**TEXT 1**

*Bring up the Bodies* by Hilary Mantel

Falcons

Wiltshire, September 1535 His children are falling from the sky. He watches from horseback, acres of England stretching behind him; they drop, gilt-winged, each with a blood-filled gaze. Grace Cromwell hovers in thin air. She is silent when she takes her prey, silent as she glides to his fist. But the sounds she makes then, the rustle of feathers and the creak, the sigh and riffle of pinion, the small cluck-cluck from her throat, these are sounds of recognition, intimate, daughterly, almost disapproving. Her breast is gore-streaked and flesh clings to her claws.

Later, Henry will say, ‘Your girls flew well today.’ The hawk Anne Cromwell bounces on the glove of Rafe Sadler, who rides by the king in easy conversation. They are tired; the sun is declining, and they ride back to Wolf Hall with the reins slack on the necks of their mounts. Tomorrow his wife and two sisters will go out. These dead women, their bones long sunk in London clay, are now transmigrated. Weightless, they glide on the upper currents of the air. They pity no one. They answer to no one. Their lives are simple. When they look down they see nothing but their prey, and the borrowed plumes of the hunters: they see a flittering, flinching universe, a universe filled with their dinner.

All summer has been like this, a riot of dismemberment, fur and feather flying; the beating off and the whipping in of hounds, the coddling of tired horses, the nursing, by the gentlemen, of contusions, sprains and blisters. And for a few days at least, the sun has shone on Henry. Sometime before noon, clouds scudded in from the west and rain fell in big scented drops; but the sun re-emerged with a scorching heat, and now the sky is so clear you can see into Heaven and spy on what the saints are doing.

As they dismount, handing their horses to the grooms and waiting on the king, his mind is already moving to paperwork: to dispatches from Whitehall, galloped down by the post routes that are laid wherever the court shifts. At supper with the Seymours, he will defer any stories his hosts wish to tell: to anything the king may venture, tousled and happy and amiable as he seems tonight. When the king has gone to bed, his working night will begin.

Though the day is over, Henry seems disinclined to go indoors. He stands looking about him, inhaling horse sweat, a broad, brick-red streak of sunburn across his forehead. Early in the day he lost his hat, so by custom all the hunting party were obliged to take off theirs. The king refused all offers of substitutes. As dusk steals over the woods and fields, servants will be out looking for the stir of the black plume against darkening grass, or the glint of his hunter’s badge, a gold St Hubert with sapphire eyes.

Already you can feel the autumn. You know there will not be many more days like these; so let us stand, the horseboys of Wolf Hall swarming around us, Wiltshire and the western counties stretching into a haze of blue; let us stand, the king’s hand on his shoulder, Henry’s face earnest as he talks his way back through the landscape of the day, the green copses and rushing streams, the alders by the water’s edge, the early haze that lifted by nine; the brief shower, the small wind that died and settled; the stillness, the afternoon heat.

‘Sir, how are you not burned?‘ Rafe Sadler demands. A redhead like the king, he has turned a mottled, freckled pink, and even his eyes look sore. He, Thomas Cromwell, shrugs; he hangs an arm around Rafe’s shoulders as they drift indoors. He went through the whole of Italy – the battlefield as well as the shaded arena of the counting house – without losing his London pallor. His ruffian childhood, the days on the river, the days in the fields: they left him as white as God made him. ‘Cromwell has the skin of a lily,’ the king pronounces. ‘The only particular in which he resembles that or any other blossom.’ Teasing him, they amble towards supper.

**QUESTIONS (write in full sentences, use quotations)**

*Understanding*

1. Explain what is happening in this extract.
2. When do you think the novel is set?
3. How would you describe the atmosphere in the text?
4. How is Thomas Cromwell presented?

*Language / Structural Analysis*

1. What is the effect of the opening sentence?
2. How does the writer’s use of language appeal to the reader’s senses?
3. How does the writer combine ideas of beauty, violence, tranquillity and death throughout the text?

