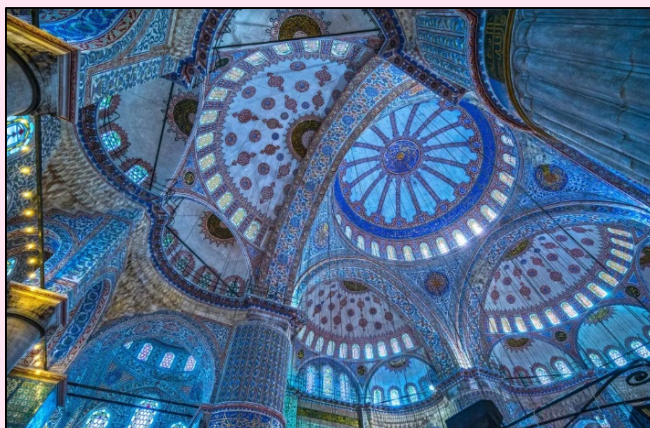


I found myself among other passengers all heading for Sofia – a Turkish construction worker, a self-confessed “drifter” from the US, a French drummer and a Ukrainian student among the mix – and as we joined the connection at Ruse our group gravitated naturally towards one another, squeezing into two compartments in comfortable silence, guarding each other’s luggage, swapping books and drifting into a harmony unique to trains. Outside, green meadows rolled in the sun, unchanging for hours until the evening drew in and the Iskar river flashed alongside like a silver belt winding in the darkness to Sofia.

I boarded the seven-hour Sofya-Istanbul Ekspresi at 11 p.m. in the middle of a snow storm, huge flakes swooping at the windows. From time to time I’d peek round the blind as towns flashed by, cupping my hands to the glass to take in the glow of TVs in darkened apartments, kitchens hung with pans, balconies lined with plants and laundry. It was undeniably romantic, thundering through the night, watching curtains being drawn, late dinners being eaten, and holding the gaze of smokers in the dark. Something stirred me awake at dawn and I scrambled to

the window in time to see an indigo sky splintered into shards over the lake. As though on fire, the lagoon was holding a reflection of the sunrise and I stilled my breath... as Istanbul emerged, the outlines of domes and minarets silhouetted against softening skies.

With a creak and a jolt we stopped. Five nights and 3,930 km after leaving London, I’d finally reached my destination. The train tickets cost a total of £584 and although I could have taken a direct flight and arrived in four hours for a fifth of the price, I wouldn’t have done it any other way. Jubilant, I pulled on my bag and wandered up the platform at Halkali station.



N.B. Candidates may NOT answer Question A and Question B on the same text.

QUESTION A – 50 Marks

- (i) What, in your opinion, does the writer reveal about the unique experience of “slow travel” in TEXT 3? Make three points, supporting your response with reference to the text. (15)
- (ii) One of Monisha Rajesh’s fellow travellers, Charles, was wearing a T-shirt saying *Green against the Machine*. What are your views on the different ways open to young people to protest, or demonstrate their views, on important issues? Develop three points in your response. (15)
- (iii) Identify four elements of the writer’s style, evident in TEXT 3, and discuss how they contribute to making this an informative and appealing piece of travel writing. Support your response with reference to TEXT 3. (20)

QUESTION B – 50 Marks

Write a series of reflective **diary entries** of a person returning to their homeplace after travelling for a whole year in different countries. In your diary you should: consider your feelings on returning home, recall and analyse some significant moments and events that stand out for you from your travels, and reflect on how the experience of travel has influenced your overall worldview now.