

Answer **two** questions: Question 1 and **either** Question 2 **or** Question 3.

- 1 The extract which follows is taken from a newspaper article about the increasing number of people taking up cycling in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- (a) Comment on the ways in which the writer uses language and style in the extract. [15]
- (b) A Johannesburg taxi driver writes to the newspaper to complain about the growing number of dangerous incidents involving cyclists in the city. Using your own words, write a section (between 120 and 150 words) of the taxi driver’s letter, basing your writing closely on the material of the original extract. [10]

Can Johannesburg reinvent itself as Africa’s first cycle-friendly megacity?

“Minibus taxis are our biggest problem. They are dangerous. They just don’t care,” says Lovemore as he joins us on a dusty corner in Johannesburg’s Diepsloot township. We are waiting for a group of cyclists to form near the minibus queue, which in the half-light of six in the morning already stretches around the block. Lovemore consults his smartphone. Around one hundred cyclists living in this informal area of makeshift shacks and dirt roads on the edge of South Africa’s biggest city use WhatsApp to coordinate their journeys – there’s safety in numbers. A couple more will be along shortly, he says. 5

The group have agreed to let me join them on their commute to the northern suburbs where most work as gardeners and security guards in luxury shopping malls or the electric-fenced homes of the wealthy. Once the group is deemed big enough, we join the slow flow of 4x4 bakkies¹ and cars heading into the city on William Nicol Drive, Johannesburg’s busiest cycling street. There’s a small but steady stream of people on old steel-framed racers and mountain bikes sturdy enough to cope with the potholes and broken glass. 10 15

Sure enough, not long after we set off, one of the ubiquitous Toyota Hiace minibuses swerves across the traffic, and us, to get to the kerb. Johannesburg may be a sprawling metropolis built for the car – but the majority of its nine million residents can’t afford one. The city’s thousands of private minibus taxis offer a lifeline to their predominantly black users, filling the voids in the coverage of official public transport. With no fixed routes, it is a fluid – and in many ways fantastically efficient – system, but it is also unpredictable, with notoriously aggressive drivers. 20

If you’re lucky you’ll hear a beep on the horn before they cut across your path. A couple of years ago, one of the Diepsloot cycle group wasn’t so fortunate: he was run over and killed by a minibus taxi. Another member, Artwell, tells me how he was seriously injured earlier this year when a bakkie drove through him at a junction. He was off work and unable to earn money for a week. No small matter. 25

Artwell occasionally takes a minibus taxi to work in Rosebank, fifteen miles away, but finds the twenty-two rand ticket prohibitively expensive. With the early-morning queue, snarled traffic and a long walk the other end, it can take an hour on a good day. He says his bike is cheaper, and just as quick. 30

By 2030, the UN’s population division predicts Johannesburg will be one of six megacities in Africa, its sprawling urban area home to eleven-and-a-half million people. Traffic congestion is already reaching what Simphiwe Ntuli, director for infrastructure at the city’s transport department, declares to be “impossible” levels. 35

It's not uncommon for a sudden snarl-up to add ninety minutes or more to a short journey, and a two-mile rush-hour drive from the rich northern suburbs to the swanky skyscrapers of Sandton can take an hour. "If everyone comes into the city by car, then nobody can move," says Ntuli. "We need a solution." At present, though, it seems the Diepsloot cyclists are not the norm: the percentage of journeys taken by bike in Johannesburg is just one in every five hundred trips. 40

The city government though, led by ANC mayor Parks Tau, has ambitious plans to address this. Infrastructure director Ntuli says Johannesburg wants "to become Africa's first cycle-friendly megacity". 45

"We can no longer accommodate more cars," he says. "Look at the traffic. It's impossible. We have to encourage cycling – we just don't have a choice. Even motorists who are hostile will come around eventually."

The mayor's support ensures Ntuli's cycle infrastructure projects get budget priority. "We want to see more people cycling so we have to get out there and make it happen. It's not going to occur naturally," he says. 50

"Johannesburg started later than Cape Town, but they have some very inspirational people who are pushing all the time," he says. "Johannesburg has the political will. That's why I think they are going to shoot ahead."

¹ *bakkie*: a small passenger-carrying van

2 The passage which follows is the opening to a short story.

(a) Comment on the ways in which the writer uses language and style in the extract. [15]

(b) Imagine you are the writer. Using between 120 and 150 of your own words, continue the narrative. Base your writing closely on the style and language of the original extract. You do not need to bring the story to a conclusion. [10]

The old woman and her daughter were sitting on their porch when Mr. Shiftlet came up their road for the first time. The old woman slid to the edge of her chair and leaned forward, shading her eyes from the piercing sunset with her hand. The daughter could not see far in front of her and continued to play with her fingers. Although the old woman lived in this desolate spot with only her daughter and she had never seen Mr. Shiftlet before, she could tell, even from a distance, that he was a tramp and no one to be afraid of. His left coat sleeve was folded up to show there was only half an arm in it and his gaunt figure listed slightly to the side as if the breeze were pushing him. He had on a black town suit and a brown felt hat that was turned up in the front and down in the back and he carried a tin tool box by a handle. He came on, at an amble, up her road, his face turned toward the sun which appeared to be balancing itself on the peak of a small mountain. 5 10

