

- [16 marks]**

In 1893, William Hudson travelled by sea to Patagonia, a remote area in South America, to study birds. In his book *Idle Days in Patagonia*, he describes the journey to get there.

- 1 The wind had blown a gale all night, and I had been hourly expecting that the tumbling storm-shaken old steamship, in which I had taken passage to Patagonia, would turn over once and for all and settle down beneath the tremendous tumult of waters. For the groaning sound of its straining timbers, and the engine throbbing like an over-worked human heart, had made the ship seem like a living thing to me; and it was tired of the struggle, and under the tumult was peace. But at about three o' clock in the morning the wind began to drop and, taking off coat and boots, I threw myself in to my bunk for a little sleep.

- Ours was a very curious boat, ancient and much damaged; long and narrow in shape, with the passengers' cabins ranged like a row of small wooden cottages on the deck; it was as ugly to look at as it was unsafe to voyage in. To make matters worse our Captain, a man over eighty years of age, was lying in his cabin sick; our one Mate was asleep, leaving only the men to navigate the steamship on that perilous coast, and in the darkest hour of a tempestuous night.



- I was just dropping into a doze when a succession of bumps, accompanied by strange grating and grinding noises, and shuddering motions of the ship, caused me to start up again and rush to the cabin door. The night was still black and starless, with wind and rain, but for acres round us the sea was whiter than milk. I did not step out, as close to me, where our only lifeboat was fastened, three of the sailors were standing together talking in low tones. 'We are lost,' I heard one say; and another answer, 'Ay, lost forever!' Just then the Mate, roused from sleep, came running to them. 'What have you done?' he exclaimed sharply; then dropping his voice, he added, 'Lower the lifeboat – quick!'

- I crept out and stood unseen by them in the dark. Not a thought of the wicked act they were about to engage in entered my mind at the time – for it was their intention to save themselves and leave us to our fate in that awful white surf. My only thought was that at the last moment, I would spring with them into the boat and save myself. But one other person, more experienced than myself, and whose courage took a better form, was also near and listening. He was the First Engineer. Seeing the men making for the lifeboat, he slipped out of the engine room, revolver in hand, and secretly followed them; and when the Mate gave the order to board, he stepped forward with the weapon raised and said in a quiet but determined voice that he would shoot the first man who should attempt to obey it. The men slunk away and disappeared in the gloom.

- In a few moments more the passengers began streaming out on to the deck in a great state of alarm. Last of all, the old Captain, white and hollow-eyed, appeared like a ghost among us. We had not been standing there long when, by some freak chance, the steamship got off the rocks and plunged on through the seething, milky surf; then very suddenly passed out of it into black and comparatively calm water. For ten minutes she sped rapidly and smoothly on, then it was said that we were stuck fast in the sand of the shore, although no shore was visible in the darkness.

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- There was no longer any wind, but through the fast-breaking clouds ahead of us appeared the first welcome signs of dawn. It was true enough that we were stuck fast in the sand; but although this was a safer bed for the steamship than the jagged rocks; our position was still a perilous one and I at once determined to land.

In 2005, Ben Fogle and James Cracknell set off together in a seven week race across the Atlantic Ocean in a rowing boat called 'Spirit'. In their book *The Crossing*, Ben describes what happened one night as he rowed and James slept.

BEN:

- 1 It was still dark. We had at least three hours of darkness to go before daybreak and, as
always, I had the sunrise shift. The ocean had continued to build, with an ever-increasing
wind that was gusting at 40 knots. The swell had grown and conditions were becoming
increasingly frenzied. I began to feel vulnerable again. If we can just make it to daybreak, I
5 thought, it will be easier to read the waves and prepare for the breakers.

- Our boat was brand spanking new and bought straight
from the race organisers. It had coped with the seas we
had experienced thus far incredibly well. I rowed on,
worried by the deteriorating weather, and I thought of
10 my wife, back at home. I longed to be with her and away
from this intimidating ocean. As I rowed, a barely
12 perceptible blue hue appeared on the skyline.

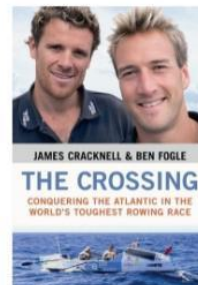
- The swell was gathering, and the breaking waves were
becoming more frequent. 'Come on, sun,' I thought,
15 willing the day to break. Something wasn't right.

- 16 I watched as a vast wave gathered behind the boat, soaring above the cabin, a wall of white
water towering over our tiny boat. Once again I dug the oars in to propel us forward, but the
wave was too big. For a moment it felt like we were moving backwards as we were sucked
20 into the belly of the wave, the horizon disappearing as the churning surf enveloped the stern
of the boat. I felt it lift, as a torrent of water crashed over the boat and I felt myself falling
backwards. I was aware of the boat collapsing on top of me. I struggled to pull my feet from
the stirrups to no avail. The world went black. I felt a weight on top of me and then a rush of
cold water as my body was brutally submerged into the bottomless Atlantic Ocean. My feet
25 were sucked from my shoes as I clung on to the oars for dear life, but then they too were
dragged from my clasp. My mind went blank as I tumbled through the surf, spun around
26 roughly like clothes in a washing machine.

- I was somewhere underwater, but which way was up? Everything was midnight black. I
panicked as I grabbed the water, desperate for something to clutch on to. There was
nothing. No boat, just inky cold water.

- 30 I had been underwater for a seeming eternity and had started to panic. It felt as though my
lungs were collapsing and I struggled to find which way to swim. I felt my hand break the
surface as my body burst from the depths of the ocean. 'Paaaaaaah,' I gasped as my body
screamed for air.

- 'James!' I cried. There was no sign of him, nor the boat. I was in the middle of the ocean
35 without a life jacket, being tossed around in the surf like a rag doll. I spun around in the
water, gripped by panic.



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- There was the boat, a black upturned hull. 'James!' I screamed again. Nothing. Nothing in
life had prepared me for this. No amount of planning could have readied me. What the hell
now? Who would ever find me out here, hundreds of miles from the nearest boat, let alone
40 land? I had to get back on to that boat.

- My mind was numb with shock, but somehow I made it back to the upturned hull, and clung
on. There was still no sign of James. Why wasn't the *Spirit* righting herself? I fretted as I
hauled myself up on to her keel.

- I could feel the boat listing. Slowly but surely the boat began to turn on top of me. I clutched
45 on to the grab line as I collapsed back into the water, the boat springing upright. I clung on,
silent and in shock.

'Ben!' I heard James's cry. He was alive. Thank god.

'I'm here, I'm here!' I squeaked, still clutching the grab line.

- All around us the ocean was strewn with debris, loose equipment from the deck. After five
50 weeks at sea we had become complacent and had long stopped lashing things down: we
could only watch as all our worldly possessions drifted away into the churning ocean.