

Source A

Trapped –Aron Ralston

In April 2003, Aron Ralston was hiking alone in the Utah wilderness when he decided to go canyon climbing. Halfway up a rock face, disaster struck. Here he recalls the accident that forced him to cut off his own arm.

Just below the ledge where I'm standing is a chockstone the size of a large bus tyre, stuck fast in the channel between the walls, a few feet out from the lip. If I can step on to it, then I'll have an easy nine feet to descend. I'll dangle off the chockstone, then take a short fall on to the rounded rocks piled on the canyon floor. Supporting myself by planting a foot and a hand on either side of the narrow canyon - a manoeuvre called "chimneying" - I traverse out to the chockstone.

With my right foot, I kick at the boulder to test how stuck it is. It's jammed tightly enough to hold my weight. I lower myself from the chimneying position and step on to the chockstone. It supports me but teeters slightly. I squat and grip the rear of the lodged boulder, turning to face back up-canyon. Sliding my belly over the front edge, I can lower myself and hang from my fully extended arms, akin to climbing down from the roof of a house.

As I dangle, I feel the stone respond to my adjusting grip with a scraping quake as my body's weight applies enough torque to disturb it from its position. Instantly, I know this is trouble, and instinctively I let go of the rotating boulder to land on the round rocks below.

When I look up, the backlit chockstone falling toward my head fills the sky. Fear shoots my hands over my head. I can't move backward or I'll fall over a small ledge. My only hope is to push off the falling rock and get my head out of its way.

Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate. Seemingly in slow motion, the rock smashes my left hand against the south wall; my eyes register the collision, and I yank my left arm back as the rock ricochets; the boulder then crushes my right hand and ensnares my right arm at the wrist, palm facing in, thumb up, fingers extended; the rock slides another foot down the wall with my arm in tow, tearing the skin off the lateral side of my forearm.

Then silence.

My disbelief paralyses me temporarily as I stare at the sight of my arm vanishing into an implausibly small gap between the fallen boulder and the canyon wall. Within moments, pain wells up through the initial shock. Good Christ, my hand. The flaring agony throws me into a panic. I grimace and growl. My mind commands my body, "Get your hand out of there!" I yank my arm three times in a naive attempt to pull it out. But I'm stuck.

Pain shoots from my wrist up my arm. Frantic, I cry out. My desperate brain conjures up the no doubt apocryphal story in which an adrenalin-stoked mom lifts an overturned car to free her baby. I'm sure it's made up, but I do know for certain that right now, while my body's chemicals are raging at full flood, is the best chance I'll have to free myself with brute force. I shove against the large boulder, heaving against it, pushing with my left hand, lifting with my knees pressed under the rock. I get good leverage and brace my thighs under the boulder and thrust upward repeatedly, grunting, "Come on ... move!"

Nothing.

Source B

Charles Dickens escapes train wreck: 9 June 1865

In 1865, Charles Dickens was involved in a train crash. Later, he wrote a letter to his friend about the experience.

My dear Mitton,

I should have written to you yesterday or the day before, if I had been quite up to writing. I am a little shaken, not by the beating and dragging of the carriage in which I was, but by the hard work afterwards in getting out the dying and dead, which was most horrible.

I was in the only carriage that did not go over into the stream. It was caught upon the turn by some of the ruin of the bridge, and hung suspended and balanced in an apparently impossible manner. Two ladies were my fellow passengers; an old one, and a young one. This is exactly what passed:- you may judge from it the precise length of the suspense. Suddenly we were off the rail and beating the ground as the car of a half emptied balloon might. The old lady cried out "My God!" and the young one screamed.

I caught hold of them both (the old lady sat opposite, and the young one on my left) and said: "We can't help ourselves, but we can be quiet and composed. Pray don't cry out." The old lady immediately answered, "Thank you. Rely upon me. Upon my soul, I will be quiet." The young lady said in a frantic way, "Let us join hands and die friends." We were then all tilted down together in a corner of the carriage, and stopped. I said to them hereupon: "You may be sure nothing worse can happen. Our danger must be over. Will you remain here without stirring, while I get out of the window?" They both answered quite collectedly, "Yes," and I got out without the least notion of what had happened.

Fortunately, I got out with great caution and stood upon the step. Looking down, I saw the bridge gone and nothing below me but the line of the rail. Some people in the two other compartments were madly trying to plunge out of the window, and had no idea there was an open swampy field 15 feet down below them and nothing else! The two guards (one with his face cut) were running up and down on the down side of the bridge (which was not torn up) quite wildly. I called out to them "Look at me. Do stop an instant and look at me, and tell me whether you don't know me." One of them answered, "We know you very well, Mr Dickens." "Then," I said, "my good fellow for God's sake give me your key, and send one of those labourers here, and I'll empty this carriage."

We did it quite safely, by means of a plank or two and when it was done I saw all the rest of the train except the two baggage cars down in the stream. I got into the carriage again for my brandy flask, took off my travelling hat for a basin, climbed down the brickwork, and filled my hat with water. Suddenly I came upon a staggering man covered with blood (I think he must have been flung clean out of his carriage) with such a frightful cut across the skull that I couldn't bear to look at him. I poured some water over his face, and gave him some to drink, and gave him some brandy, and laid him down on the grass, and he said, "I am gone", and died afterwards.

Questions

1. Read SOURCE A paragraphs 1, 2 and 3

Shade 4 statements below which are TRUE. [4 marks]

[4 marks]

- The writer sees a discarded bus tyre
- The writer has a clear plan to get across the ledge
- The chockstone is stuck between two walls
- The writer kicks at the boulder because he is angry.
- The writer experiences an earthquake
- The chockstone was not as jammed as he thought
- The writer realises he is in trouble
- The writer is with a friend

TOP TIPS FOR THIS QUESTION

2. You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.

Both sources are about dangerous situations. Use details from both sources to write a summary of the different ways people are affected by these situations. [8 marks]

TOP TIPS FOR THIS QUESTION

3. Now refer to this section again in Source A.

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Nothing.

How does the writer use language to describe his feelings in this part of the extract? [12 marks]

TOP TIPS FOR THIS QUESTION

4. For this question, you need to refer to the whole of Source A, together with the whole of Source B.

Compare how the writers convey their different perspectives on these dangerous situations.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different perspectives on the dangerous situations
- compare the methods the writers use to convey their different perspectives
- support your response with references to both texts.

[16 marks]

TOP TIPS FOR THIS QUESTION

Section B

Question 5

'People should stop driving around in gas guzzling cars, they should take more public transport in order to protect the environment'.

Write an article for a newspaper which in which you explain your views on this statement.

[40 marks]

TOP TIPS FOR THIS QUESTION