The old woman didn't change her position until he was almost into her yard; then she rose with one hand fisted on her hip. The daughter, a large girl in a short blue organdy¹ dress, saw him all at once and jumped up and began to stamp and point and make excited speechless sounds. 15

Mr. Shiftlet stopped just inside the yard and set his box on the ground and tipped his hat at her as if she were not in the least afflicted; then he turned toward the old woman and swung the hat all the way off. He had long black slick hair that hung flat from a part in the middle to beyond the tips of his ears on either side. His face descended in forehead for more than half its length and ended suddenly with his features just balanced over a jutting steel-trap jaw. He seemed to be a young man but he had a look of composed dissatisfaction as if he understood life thoroughly. 20

"Good evening," the old woman said. She was about the size of a cedar fence post and she had a man's gray hat pulled down low over her head. 25

The tramp stood looking at her and didn't answer. He turned his back and faced the sunset. He swung both his whole and his short arm up slowly so that they indicated an expanse of sky and his figure formed a crooked cross. The old woman watched him with her arms folded across her chest as if she were the owner of the sun, and the daughter watched, her head thrust forward and her fat helpless hands hanging at the wrists. She had long pink-gold hair and eyes as blue as a peacock's neck. 30

He held the pose for almost fifty seconds and then he picked up his box and came on to the porch and dropped down on the bottom step. "Lady," he said in a firm nasal voice, "I'd give a fortune to live where I could see a sun do that every evening."

"Does it every evening," the old woman said and sat back down. 35

¹ *organdy*: a fine, translucent cotton fabric

Turn over for Question 3.

- 3 The following text is an extract from a piece of travel writing about Patagonia, a region at the southern end of South America.
- (a) Comment on the ways in which language and style are used to convey the writer's reflections on his surroundings. [15]
- (b) A specialist travel brochure runs a feature advertisement about Patagonia. Basing your writing closely on the material of the original passage and using your own words, write a section (between 120 and 150 words) of the advertisement. [10]

As he fished out his door key, I asked him about Patagonia.

'I have been there,' he said. 'But I don't know it well. I'll tell you this, though. It's a dreary place. A very dreary place.'

'I was planning to take the train tomorrow.'

'Don't go tomorrow. Come and see me. I like your reading.'

5

'I suppose I can go to Patagonia next week.'

'It's dreary,' said Borges. He had got the door open, and now he shuffled to the elevator and pulled open the metal gates. 'The gate of the hundred sorrows,' he said, and entered chuckling.

In Patagonia

10

It had been my intention to arrive in Esquel on Holy Saturday and to wake on Easter Sunday and watch the sunrise. But Easter had passed. This was no special date, and I had overslept. I got up and went outside. It was a sunny breezy day—the sort of weather that occurs every day of the year in that part of Patagonia.

I walked to the station. The engine that had taken me to Esquel looked derelict on the siding, as if it would never run again. But it had a hundred more years in it, I was sure. I walked beyond it, past the one-storey houses to the one-roomed huts, to where the road turned into a dusty track. There was a rocky slope, some sheep, the rest bushes and weeds. If you looked closely you could see small pink and yellow flowers on these bushes. The wind stirred them. I went closer. They shook. But they were pretty. Behind my head was a great desert.

15

The Patagonian paradox was this: to be here, it helped to be a miniaturist, or else interested in enormous empty spaces. There was no intermediate zone of study. Either the enormity of the desert space, or the sight of a tiny flower. You had to choose between the tiny or the vast. The paradox diverted me. My arrival did not matter. It was the journey that counted.

25

The sheep saw me. The younger ones kicked their heels. When I looked again, they were gone, and I was an ant on a foreign ant-hill. It was impossible to verify the size of anything in this space. There was no path through the bushes, but I could look over them, over this ocean of thorns which looked so mild at a distance, so cruel near by, so like misshapen nose-gays¹ close-up. It was perfectly quiet and odourless.

30

I knew I was nowhere, but the most surprising thing of all was that I was still in the

world after all this time, on a dot at the lower part of the map. The landscape had a gaunt expression, but I could not deny that it had readable features and that I existed in it. This was a discovery—the look of it. I thought: Nowhere is a place. 35

Down there the Patagonian valley deepened to grey rock. Ahead, there was a succession of hills, whittled and fissured by the wind, which now sang in the bushes. The bushes shook with this song. They stiffened again and were silent. The sky was clear blue. A puff of cloud, white as a quinceflower, carried a small shadow from town, or from the South Pole. I saw it approach. It rippled across the bushes and passed over me, a brief chill, and then sloped off to the east. There were no voices here. There was this, what I saw; and, though beyond it were mountains and glaciers and albatrosses and Indians, there was nothing here to speak of, nothing here to delay me further. Only the Patagonian paradox: the vast space, the very tiny blossoms of the sage-bush's cousin. The nothingness itself, a beginning for some intrepid traveller, was an ending for me. I had arrived in Patagonia, and I laughed when I remembered I had come here from Boston, on the subway train that people took to work. 40 45

¹ *nosegays*: small bunches of flowers

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