**Dystopia**

**Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature.**

Revelation is the word for a complex of thought revealing itself instantaneously with the enormous impact of absolute truth. Standing motionless with Becky, my mouth agape, head far back, staring up at that incredible sight in the night sky, I knew a thousand things it would take minutes to explain, and others I can never explain in a lifetime.

Quite simply, the great pods were leaving a fierce and inhospitable planet. I knew it utterly and a wave of exultation so violent it left me trembling swept through my body; because I knew Becky and I had played our part in what was now happening. We hadn’t, and couldn’t possibly have been – I saw it now – the only souls who had stumbled and blundered onto what had happened in Mill Valley. There’d been others, of course, individuals, and little groups, who had done what we had – who had simply refused to give up. Many had lost, but some of us who had not been caught and trapped without a chance had fought implacably, and a fragment of wartime speech moved through my mind: *We shall fight them in the fields, and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender*. True then for one people, it was true always for the whole human race, and now I felt that nothing in the whole vast universe could ever destroy us.

Did this incredible alien life form “think” this, too, or “know” it? Probably not, I thought, or anything our minds could conceive. But it had sensed it; it could tell with certainty that this planet, this little race, would never receive them, would never yield. And Becky and I, in refusing to surrender, but instead fighting their invasion to the end, giving up hope of escape in order to destroy even a few of them, had provided the final conclusive demonstration of that truth. And so now, to *survive* – their one purpose and function – the great pods lifted and rose, climbing through the faint mist, on and out toward the space they had come from, leaving a fiercely implacable planet behind, to move aimlessly on once again, forever, or… it didn’t matter.

Even now – so soon – there are times, and they come more frequently, when I’m no longer certain in my mind of just what we did see, or of what really happened here. I think it’s perfectly possible that we didn’t actually see, or correctly interpret, everything that happened, or that we thought had happened. I don’t know, I can’t say; the human mind exaggerates and deceives itself. And I don’t much care; we’re together, Becky and I, for better or worse.

But … showers of small frogs, tiny fish, and mysterious rains of pebbles sometimes fall from out of the skies. Here and there, with no possible explanation, men are burned to death inside their clothes. And once in a while, the orderly, immutable sequences of time itself are inexplicably shifted and altered. You read these occasional queer little stories, humorously written, tongue-in-cheek, most of the time; or you have vague distorted rumors of them. And this much I know. Some of them – *some* of them – are true.

Jack Finney, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1954)

**Dystopia**

**Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature.**

The secular cooling that must some day overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour. Its physical condition is still largely a mystery, but we know now that even in its equatorial region the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coldest winter. Its air is much more attenuated than ours, its oceans have shrunk until they cover but a third of its surface, and as its slow seasons change huge snow caps gather and melt about either pole and periodically inundate its temperate zones. That last stage of exhaustion, which to us is still incredibly remote, has become a present-day problem for the inhabitants of Mars! The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. And looking across space with instruments and intelligences such as we have scarcely dreamed of, they see, at its nearest distance only 35,000,000 of miles sunward of them, a morning star of hope, our own warmer planet, green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility, with glimpses through its drifting cloud-wisps of broad stretches of populous country and narrow, navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars. Their world is far gone in its cooling, and this world is still crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that generation after generation creeps upon them.

And before we judge of them too harshly we must remem­ber what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo,' but upon its own inferior races. The Tasmanians," in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of exist­ence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?

