

The following extract is taken from the opening of a short story 'On the Sidewalk Bleeding'
A boy has been stabbed in an alleyway and left for dead.

1 The boy lay on the sidewalk bleeding in the rain. He was sixteen years old, and he wore a bright purple jacket, and the lettering across the back of the jacket read THE ROYALS. The boy's name was Andy and the name was delicately scripted in black thread on the front of the jacket, just over the heart. ANDY.

5 He had been stabbed ten minutes ago. The knife entered just below his rib cage and had been drawn across his body violently, tearing a wide gap in his flesh. He lay on the sidewalk with the March rain drilling his jacket and drilling his body and washing away the blood that poured from his open wound. He had known excruciating pain when the knife had torn across his body, and then sudden comparative relief when the blade was pulled away. He had heard the voice saying, 'That's for you Royal!' and then the sound of footsteps hurrying into the rain, and then he had fallen to the sidewalk, clutching his stomach, trying to
10 stop the flow of blood.

He tried to yell for help, but he had no voice. He did not know why his voice had deserted him, or why there was an open hole in his body from which his life ran readily, steadily, or why the rain had become so suddenly fierce. It was 11:13 p.m. but he did not know the time.

There was another thing he did not know.

15 He did not know he was dying. He lay on the sidewalk, bleeding, and he thought only: That was a fierce rumble. They got me good that time, but he did not know he was dying. He would have been frightened had he known. In his ignorance he lay bleeding and wishing he could cry out for help, but there was no voice in his throat. There was only the bubbling of blood from between his lips whenever he opened his mouth to speak. He lay in his pain, waiting, waiting for someone to find him.

20 He could hear the sound of automobile tires hushed on the rain swept streets, far away at the other end of the long alley. He lay with his face pressed to the sidewalk, and he could see the splash of neon far away at the other end of the alley, tinting the pavement red and green, slickly brilliant in the rain.

25 He wondered if Laura would be angry. He had left the jump to get a package of cigarettes. He had told her he would be back in a few minutes, and then he had gone downstairs and found the candy store closed. He knew that Alfredo's on the next block would be open. He had started through the alley, and that was when he had been ambushed.

30 He could hear the faint sound of music now, coming from a long, long way off. He wondered if Laura was dancing, wondered if she had missed him yet. Maybe she thought he wasn't coming back. Maybe she thought he'd cut out for good. Maybe she had already left the jump and gone home. He thought of her face, the brown eyes and the jet-black hair, and thinking of her he forgot his pain a little, forgot that blood was rushing from his body.

He heard footsteps at the other end of the alley, and he lifted his cheek from the sidewalk and looked into the darkness and tried to cry out, but again there was only a soft hissing bubble of blood on his mouth.

35 The man came down the alley. He had not seen Andy yet. He walked, and then stopped to lean against the brick of the building, and then walked again. He saw Andy then and came toward him, and he stood over him for a long time, the minutes ticking, ticking, watching him and not speaking.

Then he said, "What's the matter, buddy?"

Andy could not speak, and he could barely move. He lifted his face slightly and looked up at the man, and in the rain swept alley he smelled the sickening odor of alcohol. The man was drunk.

40 The man was smiling.

"Did you fall down, buddy?" he asked. "You must be as drunk as I am." He squatted alongside Andy.

'You gonna catch cold there,' he said. "What's the matter? You like layin' in the wet?"

Andy could not answer. The rain spattered around them.

Q1 - Read again lines 1- 3

List four things you learn about the boy.

Q2 - Explore how the writer uses language to show the agony and peril the boy is in.

[8 marks]

Q3 - How has the writer structured the text to interest the reader? [8 marks]

Q4 - Read again line 20 to the end.

A reviewer having read the extract said 'Fear is created for the boy in the story. It is clear to the reader he is going to die. To what extent do you agree with the student?

[20 marks]