

Read the extract again. Match sentences A–G with gaps 1–7 in the text.

A. Each stamped with a kind of purposeful, hungry urgency, a determination to get into this train.

B. Whether this happened without dangerous cause, whether it often happened, what it signified, of all this she had no idea.

C. Looking up at the illuminated sign overhead she was glad she had not attempted to push her way in.

D. Some held their chins high, stretching necks, their expressions agonised, like martyrs in paintings.

E. The back of a head pushed one aside and pressed so close into her face that hair came into her mouth, she could smell the less than clean hair and see the beads of dandruff .

F. It was possible to walk in without pushing or being pushed, though there was no question of finding a seat.

G. A man, pushing past her, swept the dress bag out of her hand, carrying it along with him in his thrusting progress.

Once she went wrong. She waited for some minutes on a platform, a train came and she would have got into it if that had been possible. She could not have brought herself to do as some did, step in and squash her body against the bodies of those who formed the dense wad of people which already bulged from the open doors. The doors ground to a close. (1) --- The train was going eastwards, bound for a place called Hainault she had never heard of.

She made the transfer to the right platform. Entering the train was not so bad as entering the eastbound one would have been. (2) --- Others stood, so she could too, it would not be for long. What she should have done was obey the voice that told her to pass right along the car. Instead she stayed near the doors, holding on as best she could to an upright rail, the bag with the dress in it clutched in her other hand.

At St Paul's, a great throng crammed the platform. She saw a sea of faces. (3) --- As before, when she was on the Northern Line, she thought there must be some rule, some operating law that would stop more than a limited, controlled number getting in. Authority would appear and stop it.

But authority did not appear, not even in the form of a disembodied voice, and the people came on in, on and on, more and more of them, a marching army. A shoving, crushing, battering ram of men and women. She could not see if the platform emptied because she could not see the platform. (4) --- She could see it still, made an ineffectual grab at it, seized only a girl's skirt instead and, relinquishing it with a gasp, saw its wearer's face loom close to hers, as distressed as her own must be.

The bag was bundled, squeezed, stretched and squashed, between the legs of the stumbling mass. There was no possibility of her reaching it. She did not dare let go, hung onto the rail, where another four hands also hung on, for dear life. Faces were closer to hers than faces had ever been. (5) --- She turned her face, twisted her neck, found her eyes meeting a man's eyes, their eyes close and gazing. His eyes were dead, purposely glazed over, blinded to deny contact.

And then, as the doors groaned shut and the train moved, the fidgeting, the adjusting of positions, the shifting of hands, ceased and all became still. Everyone froze into stillness like people playing the statues game when the music stops. She knew why. If the heaving had continued, if there had been continuous restless movement, existence inside the train would have been impossible. People would begin to scream. People would begin to beat each other in their frenzy at something so intolerable imposed upon them.

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They were still. (6) --- Others hung their heads in meek submission. It was worst for the very short, like the girl she could see between face and face and back of head, standing with nothing to hold onto, supported by those who surrounded her, her head under the men's elbows, a woman's handbag, clutched under an arm, driving its hard contents into her throat.

When the train stopped, she thought they were there. She wondered why the doors were not opening. Outside the windows all was darkness and she understood that they had stopped in a tunnel. (7) --- She would have liked to ask, speak into the face of the man whose breath, rich with garlic, fanned hotly into her nostrils. Her throat had dried. She had no voice.

Match the highlighted words from the text with their synonyms. Discuss what differences there are between the pairs of words and when you would use each one.

shoving | relinquishing | fidgeting | adjusting | ceased | heaving | clutched

1. adapting –
2. pulling –
3. held –
4. letting go –
5. pushing –
6. stopped –
7. twitching –

Look at the highlighted words and decide what their literal meaning is. Then discuss their figurative meaning in phrases 1–8. Why do you think the writer has used the words in these phrases? Find a few more words in the text that have a different figurative meaning from their literal one.

1. The doors groaned shut.
2. ... each stamped with a purposeful urgency.
3. The dense wad of people.
4. She saw a sea of faces.
5. A marching army.
6. A battering ram of men and women.
7. A man swept the dress.
8. Everyone froze into stillness.

1. groan – is normally when people are in pain or suffering, here it implies that it was an effort for the doors to shut
2. stamped with – usually an official mark, here it implies that the people's expressions were similar and fixed
3. wad – usually used for mass or lump of paper, etc., here it implies lack of identity
4. sea – implies an uncountable number, continually moving
5. army – refers to a group of people involved in the same activity
6. battering ram – normally used to force an entry, here it implies combined determination to push forward
7. swept – implies here someone pushed the dress along like a broom pushes dust, not considering the nature of the item, lack of control
8. froze – here implies people became like statues

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