

## From A Game of Polo with a Headless Goat

Emma Levine travelled throughout Asia researching and filming unusual sports. In this passage she writes about a donkey race in Karachi.

We drove off to find the best viewing spot, which turned out to be the crest of the hill so we could see the approaching race. I asked the lads if we could join in the 'Wacky Races' and follow the donkeys, and they loved the idea. We'll open the car boot, you climb inside and point your camera towards the race. As the donkeys overtake us, we'll join the cars. 'But will you try and get to the front?' 'Oh yes, that's no problem.'

The two lads who had never been interested in this Karachi sport were suddenly fired up with enthusiasm. We waited for eternity on the brow of the hill, me perched in the boot with a zoom lens pointing out. Nearly one hour later I was beginning to feel rather silly when the only action was a villager on a wobbly bicycle, who nearly fell off as he cycled past and gazed around at us.

Several vehicles went past, and some donkey-carts carrying spectators. 'Are they coming?' we called out to them. 'Coming, coming,' came the reply. I was beginning to lose faith in its happening, but the lads remained confident.

Just as I was assuming that the race had been cancelled, we spotted two approaching donkey-carts in front of a cloud of fumes and dust created by some fifty vehicles roaring up in their wake. As they drew nearer, Yaqoob revved up the engine and

**Comment [MK1]:** Title stands out, it is quirky, unusual and attention grabbing due to the unexpected and shocking imagery of a headless goat.  
Game of polo is once again something the British audience would know about but the headless goat is an unusual twist to it.  
Game of polo: stepping stone into the strange world  
Polo and headless goat are juxtaposition- Polo has aristocratic, sophisticated and refined connotations.  
Headless goat has very barbaric, savage connotations.  
This piques the reader's interest and causes the reader to wonder how this combination works.

**Comment [MK2]:** Karachi: A place in Pakistan

**Comment [MK3]:** Immediate high energy start to build up tension fast  
The paragraph in general is a promising paragraph although towards the end it does not quite deliver.  
This might suggest:  
- Tension management to build up to climax  
- Reinforces the sense of unpredictability of an Asian country compared to a Western country

**Comment [MK4]:** Wacky crazy and wild.  
'Wacky races' is the name of a cartoon show which allows us to:  
- Imagine the extent of anarchy and the complete lack of rules alike in a cartoon  
- But also relate to what it might be like in the goat race

**Comment [MK5]:** Immediate agreement without any hesitation

**Comment [MK6]:** Something slightly dangerous and unaccepted in a Western country but comes across as something fun and exciting

**Comment [MK7]:** Fast paced, relatively short sentences. Alternating speech structure (Them to the author(us), author to them)

**Comment [MK8]:** Broken grammar rules- cannot normally start the sentence with a 'But', suggest a natural flow of conversation.  
Adventurous spirits are expressed by their desire to seek adventure (get to the front) in the midst of the action. Confidence at being able to be in the front their lack of worries or concern

**Comment [MK9]:** Hyperbole of time, which suggest that the wait is long because of their impatience and excitement

**Comment [MK10]:** Lull in tension which allows for a more exciting climax. This lull in tension is also created by longer sentences

**Comment [MK11]:** Excitement is replaced

**Comment [MK12]:** Humorous

**Comment [MK13]:** Clash of culture. The villager thinks the author is unusual whereas we (the author and the readers) mirror his thoughts, we too think he is unusual

**Comment [MK14]:** Lack of any urgencies, suggest a laid back attitude. Lack of any time clause suggest the difference between life here and perhaps the more orderly, predictable and structured back in England (i.e. a formula 1 race would have run at a definite start time and everyone would be aware of what was happening)

**Comment [MK15]:** Alternating structure in this paragraph. Them vs. us(author). Fairly short paragraphs with breaks throughout to show a build up on excitement once again.

**Comment [MK16]:** Suggest that tension is about to built up, sudden shift in tone and monosyllabic word foregrounding the sentence.

