

GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(8700)

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20th Century prose fiction

An extract from the novel *Salt to the Sea* by Rita Sepetys.

**Please turn the page over
to see the source**

The extract is taken from the opening to the novel “Salt to the Sea” by Ruta Sepetys. In this part of the text, the narrator, Joana, is fleeing from Lithuania during World War 2.

My conscience mocked me, picking fights like a stubborn child.

It’s all your fault, the voice whispered.

5 I quickened my pace and caught up with our small group. The Germans would march us off the field road if they found us. Roads were reserved for the military. Evacuation orders hadn’t been issued and anyone fleeing East Prussia was branded a deserter. But what did that matter? I became a deserter four years ago, when I fled from Lithuania.

Lithuania.

I had left in 1941. What was happening at home? Were the dreadful things whispered in the streets true?

10 We approached a mound on the side of the road. The small boy in front of me whimpered and pointed. He had joined us two days prior, just wandered out of the forest alone and quietly began following us.

“Hello, little one. How old are you?” I had asked.

“Six,” he replied.

15 “Who are you traveling with?”

He paused and dropped his head. “My Omi.”

I turned toward the woods to see if his grandmother had emerged. “Where is your Omi now?” I asked.

The wandering boy looked up at me, his pale eyes wide. “She didn’t wake up.”

20 So the little boy travelled with us, often drifting just slightly ahead or behind. And now he stood, pointing to a flap of dark wool beneath a meringue of snow.

I waved the group onward and when everyone advanced I ran to the snow-covered heap. The wind lifted a layer of icy flakes revealing the dead blue face of a woman, probably in her twenties. Her mouth and eyes were hinged open, fixed in fear. I dug through her iced pockets, but they had
25 already been picked. In the lining of her jacket I found her identification papers. I stuffed them in my coat to pass on to the Red Cross* and dragged her body off the road and into the field. She was dead, frozen solid, but the thought of tanks rolling over her was more than I could bear.

I ran back to the road and our group. The wandering boy stood in the centre of the path, snow falling all around him.

30 “She didn’t wake up either?” he asked quietly.

I shook my head and took his mittened hand in mine. And then we both heard it in the distance.

Bang.

35 We trudged farther down the narrow road. Fifteen refugees. The sun had finally surrendered and the temperature followed. A blind girl ahead of me, Ingrid, held a rope tethered to a horse-drawn cart. I had my sight, but we shared a handicap: we both walked into a dark corridor of combat, with no view of what lay ahead. Perhaps her lost vision was a gift. The blind girl could hear and smell things that the rest of us couldn't.

40 Did she hear the last gasp of the old man as he slipped under the wheels of a cart several kilometers back? Did she taste coins in her mouth when she walked over the fresh blood in the snow?

The blind girl put her face to the sky and raised her arm in signal. And then I heard them.

Planes.

END OF SOURCE

Glossary

*A charity that helped the sick and wounded