

# As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning

by Laurie Lee

- 1 Early next morning, four truckloads of militia  
drove off to Altofaro to attack the rebels. They  
swung singing through the streets in their bright  
blue shirts, waving their caps as though going to  
5 a fair. El Gato was in charge, dynamite strapped  
to his body; the others shared a musket between  
three. Once they were over the hill, we expected  
to hear the sounds of war break out, but the  
morning passed in silence. 45
- 10 About noon, a white aircraft swinging low from  
the sea, circled the village, and flew away again  
– leaving the clear blue sky scarred with a new  
foreboding above a mass of upturned faces. 55  
Many felt, till that moment, their village to be  
secure and forgotten; now the eye of war had  
spied them out.
- Throughout the afternoon nothing happened.  
Families ate their meals in the street, seeking  
the assurance of one another's company. Once  
20 again the fierce sunlight obliterated everything  
it fell on, burning all colours to an ashen glare.  
When people stepped out of their houses they  
seemed to evaporate for a moment, as if the  
light had turned them to vapour; and when they  
25 passed into shadow they disappeared again, like  
stepping into a hole in the ground. That afternoon  
of waiting was the hottest I've known. Fear lay  
panting in the street like a dog. It was as though  
El Gato and his men had been swallowed up  
30 in silence, or had followed the war to another  
country.
- But war was not far away, and after nightfall,  
unexpectedly, it paid its first mad call on  
Almuñécar. A destroyer crept into the bay, unseen  
35 by anyone, and suddenly began probing the shore  
with its searchlight. The beam swept over the  
hills, up and down the coast, and finally picked  
out the village and pinned it against the darkness. 80  
Held by the blazing eye, opening so ominously  
40 from the sea, the people experienced a moment  
of naked panic. There seemed nowhere to run  
to, nowhere to hide, so they hurried down to the  
beach, and stood motionless in the glare, facing  
the invisible warship and raising their arms in a  
kind of massed entreaty. As the searchlight played  
over them they remained stiffly at attention, just  
letting themselves be seen. In the face of the  
unknown, all they could do was offer themselves  
in this posture of speechless acquiescence. Such  
pitiless brightness had never lit up their night  
before: friend or foe, it was a light of terror.
- For a while nothing happened. The warship just  
sat in the darkness stroking its searchlight up and  
down the shore. To get a better view, I joined a  
55 group of boys who'd already climbed on to the  
castle wall. We could see the whole of Almuñécar  
below us – the crowds on the beach and the  
spoke of light turning on its invisible hub. As we  
watched, it began to play over the nearby hills  
and move again along the coastal road. Suddenly  
60 it picked out a lorry heading towards the village,  
then three more, all packed with men. The beam  
lazily followed them, as though escorting them  
home, lighting up their rifles like little thorns. One  
could hear distant shouting above the sound of  
the engines – it was El Gato's militia coming back  
at last.
- The trucks roared into a village, horns stridently  
blowing, and pulled up in the warship's pool  
of light. The beam was abruptly switched off,  
followed by a moment of absolute darkness. Then  
there came a blinding flash from the sea.
- Silence. It was as though a great fuse had blown.  
Then the mountains behind us thundered, a  
75 thunder that boomed and cannoned from peak  
to peak and tumbled in the valleys like showers  
of stones. There was another flash, another  
explosion, another hot blast of air. For a moment  
we imagined it might be some kind of salute to  
the militia. Then we heard the tearing scream of a  
shell.
- The searchlight came on again. We could see  
the crowds on the beaches surging inland like

## Source A Continued.

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85 a muddy wave. The destroyer fired once more,  
misting its searchlight with smoke, and we were  
no longer in doubt about its intentions. A house  
on our right suddenly shuddered, rose a foot in  
the air, and slowly collapsed like a puff-ball. A  
90 bundle of stones and trees leapt up by the river.  
A pall of dust drifted over the village.

After half a dozen more salvos, the firing broke  
off; inexplicably, since we seemed to be at  
their mercy. Then the shocked silence in the  
village began to fill with a curious whispering  
and rustling, the sound of a multitude on the  
move. In the naked beam of the searchlight we  
saw them come stumbling up the streets, bent  
double, crying and moaning, mothers and fathers  
dragging their children behind them, old folk  
tottering and falling down.

As the village ran for the hills, looking for patches  
of darkness, we saw a small boat put out from  
the shore, with two squat figures inside it sitting  
hunched at their oars and rowing frantically  
towards the ship.

And that was the end of the bombardment. The  
destroyer was found to be friendly. It had been  
an unfortunate error of war. A case of mistaken  
identity; the captain sent his apologies, slipped  
anchor, and sailed quietly away – leaving a few  
gaps in the houses, a few dead in the streets,  
and most of the population scattered across the  
hillsides.

# *'I see my wife coming off the field of battle, all smiles'*

by Tim Dowling

The rain is coming down at a profound slant and I am kneeling in the cold mud behind a stack of tyres. I can't see anything through my spattered goggles, but I can hear the bullets whistling over my head and knifing into the mud around me. I am pinned down in a crossfire. This is a nightmare, I think. But isn't a nightmare. It's my son's birthday party.

