

SECTION A

Write a commentary on ONE of the following:

1. (a)

Even so, hiring a bus would not have made the end of term comfortable enough for my brother, Nhama. The bus terminus - which is also the market, with pale dirty tuckshops, dark and dingy inside, which we call magrosa, and women under msasa trees selling hard-boiled eggs, vegetables, seasonal fruit, boiled chicken which is sometimes curried and sometimes not, and anything else that the villagers or travellers might like to buy - is at least two miles distance from our homestead. Had a bus been hired or not my brother would still have had to walk the two miles home. This walk was another aspect of his homeward journey that my brother wished not to have to endure.

I, Tambudzai, not having had to make the journey regularly each end of term and each beginning of a new term, could not understand why my brother disliked walking so much, especially after having been cramped in an airless bus for such a long time: the bus journey to the mission took nearly an hour. Besides the relief of being able to stretch your legs after such a long journey, the walk home from the bus terminus was not a long walk when you had nowhere to hurry to. The road wound down by the fields where there were always some people with whom to pass ten minutes of the day - enquiring about their health and the health of their family, admiring the broad-leafed abundance of the maize crop when it was good; predicting how many bags the field would yield or wondering whether the plants had tasselled too early or too late. And although the stretch of road between the fields and the terminus was exposed to the sun and was, from September to April, except when it rained, harsh and scorching so that the glare from the sand scratched at your eyes, there was always shade by the fields where clumps of trees were deliberately left standing to shelter us when we ate our meals or rested between cultivating strips of the land.

From the fields the road grew shadier with shrubs and trees, acacia, lantana, msasa and mopani, clustered about on either side. If you had time you could run off the road into more wooded areas to look for matamba and matunduru. Sweet and sour. Delicious. From this woody section the road rolled down into a shallow ravine, a river valley thoughtfully appointed along its floor with smooth flat-topped boulders which made exciting equipment for all sorts of our childhood games. Across and around the lowest of these boulders, the river flowed sparsely in a dry season, but deeply enough in places when the rains were heavy to cover a child's head and to engulf me to my nipples. We learnt to avoid these places when the river flowed violently, but in most seasons it flowed placidly enough to permit bathing along most of its length. As children we were not restricted. We could play where we pleased. But the women had their own spot for bathing and the men their own too. Where the women washed the river was shallow, seldom reaching above my knees, and the rocks were lower and flatter there than in other places, covering most of the riverbed. The women liked their spot because it was sensibly architected for doing the laundry. We were apprehensive about growing so big that we would have to wash there with the women and no longer be able to swim in the deeper, cooler, more interesting pools.

The river, the trees, the fruit and the fields. This was how it was in the beginning. This
40 is how I remember it in my earliest memories, but it did not stay like that. While I was still
quite young, to enable administration of our area, the Government built its District Council
Houses less than a mile away from the places where we washed. Thus it became necessary for
all the inhabitants of the dozen or so homesteads that made up our village to cross Nyamarira,
as our river is called, whenever we went on business to the Council Houses.

Tsistsi Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions*²
[the story of a girl's education set in Zimbabwe,
formerly Rhodesia, in the 1960s and 70s]
First published 1988

¹ flowered

² *The condition of native is a nervous condition*

From an introduction to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (author's note)