H G Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

**Dystopia**

**Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature.**

We all remember that time. It was no different for me than for others. Yet we do tell each other over and over again the particularities of the events we shared, and the repetition, the listening, is as if we are saying: ‘It was like that for you, to? Then that confirms it, yes, it was so, it must have been, I wasn’t imagining things.’ We match or dispute like people who have seen remarkable creatures on a journey: ‘Did you see that big blue fish? Oh, the one you saw was yellow!’ But the sea we travelled over was the same, the protracted period of unease and tension before the end was the same for everybody, everywhere; in the smaller units of our cities – streets, a cluster of tall blocks of flats, a hotel, as in cities nations, a continent… yes, I agree that this is pretty highflown imagery considering the nature of the events in question: bizarre fish, oceans, and so forth. But perhaps it wouldn’t be out of place here to comment on the way we – everyone – will look back over a period in life, over a sequence of events, and find much more there than they did at the time. This is true even of events as dispiriting as the litter left on a common after a public holiday. People will compare notes, as if wishing or hoping for confirmation of something the events had not licensed – far from it, something they had seemed to exclude altogether. Happiness? That’s a word I have taken up from time to time in my life, looked at – but I never did find that it held its shape. A meaning, then; a purpose? At any rate, the past, looked back on in this frame of mind, seems steeped in a substance that had seemed foreign to it, was extraneous to the experiencing of it. Is it possible that this is the stuff of real memory? Nostalgia, no; I’m not talking of that, the craving, the regret – not that poisoned itch. Nor is it a question of the importance each one of us tries to add to our not very significant pasts: ‘*I* was there, you know. I saw that.’

Doris Lessing, *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1995)

**Dystopia**

**Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature.**

He was beginning to think that death was finally upon them and that they should find some place to hide where they would not be found. There were times when he sat watching the by sleep that he would begin to sob uncontrollably but it wasn’t about death. He wasn’t sure what it was about but he thought it was about beauty of about goodness. Things that he’d no longer any way to think about at all. They squatted in a bleak wood and drank ditchwater strained through a rag. He’d seen the boy in a dream laid out upon a coolingboard and woke in horror. What he could bear in the waking world he could not by night and he sat awake for fear the dream would return.

They scrabbled through the charred ruins of houses they would not have entered before. A corpse floating in the black water of a basement among the trash and rusting duct-work. He stood in a livingroom partly burned and open to the sky. The waterbuckled boards sloping away into the yard. Soggy volumes in a bookcase. He took one down and opened it then put it back. Everything damp. Rotting. In a drawer he found a candle. No way to light it. He put it in his pocket. He walked out into the grey light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. And somewhere two hunted animals trembling like ground-foxes in their cover. Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it.

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (2006)

**Dystopia**

**Write a critical appreciation of this passage, relating your discussion to your reading of dystopian literature.**

The bell that measures time is ringing. Time here is measured by bells, as once in nunneries. As in a nunnery too, there are few mirrors.

I get up out of the chair, advance me feet into the sunlight in their red shoes, flat-heeled to save the spine and not for dancing. The red gloves are lying on the bed. I pick them up, pull them onto my hands, finger by finger. Everything except the wings around my face is red: the colour of blood, which defines us. The skirt is ankle-length, full gathered to a flat yoke that extends over the breasts, the sleeves are full. The white wings too are prescribed issue; they are to keep us from seeing, but also from being seen. I never looked good in red, it’s not my colour. I pick up the shopping basket, put it over my arm.

The door of the room – not *my* room, I refuse to say *my* – is not locked. In fact it doesn’t shut properly. I go out into the polished hallway, which has a runner down the centre, dusty pink. Like a path through the forest, like a carpet for royalty, it shows me the way.

The carpet bends and goes down the front staircase and I go with it, one hand on the banister, once a tree, turned in another century, rubbed to a warm gloss. Late Victorian, the house is, a family house, built for a large rich family. There’s a grandfather clock in the hallway, which doles out time, and then the door to them motherly front sitting room, with its fleshtones and hints. A sitting room in which I never sit, but stand or kneel only. At the end of the hallway, above the front door, is a fanlight of coloured glass: flowers, red and blue.

There remains a mirror, on the hall wall. If I turn my head so that the white wings framing my face direct my vision towards it, I can see it as I go down the stairs, round convex, a pier-glass, like the eye of a fish, and myself in it like a distorted shadow, a parody of something, some fairytale figure in a red cloak, descending towards a moment of carelessness that is the same as danger. A sister, dipped in blood.

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1996)