**TEXT 2**

*Spies* by Michael Frayn

*In this extract from chapter 2 of the novel, the narrator recalls a turning point in his childhood in England during the Second World War, when his friend Keith tells him something that sets off a complex chain of events.*

Where the story began, though. was where most of our projects and adventures began – at Keith’s house. At the tea table, in fact – I can hear the soft clinking made by the four blue beads that weighted the lace cloth covering the tall jug of lemon barley...

No, wait. I’ve got that wrong. The glass beads are clinking against the glass of the jug because the cover’s stirring in the breeze. We’re outside, in the middle of the morning, near the chicken run at the bottom of the garden, building the transcontinental railway.

Yes, because I can hear something else, as well - the trains on the real railway, as they emerge from the cutting on to the embankment above our heads just beyond the wire fence. I can see the showers of sparks they throw up from the live rail. The jug of lemon barley isn’t our tea- it’s our elevenses, waiting with two biscuits each on a tray his mother has brought us out from the house, and set down on the red brick path beside us. It’s as she walks away, up the red brick path, that Keith so calmly and quietly drops his bombshell.

When is this? The sun’s shining as the beads clink against the jug, but I have a feeling that there’s still a trace of fallen apple blossom on the earthworks for the transcontinental railway, and that his mother’s worried about whether we’re warm enough out there. ‘You’ll come inside, chaps, won’t you, if you get chilly?’ May still, perhaps. Why aren’t we at school? Perhaps it’s a Saturday or a Sunday. No, there’s the feel of a weekday morning in the air; it’s unmistakable, even if the season isn’t. Something that doesn’t quite fit here, as so often when one tries to assemble different bits to make a whole.

Or have I got everything back to front? Had the policeman already happened before this?

It’s so difficult to remember what order things occurred in – but if you can’t remember that, then it’s impossible to work out which led to which, and what the connection was. What I remember, when I examine my memory carefully, isn’t a narrative at all. It’s a collection of vivid particulars. Certain words spoken, certain objects glimpsed. Certain gestures and expressions. Certain moods, certain weathers, certain times of day and states of light. Certain individual moments, which seem to mean so much, but which mean in fact so little until the hidden links between them have been found.

Where did the policeman come in the story? We watch him as he pedals slowly up the Close. His appearance has simultaneously justified all our suspicions and overtaken all our efforts, because he’s coming to arrest Keith’s mother... No, no- that was earlier. We’re running happily and innocently up the street beside him, and he represents nothing but the hope of a little excitement out of nowhere. He cycles right past all the houses, looking at each of them in turn, goes round the turning circle at the end, cycles back down the street ... and dismounts in front of No. 12. What I remember for sure is the look on Keith’s mother’s face, as we run in to tell her that there’s a policeman going to Auntie Dee’s. For a moment all her composure’s gone. She looks ill and frightened. She’s throwing the front door open and not walking but running down the street...

I understand now, of course, that she and Auntie Dee and Mrs Berrill and the McAfees all lived in dread of policemen and telegraph boys, as everyone did then who had someone in the family away fighting. I’ve forgotten now what it had turned out to be- nothing to do with Uncle Peter, anyway. A complaint about Auntie Dee’s blackout, I think. She was always rather slapdash about it.

Once again I see that look cross Keith’s mother’s face, and this time I think I see something else beside the fear. Something that reminds me of the look on Keith’s face, when his father’s discovered some dereliction in his duties towards his bicycle or his cricket gear: a suggestion of guilt. Or is memory being overwritten by hindsight once more?

If the policeman and the look had already happened, could they by any chance have planted the first seed of an idea in Keith’s mind?

I think now that most probably Keith’s words came out of nowhere, that they were spontaneously created in the moment they were uttered. That they were a blind leap of pure fantasy. Or of pure intuition. Or, like so many things, of both.

From those six random words, anyway, came everything that followed, brought forth simply by Keith’s uttering them and by my hearing them. The rest of our lives was determined in that one brief moment as the beads clinked against the jug and Keith’s mother walked away from us, through the brightness of the morning, over the last of the fallen white blossom on the red brick path, erect, composed, and invulnerable, and Keith watched her go, with the dreamy look in his eye that I remembered from the start of so many of our projects.

