again.

The narrator explains how Joe slips into this dark madness further 'I couldn't work out whether I was laughing or sobbing' and he almost enjoys these moments by saying 'I giggled more, I listened and giggled again.' The use of repetition highlighting his ~~enjoyment~~ strange enjoyment further.

The narrator does ~~not~~ reassure the reader that this state of mind is split between 'calm rational voice' and 'quietly mad' which is a theme throughout Joe's ~~isolated~~ journey back to camp where he his rational and motivating voice encourages and ~~also~~ almost shouts at Joe using imperatives such as 'push, dig, drag' to highlight its importance and usefulness, ~~to Joe and his survival.~~ ~~But the~~ and unemotional objectivity to Joe's predicament and its part of aiding Joe and his fight for life.

The narrator explains Joe's predicament situation initial in the dark when Joe lights the area with the beam from his hat he almost personifies its use by ~~talking about the~~ he uses by talking about the

walls were moving and luring Joe into the depths  
 which ~~is~~ <sup>pe</sup> leads the reader to thinking this is ~~who~~ <sup>Joe</sup> is  
 imagining the creature to be alive and is personifying the  
 creature into a dark creature that ~~his~~ is tempting him  
 to jump into the unknown and be swallowed by this formidable  
 monster. The narrator cleverly uses nouns to describe some of the  
 beauty of the cave and describes the light as 'gleamed' on the silver + green which  
 expresses Joe's appreciation of his surroundings even though he is aware of the  
 danger he is in.

#### Examiner summary:

The candidate shows a perceptive understanding of the writer's ideas and use of language in the chosen extract from the text. The response is supported by discriminating reference to the chosen extract.

#### Band this response achieves in the mark scheme:

5	20-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptive understanding of the text</li> <li>• Perceptive understanding of the writer's ideas</li> <li>• Perceptive understanding of how the writer uses language</li> <li>• Discriminating reference to the extract to support response.</li> </ul>
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This response receives full marks.