

A Matter of Fact

Non-Fiction Text Study

Short and Long answer questions
Comparison question
Transactional Writing





Mauro Prosperi was 39 years old when he took part in the 1994 Marathon des Sables - a six-day, 250km (155-mile) race through the Sahara described as the toughest race of its kind. Following a sandstorm, the former Olympic pentathlete was lost in the desert for 10 days.

Things went wrong on the fourth day, during the longest and most difficult stage of the race.

When we set out that morning there was already quite a bit of wind. I had passed through four checkpoints when I entered an area of sand dunes. I was alone - the pacemakers had gone ahead.

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Suddenly a very violent sandstorm began. The wind kicked in with a terrifying fury. I was swallowed by a yellow wall of sand. I was blinded, I couldn't breathe. The sand whipped my face - it was like a storm of needles.

It lasted eight hours. When the wind died down it was dark, so I slept out on the dunes. I woke up very early to a transformed landscape. I didn't know I was lost. I had a compass and a map so I thought I could navigate perfectly well, but without points of reference it's a lot more complicated.

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When I realised I was lost, the first thing I did was to urinate in my spare water bottle, because when you're still well-hydrated your urine is the clearest and the most drinkable. I remembered my grandfather telling me how, during the war, he and his fellow soldiers had drunk their own urine when their water ran out. I did it as a precaution, but I wasn't desperate. I was sure the organisers would find me soon.

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After a couple of days I came across a *marabout* - a Muslim shrine - where Bedouins stop when they are crossing the desert. I was hoping it was inhabited, but unfortunately there was nobody there - only a holy man in a coffin. But at least I had a roof over my head, it was like being home. I assessed my situation: it wasn't rosy. I ate some of my rations, which I cooked with fresh urine, not the bottled urine that I was saving to drink - I started to drink that on the fourth day.

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I stayed in the marabout, waiting to be found.

I gave in to despair only twice. Once was when I saw the helicopter and it didn't see me. The other time was when I saw the aeroplane.

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I had been in the marabout for three days when I heard the sound of a motor - an aeroplane. I don't know if it was looking for me, but I immediately started a fire with whatever I had - my rucksack, everything - in the hope the plane would see the smoke. But just then another sandstorm hit. It lasted for 12 hours. The aeroplane didn't spot me.

I felt it was my very last chance to be found.

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I wasn't afraid of dying and my decision to take my own life came out of logical reasoning rather than despair. I wrote a note to my wife with a piece of charcoal and then cut my wrists. I lay down and waited to die, but my blood had thickened and wouldn't drain.

The following morning I woke up. I hadn't managed to kill myself. Death didn't want me yet.

I took it as a sign. I put myself in order - Mauro the athlete was back. I needed to have a plan.

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I walked in the desert for days, killing snakes and lizards and eating them raw - that way I drank, too. I think there are some instincts, a kind of *deja vu*, that kick in in an emergency situation: my inner caveman emerged.

On the eighth day I came across a little oasis. I lay down and drank, sipping slowly, for about six or seven hours. I saw a footprint in the sand, so I knew people couldn't be far.

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The next day, I saw some goats in the distance - it gave me hope.

Then I saw a young shepherd girl run towards a large Berber tent. There were no men in the camp - they had gone to market - but the women took care of me. Then they sent someone to call the police - they like to camp close to military bases for protection.

The police came and carried me to their Jeep. They took me to their military base, blindfolded, because they didn't know who I was. They thought I might be dangerous. They took me to hospital in Tindouf, where finally, after 10 days, I was able to call my wife. The first thing I said to her was: "Have you already had my funeral?" Because after 10 days lost in the desert you would expect someone to be dead.

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When they weighed me in the hospital I had lost 16kg (35lb) - I weighed just 45kg (99lb). My eyes had suffered and my liver was damaged, but my kidneys were fine. I couldn't eat anything other than soup or liquids for months. It took me almost two years to recover.

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Give Water.

Join our school in supporting The Water Project



Learn.

Nearly one billion people worldwide lack access to clean, safe drinking water. 5

Dirty water leads to a cycle of sickness and poverty. Without clean water, communities struggle to teach their children, they can't develop and hope remains elusive. You can help change that.

When water comes...everything changes. Women don't spend hours searching for a source of water, children (especially girls) return to school, water-borne illnesses are reduced and hope is restored. 10

Give.

Help provide fresh water wells for communities in need.

The Water Project is a non-profit committed to providing clean, safe drinking water to those who suffer needlessly without it. TWP works with local partners to drill fresh water wells in areas where there is no access to clean water. And we need your help. 15

You can help provide clean water by taking "The Water Challenge" with family, friends and classmates. Or, help raise money another way... just get involved!

See.

You donate. We'll show you how you helped. 20

Every donation is matched to a specific project. You'll come alongside us as we work together to provide clean, safe water. You'll see pictures and maps and read about the community your gifts are helping online as it happens. See the outcomes and know that your efforts made a real, lasting difference.

Learn more at TheWaterProject.org



<http://thewaterproject.org/>

Questions

Re-read extract 1. Answer the questions below.

1. Identify words used to make the sandstorm seem human in lines 5 - 10. (1)
2. Explain the effect of the simile "it was like a storm of needles" in line 9. (2)
3. Identify four actions taken by Mauro Prosperi after the sandstorm. (2)
4. Identify two examples of descriptive language in lines 18 - 22. (2)
5. Find evidence of Mauro Prosperi's state of mind in lines 24 - 35. (1)
6. Analyse how the writer use language and structure to portray his emotions. (8)
Support your views with detailed reference to the text.



Re-read extract 2. Answer the questions below.

7. Find four facts about the importance of water in lines 5 - 10. (1)
8. Identify two examples of persuasive language in lines 11 - 19. (2)
9. Analyse how the writer use language and structure to appeal to its readers? (8)
Support your views with detailed reference to the text.



8. Compare how the writers of Extract 1 and Extract 2 present ideas on the importance of water. Support your answer with detailed references to the texts. (12)

9. Write the text for a handbook on surviving in the desert. Use the information from both texts to support your ideas. You could include:
 - clothing and supplies
 - shelter
 - food and water(25)

OR

10. Write a series of blog entries outlining how a school might raise money for The Water Project. Use the information from both texts to support your ideas. You could include:
 - ideas for projects
 - reasons to support the charity
 - the success of charity events(25)