

## 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 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.

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.

**Comment [s1]:** Polo contrasts with headless goat because polo is associated with sophistication, elegance and refinement, which contrasts with headless goad which seems barbaric. This makes the situation seem very exotic and this unusual title also intrigues the reader and instantly makes them interested in the article.

**Comment [s2]:** There is no real introduction this draws the readers straight in to the story as we wonder what is going to be viewed and what the wacky races are

**Comment [s3]:** Harsh consonants enhance the excitement and intensity of the race.

**Comment [s4]:** Monosyllabic words create a fast pace, therefore speeding up our reading and creating more excitement.

**Comment [s5]:** Wacky suggests wildness and a crazy atmosphere, so it shows that people love this wild experience. Again this might seem exotic to the everyday Western readers who are the audience for this piece of writing

**Comment [s6]:** Shows that they love excitement, which shows their free spirit.

**Comment [s7]:** Ready and geared up for action – shows their sense of adventure.

**Comment [s8]:** Very unusual and quite comical – shows the exotic and strange nature of this experience.

**Comment [s9]:** The slower pace reduces tension and makes it seem like nothing is going to happen – but the slower parts here make the exciting parts next seem even more intense

**Comment [s10]:** Repetition but to sense urgency – accentuates the absence of excitement and tension.

**Comment [s11]:** The boys are still keen to see the race, so it shows their enthusiasm and sense of adventure.

**Comment [s12]:** The 'just' marks a shift in tone = excitement.

**Comment [s13]:** Vivid imagery – the cloud of dust suggests something unknown, suspense, excitement and mystery, which makes it intense.

**Comment [s14]:** Suddenly the boring stillness from before is disturbed and the race now seems more exciting in comparison to the quieter, earlier part of the extract.

**Comment [s15]:** No fear – straight in the moment, shows the Yaqoob and Iqbal's free spirits

**Comment [s16]:** Definite tone shows that the speed is extremely fast.

**Comment [s17]:** Fast pace and monosyllabic words make the imagery more exciting and more vivid.

**Comment [s18]:** Shows excitement but shows that the people are not entirely barbaric or wild, as they are not cruel.

**Comment [s19]:** Triad emphasises the excitement and the loud, chaotic sound of the noise.

**Comment [s20]:** There is something primitive about this. This also shows the nature and free spirit of the people.

**Comment [s21]:** Triad, emphasises chaos. Also shows no fear which contributes the sense of exotic adventure

**Comment [s22]:** Very exciting and very intense. Harsh consonants suggest a small hint of danger

**Comment [s23]:** Comparison, makes reader understand it better (F1 is a fast and exciting car race.

**Comment [s24]:** No order, shows chaos.

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 [s25]:** However, Yaqoob Loves this chaos reinforcing his freedom and sense of adventure.

**Comment [s26]:** Sounds dangerous and exciting.

**Comment [s27]:** Fast pace makes it seem more exciting.

**Comment [s28]:** Triad - seems chaotic and dangerous but this is exhilarating rather than scary

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 [s29]:** This shows that the order (traffic on the roads) has been pushed aside and rather than complain people are watching the race, this suggests that behaviour is more spontaneous and unpredictable in Pakistan

**Comment [s30]:** Loving this chaos shows his free spirit.

**Comment [s31]:** The euphemism (he is really swearing) makes the people in this extract seem more likable and roguish rather than offensive. This also suggests an exotic life, filled with excitement and adventure.

**Comment [s32]:** A sense that we are building up towards a climax – easy roads will increase the speed further.

**Comment [s33]:** The list like details here suggest that these three things happened in quick succession as is emphasised by the triad

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. **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 [s34]:** Short sentence and definitive tone shows that it has ended. There is a sense of shock at the unexpected ending and the audience is made to wonder about what will happen next

**Comment [s35]:** Grim tone – shows that danger has started.

**Comment [s36]:** Shows the different between the writer's western approach to the problem and the approach of the Pakistani people

**Comment [s37]:** Money suggest that this is going to get serious, violent and dangerous.

**Comment [s38]:** Strong opinions have violent connotations, so this adds a strong sense of danger.

**Comment [s39]:** Triad enhances the dangerous situation. The sibilance also makes this seem more threatening and tense.

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 [s40]:** Shows that although the Iqbal and Yaqoob are free spirited, they are also sensible and responsible as they are aware of the consequences, this makes them seem very wise.

**Comment [s41]:** The positive impression of these two characters is reinforced as this command makes them seem caring

**Comment [s42]:** Dangerous and overwhelming.

**Comment [s43]:** Controlling tone shows that they are making the right choices.

**Comment [s44]:** Shows just how exotic these people really are because no civilized European would ever think of driving without a license.

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 highstakes donkey race could have caused problems**.

**Comment [s45]:** Shows that this whole experience could have gone completely wrong – however the tentative 'could have' and the relatively light hearted tone here suggests that rather than being worried by the danger and reprimanding herself for getting into this kind of situation, Emma Levine is actually exhilarated by the risks she is taking

Emma Levine

**ORGANISING PRINCIPLES:**

**RECREATE THE EXCITEMENT, CHAOS AND  
CRAZY WILDNESS OF THE EXPERIENCE ...**

**A SENSE OF EXOTIC DANGER ABOUT THESE  
FAR - FLUNG COUNTRIES**

**CREATE AN IMPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE -  
FREEDOM, ADVENTUOUS, A BIT WILD**