**Comment [MK17]:** Exotic, dirty and unknown, creates tension as readers want to know what is behind the "screen"

**Comment [MK18]:** Stirring up of tension emphasised by the harsh consonants of 'the onomatopoeia roaring'- might suggest an animalistic crowd, desperate to get in the midst of the action too, obvious display of the popularity of the race

**Comment [MK19]:** Unusual name once again suggest this exotic twist- reveals our culture is too different as we think it is weird

began to **inch** the car out of the lay-by. The **two donkeys were almost dwarfed by their entourage**; but there was **no denying their speed** — the Kibla donkey is said to achieve speeds of up to **40 kph**, and this looked close. The two were **neck-and-neck**, their **jockeys perched on top of the tiny carts using their whips energetically, although not cruelly.**

**Comment [MK20]:** Step by step, gradual build up on tension

**Comment [MK21]:** Slightly comical image as although the donkeys are meant to be the main attraction, they are seemingly nothing compared to the crowd

**Comment [MK22]:** Image of instability position, yet a frantic and energetic image- excitement of race

**Comment [MK23]:** Creates the impression that this is unique and unusual, we do not get the impression that the donkeys are being tortured and mistreated. Author is celebrating culture not criticizing it

**Comment [MK24]:** Travel writing style, more informative style with lack of personal detail as in paragraphs before. Short paragraph filled with mono-syllabic words shows the amount of activity going on- builds up tension and excitement

**Comment [MK25]:** Triad, onomatopoeia, really cluttered sentences as there is so much detail in one long sentence, echoes the cluttered sense- **Cacophony of noise**

**Comment [MK26]:** Brackets give information right after it but also disrupts the flow of the text and the structure- once again, echoes the overwhelming amount of detail

**Comment [MK27]:** Once again, allows the readers to understand and therefore to be more a part of the action- a stepping stone into the unknown world

**Comment [MK28]:** Adverbs shows the inordinate amount of activity that is surrounding the author. Full expression of liveliness and vibrancy

**Comment [MK29]:** Diversity of types of vehicles perhaps suggest that this is something that is popular and a common passion of all the local people- shows a sense of unity among the people within their differences

**Comment [MK30]:** Real sense of chaos  
-Long sentences with overwhelming detail  
-List to create a fast pace- **Asyndeton**  
-Content is chaotic and disorderly  
-Triad within to show detail

**Comment [MK31]:** Creates an almost reckless and slightly dangerous yet thrilling image

**Comment [MK32]:** Without rules- in disorder

**Comment [MK33]:** Brings in something relatable, allows us to understand. Triad to once again, shows mayhem and excitement of the race

**Comment [MK34]:** Even though there's so much going on and a lot is seemingly dangerous, we do not feel a sense of danger, rather a thrill of excitement

**Comment [MK35]:** Young driver thoroughly enjoys this (dangerous+adventurous), a chance to demonstrate his skills and almost prove himself

**Comment [MK36]:** Driving is instinctive. Suggest a sense of precision and accuracy. Sharp, shorts, clear, clean consonants reflect this

**Comment [MK37]:** Quick reflexes and response

**Comment [MK38]:** Metaphor- suggest that you have to be bold and daring.

**Comment [MK39]:** Triad once again

**Comment [MK40]:** Chaotic scene- Everyone is a part of the race

**Comment [MK41]:** Real sense of danger and chaos as there is so much going on and the readers cannot really keep up with the myriad activity.

**Comment [MK42]:** Danger and excitement- almost cartoon race image- relates back to the "Wacky Race"

**Comment [MK43]:** Simplistic joy- shows the simplistic lifestyle of the people there. Short sentence shows that this is certain not ambiguous  
Yaqoob comes across as a free spirit, he's humorous and seemingly easy going

The noise of the approaching vehicles grew; **horns tooting, bells ringing, and the special rattles used just for this purpose (like maracas, a metal container filled with dried beans).** Men **standing on top of their cars and vans, hanging out of taxis and perched on lorries, all cheered and shouted, while the vehicles jostled** to get to the front of the convoy.

Yaqoob chose exactly the right moment to **edge out** of the road and **swerve in** front of the nearest car, finding the perfect place to see the two donkeys and at the front of the vehicles. This was **Formula One without rules, or a city-centre rush hour gone anarchic; a complete flouting of every type of traffic rule and common sense.**

**Our young driver relished this unusual test of driving skills. It was survival of the fittest, and depended upon the ability to cut in front of a vehicle with a sharp flick of the steering wheel (no lane discipline here); quick reflexes to spot a gap in the traffic for a couple of seconds; nerves of steel, and an effective horn.** There were **two races** — the motorized spectators at the back; in front, the two donkeys, still running close and amazingly not put off by the uproar just behind them. Ahead of the donkeys, **oncoming traffic** — for it was a main road — had to **dive into the ditch** and wait there until we had passed. **Yaqoob loved it.** We

stayed near to the front, his hand permanently on the horn and his language growing more colourful with every vehicle that tried to cut in front. ...

