

SHORT STORY 8

The follower
By Frederick Carruthers Cornell

About Frederick Carruthers Cornell (1867 – 1921)

Frederick Carruthers Cornell was born in Devon, England, in 1867. he commenced his mining career in Brazil and then Mexico. Before coming to South Africa in 1901, he ran a hotel in Madeira, where he met his wife. He made many prospecting trips in the course of his 20 years in South Africa: to Namaqualand, the Richtersveld and South West Africa (now Namibia). He searched for gold, copper and diamonds but was never fortunate enough to make a significant find.

During the First World War he served with the South African native labour Corps, but his asthma prevented him from active service. It was he who first advised government that the Germans had crossed the border into Cape territory in 1914. He was awarded the OBE for his services.

In 1920 he travelled to England to accept a Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society and to find a backer for further exploration of the lower reaches of the Orange River. He gave several lectures during the trip, including to the Royal Geographical Society.

His tragic death resulted from an accident in 1921 when he was thrown out of the sidecar of a motorcycle. His writings include articles and stories that were published by various newspapers and journals.

Background to The follower

Jason tells this story round a campfire – and it is exactly that kind of story! One needs to feel the atmosphere, rather than try to analyse it. When it comes to an end, we are left with many, many questions we would love to have answered. It takes place against the backdrop of South West Africa (Namibia) then governed by Germany. The Skeleton Coast, where the actual story seems to be set, is a wild and lonely coast. It is the grave of many a prospector and castaway who survived a shipwreck only to die on this inhospitable coast. The prospectors explored there only because the area was rich in alluvial diamonds – to be found where they had been deposited by streams centuries before..

The follower

In a desolate and lonely spot near the wide expanse of mud-flats which form the mouth of the Orange River there stands the roofless ruins of an old farmhouse. It's stone walls of huge thickness, and the high stone kraal with huge iron hinges only remaining where once swung a formidable door, speak eloquently of the

time where this remote part of Klein Namaqualand, in common with the islands and lower reaches of the Orange River, was infested with bands of Hottentot outlaws and robbers, and when the daring white man who had ventured among them kept his scant flocks and herds under lock and key, and guarded them with a strong hand.

To the south, towards Port Nolloth, stretches seventy-odd miles of desolate, waterless sand-scrub; eastward lie vast expanses of similarly dreary, featureless, undulating scrub, beyond which rise the mysterious mountains of the Richtersveld and hundreds of miles of uninhabited country; westward is the wide lonely ocean; and to the north, across the Orange River, lie the dreaded sand dunes of German South- West Africa.

It was in the direction of the dunes, gleaming silver-white in the clear moonlight, that the eyes of the three white men – prospectors – who had foregathered in this lonely spot were turned as they sat, finishing their evening meal, beside a bright fire that lit up the broken and roofless walls. They had met after months of lonely wanderings. Sidney and Ransford amongst the , mountains of the Richtersveld, Jason from long arduous expeditions along the Great Fish River and amongst the trackless sands across the river. The talk had been of the dunes; of men lost and dying of thirst a few miles from camp; of terrific storms that lifted the sand in huge masses, and whirled it across the land, overwhelming all it encountered; of whole dunes that were shifted by the wind, leaving gruesome things disclosed in the hollows where once they had stood; of diamonds, danger and death.

“Yes!” said Jason, “there’s many a man been lost since the diamond rush first started; gone away from camp and never turned up again – died of thirst most of them, of course, though I daresay the Bushmen accounted for some. Sometimes the sand has overwhelmed them and buried their bodies forever. Sometimes after a big storm it gives up it’s dead as the sea does. I’ve seen some queer things there myself. Once near Easter Cliffs, after a terrific storm had shifted all the dunes, I came across the bodies of a dozen white men, all together and mummified and wonderfully preserved. God knows how they died and how long they’d been there!”

But the weirdest thing that ever happened to me up there was when Carfax disappeared. You remember Carfax? A tall, bony powerful chap he was, quite dour, and with a strong vein of superstition in him. Anyhow, he was a good prospector and a reliable man, and when the rush for the northern fields took place about two years ago he was one of a party of four of us who had been landed with a few kegs of water and bare necessities on the waterless coast opposite Hollams Bird Island. Here we searched in vain for diamonds, the dunes being exceptionally difficult and the wind came up every afternoon converting the whole country into a whirling chaos that it was impossible to see in, or work in – next to impossible to exist in.

“On the third evening, after an exceptionally strong gale had nearly choked, blinded, and overwhelmed us, Carfax did not turn up in camp, and though we searched all the following day we found no trace of him – not a

vestige; for one of the worst things about the dunes is that when the wind is blowing the spoor is filled up almost immediately with drifting sand; though peculiarly enough a day or two later the spoor will show again, when the light sand again has been blown out. He had only a small water-bottle with him, the heat was like Hades itself, and we all thought he was dead.

“But on the second night of his absence – I shall never forget it – the wind had gone down completely, and the long stretches of white dunes lay clear and bright in the white moonlight. The other fellows lay asleep on the sand, exhausted, for we had had a terrible day, but I couldn’t sleep – I never can in bright moonlight. And after tossing around for some time I got up to get a drink. Poor Carfax was still in my mind, and I stood thinking of him and gazing out in the direction in which he had gone, straining my eyes in the forlorn hope of seeing something moving; but the dead silver-white was unbroken by a single speck.

