

In this extract, taken from the mid-point of a novel, the narrator witnesses a dangerous situation whilst walking across a causeway (a road which regularly floods).

1 For a short time, I walked slowly on, determined to stick to my path until I came out onto the safety of the country road. But it began to dawn on me that I should as likely as not become very quickly lost once I had left the straightness of the causeway, and might wander all night in exhaustion. The most obvious and sensible course was to turn and retrace my steps the few
5 hundred yards I had come and to wait at the house until either the mist cleared, or Keckwick arrived to fetch me, or both.

That walk back was a nightmare. I was obliged to go step by slow step, for fear of veering off onto the marsh, and then into the rising water. If I looked up or around me, I was at once baffled by the moving, shifting mist, and so on I stumbled, praying to reach the house, which
10 was farther away than I had imagined. Then, somewhere away in the swirling mist and dark, I heard the sound that lifted my heart, the distant but unmistakable clip-clop of the pony's hooves and the rumble and creak of the trap. So Keckwick was unperturbed by the mist, quite used to traveling through the lanes and across the causeway in darkness, and I stopped and waited to see a lantern—for surely he must carry one—and half wondered whether to shout
15 and make my presence known, in case he came suddenly upon me and ran me down into the ditch.

Then I realized that the mist played tricks with sound as well as sight, for not only did the noise of the trap stay further away from me for longer than I might have expected but also it seemed to come not from directly behind me, straight down the causeway path, but instead to
20 be away to my right, out on the marsh. I tried to work out the direction of the wind but there was none. I turned around but then the sound began to recede further away again. Baffled, I stood and waited, straining to listen through the mist. What I heard next chilled and horrified me, even though I could neither understand nor account for it. The noise of the pony trap grew fainter and then stopped abruptly and away on the marsh was a curious draining,
25 sucking, churning sound, which went on, together with the shrill neighing and whinnying of a horse in panic, and then I heard another cry, a shout, a terrified sobbing—it was hard to decipher—but with horror I realized that it came from a child, a young child. I stood absolutely helpless in the mist that clouded me and everything from my sight, almost weeping in an agony of fear and frustration, and I knew that I was hearing, beyond any doubt,
30 appalling last noises of a pony and trap, carrying a child in it, as well as whatever adult—presumably Keckwick—was driving and was even now struggling desperately. It had somehow lost the causeway path and fallen into the marshes and was being dragged under by the quicksand and the pull of the incoming tide.

I began to yell until I thought my lungs would burst, and then to run forward, but then
35 stopped, for I could see nothing and what use would that be? I could not get onto the marsh and even if I could there was no chance of my finding the pony trap or of helping its occupants, I would only, in all likelihood, risk being sucked into the marsh myself. The only thing was to get back to Eel Marsh House, to light every light and somehow try and signal with them from the windows, hoping against all reason that this would be seen, like a
40 lightship*, by someone, somewhere, in the countryside around.

Shuddering at the dreadful thoughts racing through my mind and the pictures I could not help but see of those poor creatures being slowly choked and drowned to death in mud and water, I forgot my own fears and nervous imaginings of a few minutes earlier and concentrated on getting back to the house as quickly and safely as I could. The water was now lapping very
45 close to the edges of the path though I could only hear it, the mist was still so thick and

darkness had completely fallen, and it was with a gasp of relief that I felt the turf and then the gravel beneath my feet and fumbled my way blindly to the door of the house.

Behind me, out on the marshes, all was still and silent; save for that movement of the water, the pony and trap might never have existed.

* lightship - a boat using a light to warn or guide those at sea

Section A: Reading

Answer **all** questions in this section.

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

01 Read again the first part of the source, from **lines 1 to 6**.

List **four** things about the narrator and his surroundings from this part of the source.

[4 marks]

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____



