

## Text C

### Into the Dunes

by S. M. Calder

The desert stretched endlessly before me — a vast ocean of shifting gold. From where I stood, the horizon trembled, melting into the sky as though the world itself had forgotten where land ended and air began. The wind brushed past, dry and restless, carrying with it the faint hiss of sand in motion — a language spoken by silence.

I had been walking for hours, maybe days. Time felt uncertain here, bending under the weight of the heat. The sun hovered above like an unblinking eye, and the air rippled with its steady glare. Each step sank deep into the dunes, soft at first, then stubborn, dragging me backward as though the earth were testing my resolve.

They said that somewhere far beyond the ridges lay the lost city of Arahim — swallowed by storms centuries ago. The few who had claimed to find it spoke of stone pillars carved with stars, of walls that shimmered when the wind passed through them, making music that no human hand could play. Some called it myth, others a curse. I only knew I needed to see it for myself.

The canteen at my side was nearly empty. My throat burned, and my shadow shrank to a thin outline crawling at my heels. Still, I pressed on. A strange calm had settled over me — not courage, but surrender. The kind that comes when you stop fearing the journey and begin to understand it.

At last, I reached the crest of a towering dune. The sand slid beneath my boots as I steadied myself, heart hammering against the vast silence. From up there, the world looked endless, painted in shades of gold and pale silver. And then, through the haze, I saw it — faint lines, sharp angles half-buried in the sand.

Ruins. Or perhaps a mirage.

I stood there for a long time, the wind tugging at my clothes, the sky blinding above me. Somewhere in that shimmer of light and dust, I thought I heard something — not a voice, not a sound, but the echo of all who had walked this path before.

And though my body ached and my lips were cracked, I smiled.  
The desert, at last, had begun to speak.

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## Text D

### The River Road

by Mara Leigh

Down by the river, where reeds bend low,  
The path runs quiet, smooth, and slow.  
I follow the murmur, the steady stream,  
Half awake in a drifting dream.

A heron lifts, its wings unfold,  
The sunlight burns to beaten gold.  
I walk through whispers, cool and deep,  
Where secrets of the current sleep.

The water hums beneath the sky,  
It tells me go — it tells me why.  
Each ripple writes, each breeze replies,  
The world reflected in my eyes.

I reach the bridge at break of day,  
And watch my doubts all drift away.  
The river moves, serene, unplanned —  
I let it guide my heart, my hand.

### Look at lines 1–5

1. Find an example of a simile.  
.....(1)
  2. Find an example of personification.  
.....(1)
  3. Describe the setting in the extract.  
.....(1)
  4. Copy three words that create a harsh or tense atmosphere.  
.....(1)
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### Look at lines 6–13

5. How does the writer show that the narrator feels uncertain about time?  
Evidence:  
.....(1)
  6. What legend or belief draws the narrator forward? Tick two boxes. (2)
    - ☐ There is a lost city buried under the dunes.
    - ☐ He is chasing another traveller.
    - ☐ The city sings when the wind passes through it.
    - ☐ He wants to escape the cold.
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### Look at lines 14–21

7. What does the narrator carry with him?  
.....(1)
8. Find a phrase that shows he is physically struggling.  
.....(1)
9. Find evidence that shows the narrator's determination.  
.....(1)
10. "Not courage, but surrender." — What does this suggest about his mindset?  
.....(1)

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### Look at lines 22–30

11. What does the narrator see from the top of the dune?  
.....(1)
12. “Ruins. Or perhaps a mirage.” — What feeling does this sentence create? Tick one. (1)
- ☐ Hope
  - ☐ Confusion
  - ☐ Joy
  - ☐ Anger
13. Find one example of imagery appealing to the sense of sight.  
.....(1)
14. How does the narrator feel in the final lines?  
.....(1)
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## Text D

*The River Road* by Mara Leigh

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1. Match each stanza to its main idea. (4 marks)

| Stanz<br>a | Main Idea  |
|------------|--|
| 1          | The speaker begins their quiet walk beside the river, surrounded by gentle movement. |
| 2          | Nature comes alive; the speaker feels calm and observant.                            |
| 3          | The speaker listens to the river’s message and reflects inwardly.                    |
| 4          | The speaker reaches peace and guidance through the journey.                          |

**Find two examples of alliteration.**

.....(1)  
.....(1)

**2. Find two examples of personification.**

.....(1)  
.....(1)

**3. Find one example of a metaphor.**

.....(1)  
|.....1

**4. Find one example of a rhyme pair.**

.....(1)

**5. What is the overall mood at the end of the poem? Tick one. (1)**

- ☐ Restless
- ☐ Peaceful
- ☐ Fearful
- ☐ Lonely

## Part Two : Writing

**Write a short poem response.**

Here are two examples of how students might respond:

### Optimistic Feedback:

"I like how the poem shows calm determination. It feels like the river teaches us to keep moving even when life slows down."

### Pessimistic Feedback:

“The quiet tone made me think about being alone. It feels like the speaker is leaving something behind and might never return.”

Now write your own two-sentence response to *The River Road*, showing how it made you feel and what message you think it gives.

[illegible]