‘My mother’, he said reflectively, almost regretfully, ‘is a German spy.’

**QUESTIONS (write in full sentences, use quotations)**

*Understanding*

1. Do you think the narrator trusts his memory? Why / why not?
2. Why did women at that time live “in dread of policemen and telegraph boys”?
3. What was the momentous thing that Keith told the narrator? Why would it have been so significant at the time?
4. Reading his account, do you believe that Keith’s mother was a German spy? Explain your reasoning.

*Language / Structural Analysis*

1. How has the writer structured the passage in order to reflect the difficulty of recalling memories?
2. What impression of memory is created through the writer’s choice of language?
3. The narrator describes his memory as “a collection of vivid particulars”. Which precise sights, sounds and feelings have stayed in his memory from that time? Why do you think this is?

**TEXT 3**

*The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga

*A successful Indian entrepreneur called Balram has heard that the Prime Minister of China is about to visit India. Balram decides to write to the Prime Minister, giving an account of his rise from poverty. In this extract he recalls a surprise visit by a school inspector during his schooldays in a poor part of India known as the Darkness.*

The inspector wrote four sentences on the board and pointed his cane at a boy:

‘Read.’

One boy after the other stood up and blinked at the wall.

Try Balram, sir,’ the teacher said. ‘He’s the smartest of the lot. He reads well.’

So I stood up, and read, ‘We live in a glorious land. The Lord Buddha received his enlightenment in this land. The River Ganga gives life to our plants and our animals and our people. We are grateful to God that we were born in this land.’

Good,’ the inspector said. ‘And who was the Lord Buddha?’

‘An enlightened man.’

‘An enlightened god.’

(Oops! Thirty-six million and five—!)

The inspector made me write my name on the blackboard; then he showed me his wristwatch and asked me to read the time. He took out his wallet, removed a small photo, and asked me, ‘Who is this man, who is the most important man in all our lives?’

The photo was of a plump man with spiky white hair and chubby cheeks, wearing thick earrings of gold; the face glowed with intelligence and kindness.

‘He’s the Great Socialist.’

‘Good. And what is the Great Socialist’s message for little children?’

I had seen the answer on the wall outside the temple: a policeman had written it one day in red paint.

‘Any boy in any village can grow up to become the prime minister of India. That is his message to little children all over this land.’

The inspector pointed his cane straight at me. ‘You, young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals – the creature that comes along only once in a generation?’

I thought about it and said:

‘The white tiger.’

‘That’s what you are, in this jungle.’

Before he left, the inspector said, ‘I’ll write to Patna asking them to send you a scholarship. You need to go to a real school – somewhere far away from here. You need a real uniform, and a real education.’

He had a parting gift for me – a book. I remember the title very well: Lessons for Young Boys from the Life of Mahatma Gandhi.

So that’s how I became the White Tiger. There will be a fourth and a fifth name too, but that’s late in the story.

Now, being praised by the school inspector in front of my teacher and fellow students, being called a ‘White Tiger’, being given a book, and being promised a scholarship: all this constituted good news, and the one infallible law of life in the Darkness is that good news becomes bad news – and soon.

My cousin-sister Reena got hitched off to a boy in the next village. Because we were the girl’s family, we were screwed. We had to give the boy a new bicycle, and cash, and a silver bracelet, and arrange for a big wedding – which we did. Mr Premier, you probably know how we Indians enjoy our weddings – I gather that these days people come from other countries to get married Indian-

style. Oh, we could have taught those foreigners a thing or two, I tell you! Film songs blasting out from a black tape recorder, and drinking and dancing all night! I got smashed, and so did Kishan, and so did everyone in the family, and for all I know, they probably poured hooch into the water buffalo’s trough.

Two or three days passed. I was in my classroom, sitting at the back, with the black slate and chalk that my father had brought me from one of his trips to Dhanbad, working on the alphabet on my own. The boys were chatting or fighting. The teacher had passed out.

Kishan was standing in the doorway of the classroom. He gestured with his fingers.

