

Reading...

Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun* at Level 2

This extract is taken from Chapter 7 of Amy Liptrot's memoir, The Outrun. The chapter is called 'Wrecked' and in it the writer remembers an interesting event that happened in Orkney when she was younger. Read the passage and complete the activities that follow.

Mum, Dad, Tom and I went outside, through the farmyard and out of the gate towards the shore, meeting neighbours heading the same way. We fell into nervous silence as our pace quickened. When we reached the edge of the cliff, she rose into view: down below, a large fishing boat was balancing on a sloping outcrop of rock. With each incoming wave the vessel rocked, unsure whether to be washed back out to sea or be pushed the other way, into the cliffs.

It was only mid-afternoon but it was getting dark and the tide was rising. The next wave came and there was a sickening creak, followed by a thunderous crash. The boat had tipped the wrong way and her hull had cracked. She was stuck. No tug-boat would be able to pull her off the rocks now.

It seemed like a disaster for our cliffside group but we were joined by a coastguard; he told us the fishermen who'd been aboard were not so concerned. Hours earlier, under cover of darkness, the crew had climbed over the edge of the boat, dropped down on to the rocks, picked their way along to the lower part of the cliffs and scrambled to the top. Instead of knocking on the door of a farm, they'd gone to the airport and had left Orkney on the first plane.

[...]

A few days later the wind got up and the boat was toppled from its perch. Overnight, the force of the sea against the rocks smashed it, leaving only small pieces floating on the waves and washed up in geos.¹

Extract adapted from Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*, Canongate Books (Edinburgh: 2018, pp.53-5)

¹ A geo is a narrow cove/bay/arm of the sea between cliffs.

Reading

1. What happens in this extract? Make **three** points:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

(4 marks)

2. a) Read **paragraph 1**. How were the speaker, her parents and her brother (Tom) feeling as they walked towards the cliffs and why?

(2 marks)

b) Quote **one word or phrase** from paragraph one that helped you understand how they were feeling:

“ _____ ”

(1 mark)

3. a) In **paragraph 2** the writer describes the scene down at the rocks. Circle the words from the list below that best describe the atmosphere in this paragraph:

calm
gloomy
troubling
tense relaxed
hopeful

(1 mark)

b) Pick **one** of the words you have circled and find **three** pieces of evidence in the paragraph that helped to create this atmosphere:

Evidence 1: “ _____ ”

Evidence 2: “ _____ ”

Evidence 3: “ _____ ”

(3 marks)

4. In **paragraph 3** the writer uses a number of interesting verbs to describe the movements of the fishermen getting off the boat to safety. For each verb listed below, explain what it tells us about the way the men moved.

Verb	Tells us that...
climbed	
dropped	
picked	

scrambled	
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(4 marks)

5. Read **paragraph 3** again. Explain *in your own words* what the fishermen did that shows they wanted to get off the island as soon as possible.

(2 marks)

6. Who would be interested in reading this extract? Pick **no more than two**.

A scientist Someone who lives on an island A pilot A fisherman A historian A doctor

Give a **reason** why you chose this person:

(3 marks)

Writing

Imagine that you were one of the fishermen on board the boat that crashed into the rocks. Describe 15 minutes of your experience. You could choose to focus on:

- the **start** of your trip as you set out on another ordinary day doing your job
- the **middle** of the journey when you realise that the weather has taken a turn for the worse
- the **last fifteen minutes** as the boat and its crew are thrown helplessly against the rocks

Success Criteria

- Written in **1st person** narration
- Description of **weather** conditions
- **Description of thoughts and feelings**
- Sense of **drama** or **tension** created
- **350 words**

Listening and Talking

The Outrun describes in detail what life is like for people living on the Orkney islands.

Task: Take part in a 7-minute group discussion based on the topic of island living. You can use the following questions to guide your discussion, or (as a group) you can come up with your own discussion questions.

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the best thing would be about living on an island?
2. What do you think the worst thing would be about living on an island?
3. Do you think you would be happy living on an island? Give reasons for your answers.
4. The famous poet John Donne wrote that 'No man is an island'. What do you think this metaphor means? Do you agree or disagree with this view?

Success Criteria

- Make **relevant contributions**
- **Communicate** ideas or opinions **clearly**
- **Allow others** the **chance** to speak and respect their right to have their views/opinions heard
- **Respond** to the views of others in appropriate ways, by **reflecting on, clarifying, or adapting** their thinking

Reading...

Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*

At Level 3

This extract is taken from Chapter 11 of Amy Liptrot's memoir, The Outrun. The chapter is called 'Ambergris' and in it the writer talks about whales, their significance to her home of Orkney, and their value. Read the passage and complete the activities that follow.

A mile or so up the coast from the farm, a whale corpse is decomposing in a geo and I scramble down the rocks to investigate. Colossal internal organs are scattered among the seaweed and driftwood, and the skin is spread like a carpet, over the pebbles. Examining the carcass, I'm caught unaware by a wave and jump up on the nine-foot spine to escape but still get wellies full of sea water and rotting whale slime.

These days a beached whale is somewhere between a curiosity and a tragedy but not so long ago it was a bonanza. The meat was eaten, if fresh, the blubber made into oil for lamps, lubricants or used in manufacture of soaps and other products, the whalebone in construction and for making corsets. You just had to know what you were looking for. These days, bird-watchers know the dead whales bring rare birds. While I'm examining the dead fin whale in the geo, white gulls, Iceland and Glaucous gulls, more usually found in the Arctic, are hanging around. They were blown in on a weather system but stay for days, feasting on the carcass. In different ways, whales have been used by people in Orkney for millenia. A whalebone hammer was excavated from the five-thousand-year-old settlement at the Knap of Howar on Papa Westray. One theory about the coverings of the now roofless Neolithic houses at Skara Brae suggests that, in the absence of much wood, the inhabitants used whale ribs as rafters, stretching animal skins between them, perhaps turfed on top. Bones twice the height of a man made a warm home, like the heart inside a ribcage.

In the late eighteenth century, whaleships called at Orkney on their way to arctic waters, to take on fresh provisions and skilled oarsmen.

[...]

A few weeks ago, Dad was chatting to a beachcomber friend and asked him to name the best thing he could imagine finding on the shore. 'Ambergris,' he replied. Ambergris is a rare and highly valuable substance, produced in the stomachs of sperm whales, either vomited or excreted, and found floating on the sea or washed up on the shore. Dad's friend described the substance – waxy, between white and grey and amber – and Dad said, 'Oh we've got some of that.'

Extract adapted from Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*, Canongate Books (Edinburgh: 2018, pp.95-97)

Reading

1. Find the words in the passage that mean the same as:

dug out _____

skeleton _____

massive _____

leaked _____

(4 marks)

2. Explain, *in your own words*, what happens in **paragraph one**. Make **three** clear points.

- _____
- _____
- _____

(3 marks)

3. In **paragraph one** the writer manages to show the size of the whale. Pick out **two words or phrases** used in this section to describe the whale's size. For each example you find try to **explain** how each word or phrase shows the whale's size. (4 marks)

Example 1: " _____ "

Explanation: _____

Example 2: " _____ "

Explanation: _____

4. In paragraph 2 the writer says that not so long ago, finding a whale was a 'bonanza'.

a.) What does the word 'bonanza' mean?

(1 mark)

b.) List **three examples** of what the body parts and tissue of whales were used for.

- I.
- II.
- III.

(3 marks)

5. Why do you think that 'dead whales bring rare birds' to the area?

(2 marks)

6. The writer includes some interesting imagery in this extract. Complete the table.

Image	Technique (ie. simile, metaphor or personification)	Two things being compared	Why this is a good comparison?
'Bones twice the height of a man made a warm home, like the heart inside a ribcage.' (pg.96)			
'the skin is spread, like a carpet, over the pebbles' (pg.95)			

(6 marks)

7. This passage contains challenging vocabulary. Complete the table.

Word choice	Denotation (meaning of word)	Connotation (what it makes you think) in context
'feasting'		
'skilled'		
'rotting'		
'rare'		
'curiosity'		

(5 marks)

8. Explain *in your own words* what ambergris is.

(2 marks)

Writing

This chapter gives us a lot of fascinating information about whales, and how the bodies and produce of these animals have been used over the years.

Task

Research the phenomenon known as “whale fall” and present your findings in the form of an informative report.

You should consult at least **four** different sources.

Learning Intentions

1. To **find, select, sort, summarise, link** and **use** information from different sources
2. To present research findings in a logical way **conveying meaning** and **information clearly** to the reader.

Success Criteria

1. A table used to organise information under relevant headings
2. Inverted commas used to contain quotations from research
3. Sources of information acknowledged
4. A bibliography (list) of all sources consulted

Some Sources

- <https://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/marine-mammals/life-after-whale-whale-falls>
- <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/whale-fall.html>
- <https://www.nature.com/articles/433566a>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/science/elements/a-whales-afterlife?reload>

Talking and Listening

There are many documentaries about the practice of whaling.

