10LIT - Task 1; Section 2 Writing

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Black drops of rain fell from dark, foreboding clouds as they rolled in, plunging the town into great darkness; plants mourning the sun. Chimneys exhaled smoke, mixing and blending into the chilling air as it drifted up, allowing the occasional dying ember to float out, only to be smitten by a volley of heavy, large droplets, which in turn, flowed into the nearby river, now matte black due to industrial by-product, rendering it impossible to drink; parched workers had to resort to cheaper alcohol over water as injuries becoming more common. It had becoming unfruitful, the trees in the bordering forest was covered in soot from the factories, suffocating them, as they slowly wilted away. The ground, dark and dead, the years without sunlight starving all the once verdant grass.

The city, however, thrived, growing across the land, a tumour spreading its tendrils out for more resources. Roads grow; within them, horses and dogs became amorphous beasts as they melded into the shadows. Along with the foot passengers, they became a congealed mass, moving rhythmically, completely apathetic towards the unfavourable weather. The river of unidentifiable masses flowed around corners, through intersections, and into buildings, all going somewhere. There is conversation, there is barking, there is neighing, but it was all eclipsed by the synchronous clanging of iron picks on the hard, cold, rock ground, reverberating throughout the town, miners looking for one thing: coal, the lifeblood of the city.

The chiming of the bell echoes down the narrow, claustrophobic hallways of the mine, signifying the end of their workday. A wave of down-trodden, demoralised miners flowed out of the coal mines covered in mud and sweat and soot, carrying the scent of brimstone along with them. They would meet officers from the coal company, who would hand out their monthly pays, before dispersing into the crowd. Walking along with them was Stanley Conrad, counting the little money that he received, noticing that he was underpaid, but uncomplaining, fearing the possible loss of his job.

This made him one of the company’s best workers: unquestioning, diligent, desperate, afraid. Unable to secure a more thriving career and perpetually working. Walking along the dark streets, he winced as sharp stones caught is his broken leather soles dug into his skin, his shoes providing no protection. A cold gust goes past him, his tattered jeans providing no warmth, and his old jacket, drenched and blackened by the rain. He peered into the glass windows of shops on either side, knowing that he would be unable to purchase any of the vanities that he found within. However, he knew he was fortunate, having seen beggars and vagrants lie in little alleys, half asleep. Having shoved his pay for the month into his pocket, he scurried home, as he had every other day, hoping that no trouble would befall him.

Conrad had lived in this town, which would have no name, for his entire life, unable to escape the shackles of his family's debt. Despite his shortcomings, he had been able to have a family, which he worked desperately, day and night, to keep together. He was an optimistic man and went to work every day, believing that that day might be the day where he would strike gold and that everything would work out for him. He would have drunk away his problems along with his fellow miners, but he lacked the money to do so, as, despite being the most diligent miners in the town, he was never paid equally with his friends, forever keeping him and his family in debt.

Despite his efforts, trouble followed him everywhere. Last year, it was a storm. Last week, it was the disease. Tonight, he had the misfortune of meeting his boss, Sir William. Stanley had been slaving away in the mines when he was interrupted by a rather rotund man, who asked him who Stanley was. Stanley knew this man, his face plastered outside of the hellish hole that he mined. Sir William, manager of the town's mines.

Sir William was not as dull as he looked, he noticed everything, the nervous fidgeting with the pick, the broken shoes and his ripped pants, but what caught his attention most was the glint of desperation in Stanley's eyes. When it came time to pay his workers, he had removed 3 pence from Stanley's name; he received no retaliation.