‘What is it, Kishan? Are we going somewhere?’

Still he said nothing.

‘Should I bring my book along? And my chalk?’

‘Why not?’ he said. And then, with his hand on my head, he led me out.

The family had taken a big loan from the Stork so they could have a lavish wedding and a lavish dowry for my cousin-sister. Now the Stork had called in his loan. He wanted all the members of the family working for him and he had seen me in school, or his collector had. So they had to hand me over too.

I was taken to the tea shop. Kishan folded his hands and bowed to the shopkeeper. I bowed to the shopkeeper too.

‘Who’s this?’ The shopkeeper squinted at me.

He was sitting under a huge portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, and I knew already that I was going to be in big trouble.

My brother,’ Kishan said. ‘He’s come to join me.’

Then Kishan dragged the oven out from the tea shop and told me to sit down. I sat down next to him. He brought a gunnysack; inside was a huge pile of coals. He took out a coal, smashed it on a brick, and then poured the black chunks into the oven.

‘Harder,’ he said, when I hit the coal against the brick. ‘Harder, harder.’

Finally I got it right – I broke the coal against the brick. He got up and said, ‘Now break every last coal in this bag like that.’

A little later, two boys came around from school to watch me. Then two more boys came; then two more. I heard giggling.

‘What is the creature that comes along only once in a generation?’ one boy asked loudly.

‘The coal breaker,’ another replied.

And then all of them began to laugh.

‘Ignore them,’ Kishan said. ‘They’ll go away on their own.’

He looked at me.

‘You’re angry with me for taking you out of school, aren’t you?’

I said nothing.

‘You hate the idea of having to break coals, don’t you?’

I said nothing.

He took the largest piece of coal in his hand and squeezed it.

‘Imagine that each coal is my skull: they will get much easier to break.’

He’d been taken out of school too. That happened after my cousin-sister Meera’s wedding. That had been a big affair too.

**QUESTIONS (write in full sentences, use quotations)**

*Understanding*

1. How does Balram distinguish himself during the inspector’s visit?
2. Why does the inspector consider ‘White Tiger’ to be an appropriate name for Balram?
3. What is the bad news for Balram that follows all the good news?

*Language / Structural Analysis*

1. What do we learn in this passage about the conditions in Balram’s school and what is your impression of the way in which the inspection is conducted?
2. Explain the ways in which Balram’s life is shown to be harsh.
3. How would you describe the narrative voice used in the passage?
4. Explain how the author has used contrast in the passage.

**TEXT 4**

*The Thirty-Nine Steps* by John Buchan

*In this extract the narrator, Richard Hannay, is on the run from a gang of spies after escaping from a locked room in their farmhouse by using some explosive devices that he found there. Unable to travel away from the farm in daylight, he has now found a hiding place on top of a dovecote which he needs to climb in spite of having been injured in the explosion.*

That was one of the hardest jobs I ever took on. My shoulder and arm ached like hell, and I was so sick and giddy that I was always on the verge of falling. But I managed it somehow. By the use of out-jutting stones and gaps in the masonry and a tough ivy root I got to the top in the end. There was a little parapet behind which I found space to lie down. Then I proceeded to go off into an old- fashioned swoon.

I woke with a burning head and the sun glaring in my face. For a long time I lay motionless, for those horrible fumes seemed to have loosened my joints and dulled my brain. Sounds came to me from the house – men speaking throatily and the throbbing of a stationary car. There was a little gap in the parapet to which I wriggled, and from which I had some sort of prospect of the yard. I saw figures come out – a servant with his head bound up, and then a younger man in knickerbockers. They were looking for something, and moved towards the mill. Then one of them caught sight of the wisp of cloth on the nail, and cried out to the other. They both went back to the house, and brought two more to look at it. I saw the rotund figure of my late captor, and I thought I made out the man with the lisp. I noticed that all had pistols.

For half an hour they ransacked the mill. I could hear them kicking over the barrels and pulling up the rotten planking. Then they came outside, and stood just below the dovecot, arguing fiercely. The servant with the bandage was being soundly rated. I heard them fiddling with the door of the dovecot, and for one horrid moment I fancied they were coming up. Then they thought better of it, and went back to the house.

