

This passage was written by George Orwell and is an account of a public execution that took place in Burma in 1931.

We set out for the gallows. Two warders marched on either side of the prisoner, with their rifles at the slope; two others marched close against him, gripping him by arm and shoulder, as though at once pushing and supporting him. The rest of us, magistrates and the like, followed behind. Suddenly, when we had gone ten yards, the procession stopped short without any order or warning. A dreadful thing had happened – a dog, come goodness knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding amongst us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt around us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah*. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog.

‘Who let that bloody brute in here?’ said the superintendent angrily. ‘Catch it, someone!’

A warder detached from the escort, charged clumsily after the dog, but it danced and gambolled** just out of his reach, taking everything as part of the game. A young Eurasian jailer picked up a handful of gravel and tried to stone the dog away, but it dodged the stones and came after us again. Its yaps echoed from the jail walls. The prisoner, in the grasp of the two warders, looked on incuriously, as though this was another formality of the hanging. It was several minutes before someone managed to catch the dog. Then we put my handkerchief through its collar and moved off once more, with the dog still straining and whimpering.

It was about forty yards to the gallows. I watched the bare brown back of the prisoner marching in front of me. He walked clumsily with his bound arms, but quite steadily, with that bobbing gait of the Indian who never straightens his knees. At each step his muscles slid neatly into place, the lock of hair on his scalp danced up and down, his feet printed themselves on the wet gravel. And once, in spite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path.

It is curious but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. All the organs of his body were working – bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming – all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned – reasoned even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone – one mind less, one world less.

*Pariah: social or religious outcast. ** Gambolled: skip or frolic playfully.

Section A

1. What are the two incidents that take place that make the narrator reflect on whether capital punishment is right or wrong? (2)
2. Read the descriptions of the dog and man closely. In what ways are they compared?
You should consider :
 - Their actions and the way they are treated
 - Any physical similarities (6)
3. Read the last paragraph closely. With close attention to language and imagery, examine how the author tries to make the reader sympathise with the prisoner's fate. (7)

Section B

Answer only one of the following questions.

1. Write a description of the events of this passage from the viewpoint of the prisoner. (15)
2. Write a letter to your local newspaper arguing either strongly for or against capital punishment. (15)
3. Write an account of an experience that you have had that has changed the way that you look at the world. (15)