**Comment [MK44]: Euphemism-** "sugar coating things". "Colourful" suggest that their culture is unique, exotic, a dash of local colour- instead of being offensive or repulsive

The road straightened and levelled, and everyone picked up speed as we neared the end of the race. But just as they were reaching the finishing line, the hospital gate, there was a near pile-up as the leading donkey swerved, lost his footing and he and the cart tumbled over. The race was over.

**Comment [MK45]:** First sentence of the paragraph is really long, reflects the reader's anxiety to know what has happen, we are holding our breathe for what is about to come

**Comment [MK46]:** Triad of action

**Comment [MK47]:** Building up of tension- final build up of tension

**Comment [MK48]:** Sense of climax, but because something has gone wrong, foreshadowed also by the hospital gate so the readers are bracing themselves for an accident to occur

**Comment [MK49]:** Short sentence, definitive tone and monosyllabic words- sudden slow down of action, anti-climax.

And then the trouble began. I assumed the winner was the one who completed the race but it was not seen that way by everyone. Apart from the two jockeys and 'officials' (who, it turned out, were actually monitoring the race) there were over a hundred punters who had all staked money on the race, and therefore had strong opinions. Some were claiming that the donkey had fallen because the other one had been ridden too close to him.

**Comment [MK50]:** Energy is instead carried over into the next paragraph as there has been so much built up that we are still anticipating something

**Comment [MK51]:** Reflects our assumptions, also suggest that these assumptions are unlikely to be valid- unpredictable

Voices were raised, fists were out and tempers rising. Everyone gathered around one jockey and official, while the bookmakers were trying to insist that the race should be re-run.

**Comment [MK52]:** Serious situation, now we are able to assume that something bad is going to happen. Overwhelming number of people are against what has happened

**Comment [MK53]:** Triad, emphasised with sibilance. Suggest danger and violence. Situation is progressively worsening- shown by the 'ing' continuous tense

**Comment [MK54]:** Jockey is being overwhelmed and people were ganging up on him, image of a mob is slowly being created

Yaqoob and Iqbal were nervous of hanging around a volatile situation. They agreed to find out for me what was happening ordering me to stay inside the car as they were swallowed up by the crowd. They emerged sometime later. 'It's still not resolved,' said Iqbal, 'but it's starting to get nasty. I think we should leave.' As we drove away, Yaqoob reflected on his driving skills. 'I really enjoyed that,' he said as we drove off at a more sedate pace. 'But I don't even have my licence yet because I'm underage!'

**Comment [MK55]:** Although adventurous, they are sensible as well and they know when their limits (wisdom)

**Comment [MK56]:** Commanding, assertive tone and modality of diction reflects one of a parents- it is a short sentence without any explanation Shows they care about Levine's safety.

**Comment [MK57]:** Metaphor, suggest the crowd is overwhelming, monstrous and threatening

**Comment [MK58]:** Still a sense of reckless adventurous spirits yet it seems balanced as he can drive at a more sedate pace too. Leads into the next paragraph

They both found this hilarious, but I was glad he hadn't told me before; an inexperienced, underage driver causing a massive pile-up in the middle of the high- stakes donkey race could have caused problems.

Emma Levine

**Comment [MK59]:** Calmer, more reflective paragraph.

Show the cultural differences as although they found it funny, our and the author's upbringing once again comes back and reminds us of the dangers and what could have possibly happened. Only within the midst of the exhilarating atmosphere during the race would we have overlooked the danger

**Comment [MK60]:** Pseudo-triad to emphasize the possible dangers that we are reminded off.

**Genre:** Travel writing – a recount of a personal experience, usually more anecdotal than factual

**Audience:** Adult readers

**Purpose:**

- **Recreate the experience of the donkey race**
  - New and unfamiliar
  - Excitement and energy
  - Chaotic anarchy (crazy wildness)
  - Exotic, strange and unusual aspects of the race
  - However there is a sense of danger towards the end
- The characters are free, adventurous and a little wild, however, their sensibility is shown at the end

**General Notes:**

The structure that is often used in the extract is a combination of things that readers is familiar with + an unusual, exotic, quirky twist (Colour coded green in the text)

**It draws out the parallels between the Western world and the Eastern world** e.g. Polo is something the reader is familiar with but the headless goat makes this seem unusual, exotic and different