In accordance with his wishes, we have come to a paintballing centre, in woods somewhere near the M25, along with seven 12-year-old boys, eight signed liability waivers, a coach-load of Chinese tourists and two large men who, according to my wife, fought together in Kosovo.

"I overhead them talking about it," she says while adjusting her ammunition belt.

"You mean they didn't get enough of this in Kosovo?" I say. I've had enough of this before they've even given us the guns.

Most of the boys have been paintballing before, and during the car journey to the centre they chatted animatedly about how much it hurts to be shot. By the time we arrive, my wife is pale with apprehension and I have gone quiet.

We had hoped to fight as a team, perhaps against a hungover hen party, but the entire afternoon session is split down the middle, odds versus evens, according to the number the organisers have scrawled on your hand. My wife and I are on opposing sides, with four 12-year-olds, half a coach-load of Chinese tourists and a Kosovan apiece.

This group proves to be more than a little trigger-happy. It is difficult to hear the repeated shouted warnings about not firing your weapon in the loading area, because so many people are firing their weapons in the loading area. They're shooting at the ground, chatting, laughing, shooting in the air. It's like a Helmand Province wedding.

We're led into the woods and given a red flag. Somewhere in the trees is the opposing team's green flag. I debate strategy with two of my son's friends, but when the shooting starts we ditch our plan in favour of getting behind a big log and staying there. At some point the guy holding our flag is cut down in a hail of paint. I reach for the flag and the world goes yellow. I've been hit in the goggles.

As I enter the cordoned off holding pen, where the other dead people are chatting and discharging their weapons in breach of an oft-repeated instruction, I see my wife coming off the field of battle, all smiles.

"It's great, isn't it?" she yells. "I shot you!"

Over the course of the afternoon, the children and my wife get chirpier while I repeatedly experience the ambiguity in situational awareness commonly known as The Fog Of War. I exit every round early without shooting anyone. It's not that I don't want to shoot anyone – after the first half-hour, I want to shoot everyone. I take a bullet in the arse while reloading, and find out exactly how much it hurts: a lot.

Finally, with the rain coming down at a profound slant and darkness closing in, I kneel in the mud behind a wall of tyres and prepare for a last stand, my gun full of the extra ammo that I bought off someone between rounds.

I peer above my makeshift parapet, scanning the horizon for enemy movement. The world instantly goes yellow again. I raise my hand in the prescribed manner to show that I am hit, and someone shoots me in the hand. I stand up, and someone else shoots me in the leg.

I walk slowly to the holding pen, imagining an ideal world where no one has a gun except me.

the surface cautiously. The snow looked soft and powdery, and I was immediately suspicious of it. I looked along the edge where the floor joined the walls and soon found what I was looking for. In several places there were dark gaps between the ice walls and the snow. It was not a floor so much as a suspended ceiling across the crevasse dividing the abyss below from the upper chamber, where I sat. The start of the snow slope running up to the sunshine lay forty feet from me. The inviting snow-carpet between me and the slope tempted me to run across it. The idea made me chuckle. I had forgotten that my right leg was useless. Okay. Crawl across it... but which way? Straight across, or keeping near to the back wall?

It was a difficult decision. I was less worried about putting my foot through the floor than by the damage such a fall would do to the fragile surface. The last thing I wanted was to destroy

the floor and myself stranded on the wrong side of an uncrossable gap. That would be too much to bear. I glanced nervously at the beam of sunlight, trying to draw strength from it, and made my mind up at once. I would cross in the middle. It was the shortest distance and there was nothing to suggest that it would be any riskier than at the sides. I gently lowered myself until I was sitting on the snow but with most of my weight still on the rope. It was agonising to inch the rope out and let my weight down gradually. I found myself holding my breath, every muscle in my body tensed. I became acutely aware of the slightest movement in the snow, and I wondered whether I would end up sinking slowly through the floor. Then some of the tension in the rope relaxed, and I realised that the floor was holding. I breathed deeply, and I released my aching hand from the rope.

## English Language Paper 2 Section A Revision Tasks

### Pack 1 – Texts on the theme of war

Source A background :

#### **Introduction**

During the 1930s Laurie Lee travelled from Gloucestershire in England to Spain. He spent the winter of 1935 in the village of Almuñécar and found himself witness to the outbreak of war. El Gato is the leader of the village's militia group.

Source B Background:

*I see my wife coming off the field of battle...*  
by Tim Dowling (*The Guardian* 2007)

Read the article, which appeared in *The Guardian* weekend magazine

## **Exam style questions**

### Question 2 Exam Style Question

You need to refer to **source A** and **source B** for this question:

The effects of the battles on people in both sources are very different.

Use details from both sources to write a summary of the differences (8 marks)

### Question 3 Exam Style Question

You now need only to refer to **source A from lines 52 – 90**.

How does Lee use language to describe the beginning of the war. (12 marks)

### Question 4 Exam Style Question

For this question you need to refer to the whole of **source A** together with the whole of **source B**.

Compare how the writers have conveyed their different views and experiences of conflict.

In your answer you should:

- Compare their different views and experiences
- Compare the methods they use to convey those views and experiences
- Support your ideas with references to both texts

(16 marks)

***Your teacher will check this work with you if you would like some feedback***

Use the English Language Paper 2 revision tips to help you. They are on the website.