All that long blistering afternoon I lay baking on the roof-top. Thirst was my chief torment. My tongue was like a stick, and to make it worse I could hear the cool drip of water from the mill- lade. I watched the course of the little stream as it came in from the moor, and my fancy followed it to the top of the glen, where it must issue from an icy fountain fringed with cool ferns and mosses. I would have given a thousand pounds to plunge my face into that.

I had a fine prospect of the whole ring of moorland. I saw the car speed away with two occupants, and a man on a hill pony riding east. I judged they were looking for me, and I wished them joy of their quest.

But I saw something else more interesting. The house stood almost on the summit of a swell of moorland which crowned a sort of plateau, and there was no higher point nearer than the big hills six miles off. The actual summit, as I have mentioned, was a biggish clump of trees – firs mostly, with a few ashes and beeches. On the dovecot I was almost on a level with the tree- tops, and could see what lay beyond. The wood was not solid, but only a ring, and inside was an oval of green turf, for all the world like a big cricket-field.

I didn’t take long to guess what it was. It was an aerodrome, and a secret one. The place had been most cunningly chosen. For suppose anyone were watching an aeroplane descending here, he would think it had gone over the hill beyond the trees. As the place was on the top of a rise in the midst of a big amphitheatre, any observer from any direction would conclude it had passed out of view behind the hill. Only a man very close at hand would realise that the aeroplane had not gone over but descended in the midst of the wood. An observer with a telescope on one of the higher hills might have discovered the truth, but only herds went there, and herds do not carry spy-glasses. When I looked from the dovecot I could see far away a blue line which I knew was the sea, and I grew furious to think that our enemies had this secret conning-tower to rake our waterways.

Then I reflected that if that aeroplane came back the chances were ten to one that I would be discovered. So through the afternoon I lay and prayed for the coming of darkness, and glad I was when the sun went down over the big western hills and the twilight haze crept over the moor. The aeroplane was late. The gloaming was far advanced when I heard the beat of wings and saw it vol-planning downward to its home in the wood. Lights twinkled for a bit and there was much coming and going from the house. Then the dark fell, and silence.

Thank God it was a black night. The moon was well on its last quarter and would not rise till late. My thirst was too great to allow me to tarry, so about nine o’clock, so far as I could judge, I started to descend. It wasn’t easy, and half- way down I heard the back-door of the house open, and saw the gleam of a lantern against the mill wall. For some agonising minutes I hung by the ivy and prayed that whoever it was would not come round by the dovecot. Then the light disappeared, and I dropped as softly as I could on to the hard soil of the yard.

I crawled on my belly in the lee of a stone dyke till I reached the fringe of trees which surrounded the house. If I had known how to do it I would have tried to put that aeroplane out of action, but I realised that any attempt would probably be futile. I was pretty certain that there would be some kind of defence round the house, so I went through the wood on hands and knees, feeling carefully every inch before me. It was as well, for presently I came on a wire about two feet from the ground. If I had tripped over that, it would doubtless have rung some bell in the house and I would have been captured.

A hundred yards farther on I found another wire cunningly placed on the edge of a small stream. Beyond that lay the moor, and in five minutes I was deep in bracken and heather. Soon I was round the shoulder of the rise, in the little glen from which the mill-lade flowed. Ten minutes later my face was in the spring, and I was soaking down pints of the blessed water.

But I did not stop till I had put half a dozen miles between me and that accursed dwelling.

**QUESTIONS (write in full sentences, use quotations)**

*Understanding*

1. What conditions make the narrator’s experience more uncomfortable?
2. What discovery does he make from the vantage point of the dovecote roof?
3. How does this discovery put him in more danger?

*Language / Structural Analysis*

1. Identify three narrow escapes that the narrator has before the end of this passage. How does the account suggest that he is smarter than his enemies?
2. How does the description of the water appeal to our senses?
3. How does the final sentence of this passage close the episode and end the chapter satisfactorily for the reader?