The Island and the Whales (2017) is an interesting documentary that looks at the practice of whaling and why it remains an important way of life for many people living in the Faroe Islands.

Task One

Watch the trailer for this documentary and note down three things you found interesting about the trailer.

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-
-

Task Two

Watch a documentary on whaling. As you watch, keep notes under the following headings:

- Why did/do people take part in whaling?
- How ethical is whaling?
- What impact does this have on this species?
- What shocks you about this practice?

Task Three

Using your notes from Task Two take part in a **10-minute group discussion**. Address each question in turn. Make sure that as well as contributing ideas to the discussion that you are actively listening to others and allowing everyone in the group to express their ideas.

Reading...

Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*

At Level 4

This paragraph comes from Amy Liptrot's memoir, The Outrun. The extract you have given concludes Chapter 18 – North Hill. Read the extract and attempt the activities that follow.

On a windy day, I climb and kneel unsteadily on top of the trig point on North Hill. Sunlight is making a rainbow through sea spray. I then continue right out to Fowl Flag. On the clifftop my heart is wild and open and empty. I've reached the edge. I howl as loudly as I can into the churning Bore, my cry caught by the waves and blown back to the shore, into the inaccessible caves, echoing and rumbling deep below my feet.

Task One

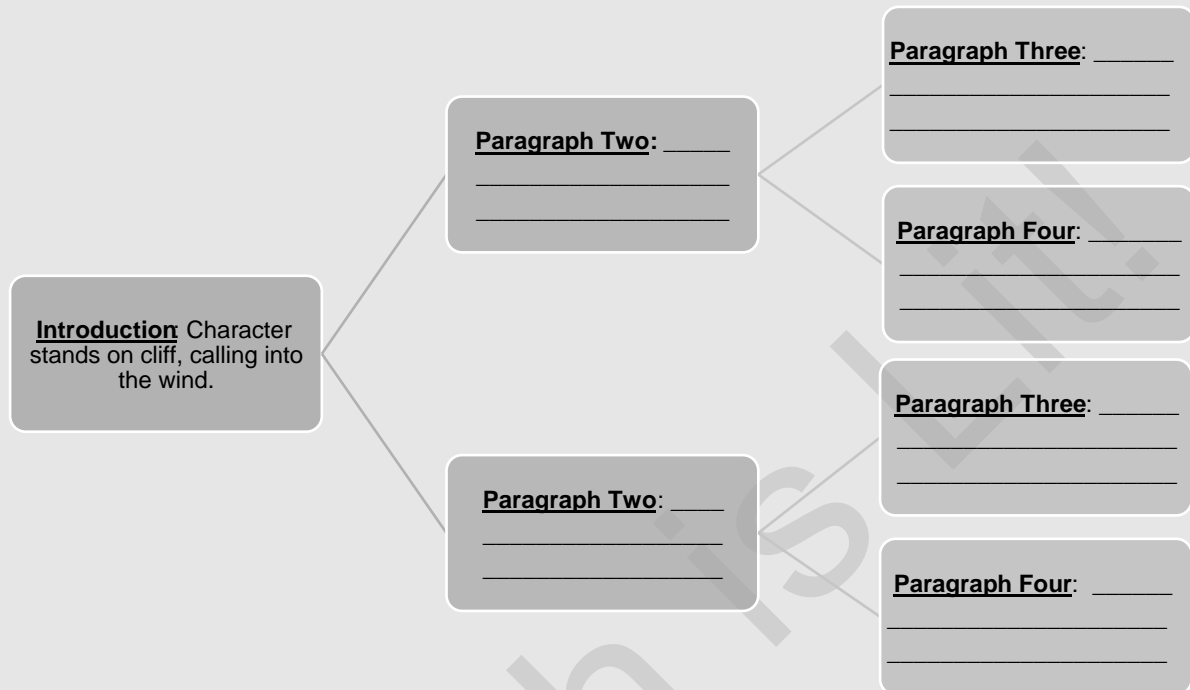
In the short extract above we are given quite a lot of details. Note down two points we learn about:

- a.) **Setting** b.) **Character**



Task Two

Imagine you were going to continue writing the story. What happens next? Use the visual organiser (below) to plan out two alternative ways the story could continue.



Task Three

Write an 800-word short story using the extract above as your introductory paragraph.

Success Criteria

- Use of first person narration to create a convincing speaking voice
- Employment of imagery and word choice to show rather than tell the character's emotional state
- A developed plot that continues logically to a key incident/point of tension
- An effective conclusion that brings the story to an end in a neat way