“I stood thus for some time, and was turning once more towards the others when a faint movement in the vague distance caught my eye. Yes! something or someone was crossing the ridge of a big dune in my direction! A jackal maybe? No, it was too big for that; the faint form was certainly that of a man – or were there two? I didn’t wait longer, but, running back and grabbing a water-bottle, I started off at a run towards who ever it was.

“Moonlight is puzzling sometimes, and I could scarcely make out if there was one figure or two; one seemed to follow the other at a little distance. But as I got nearer I could see it was Carfax – alone. ‘Carfax!’ ‘Carfax!’ I called out, ‘thank God you’re alive – we’d given you up! He made no answer, but came on slowly and falteringly, turning repeatedly as though to gaze behind. Now I saw that he was in the last stage of exhaustion; his face was drawn and ghastly, and his cracked and swollen lips were moving rapidly in broken, incoherent words; his sufferings had plainly driven him out of his mind. He snatched at the water-bottle and drained it at a draught; then clutching me by the arm, he pointed across the dunes.

“There! There! See! He follows me always, since I found the diamonds! Look! look!

“As he pointed his face ghastly with fear, and I too looked back, to see I knew not what. Was he followed. And by whom? I had thought at first there had been one following; but no, there was nothing to be seen. Who could be following him in this desolate place? But still he clutched my arm, and gibbered, and pointed back, and now my eyes were playing tricks again; surely there was a shadow! No, there was nothing there – no human being at any rate. Possibly it had been a jackal. So soothing him as best I could, I helped the poor demented fellow back to camp, he with many a backward look of fear, and I myself with an uncanny feeling that we were being followed.

“Well he was delirious for days; and when the cutter came back to pick us up and take us to another spot father up the coast he was too ill to be moved, so we rigged up a bit of a tent and I was left to nurse him till the boat returned

again. It was a weird experience, alone in that desolate spot with a madman for company; for though he quietened down after the others had gone he still had the hallucination of being followed and watched; and especially in the night, when I wanted to sleep, he would seize me by the arm and point through the tent door to the bright moonlight outside, 'There! There!' he would mutter, 'don't you see him? Look at his square-toed boots and brass buckles. See how his ghastly dead eyes glare! Keep him away from me – they are mine!' And in my overstrung, nervous state I could have sworn on one or two occasions that I, too, saw such a figure.

"He gradually got calmer and more himself, and then he told me a strange tale of what had happened to him in the dunes.

"He had been overtaken by a sandstorm many miles from the camp, and had struggled on till absolutely exhausted, not daring to lie down to rest lest the fast whirling sand should overwhelm him; and when late at night the wind had fallen he was hopelessly and utterly lost, and had thrown himself down in a sheltered spot deep hollowed out by the wind between two gigantic dunes, and had at once fallen into a deep sleep of exhaustion.

"Then he had dreamed – a startling and vivid dream that had seemed half reality. He saw three men come down over the big dune to close beside where he lay – rough-looking men in a costume of long ago, with cocked hats, broad breeches, and buckled shoes; and the moonlight shone on the brass hilts of their cutlasses and pistols. They took no notice of him, but, stooping, began to pick up the bright diamonds that Carfax now saw covered the sand before them. Soon the bag was full and a quarrel arose; for he saw two of the men draw their swords and fight fiercely, whilst the other, a tall hawk-faced man, stood by and watched, holding the bag. At length one fell, pierced through by the other's broad blade; and as the victor stood over him the hawk-faced man cut him down from behind, and stood laughing horribly and holding the bag of diamonds before their dying eyes. And as he laughed one of them, with a last effort, drew a pistol from his belt and shot him dead.

"At the report the scene vanished, and Carfax awoke with a start. The dream had been so vivid that the pistol shot seemed still to be ringing in his ears, and he sprang to his feet, scarcely knowing what he should see. The air was clear of dust now, and the moon shone brightly; and by its light he saw a few paces from him a prostrate form partly covered with sand. He bent over it; it was the body of a man, a man dressed in a strange old-world costume – a dead man, dead hundreds of years, and mummified and wonderfully preserved by the sands that had covered him deep through the centuries, until the big gale of yesterday had lifted the heavy pall. Huddled nearby lay two other indistinct forms; and Carfax, his dream still vividly before him, knew well what they were.

"Yes! there, too, lay the leather bag at his feet! And trembling with excitement he knelt and plunged his hands into it, and drew out a handful of big, dully gleaming diamonds. And as he gazed at the treasure his hand was clutched in an icy grasp, and turning in terror he found the horrible eyes of the dead man glaring close into his own.

“With a scream of horror he wrenched away his wrist, and still clutching the stones, fled madly across the dunes, pursued by the fearful figure of the long-dead man. Stumbling, falling, on and on he fled, till the moon paled and the stars faded and the bright sun rose and gave the hunted man a gleam of courage; but his fearful glance behind him still showed the grim figure of him who followed.

“He could not tell what instinct had guided him back to camp; but all through that awful day he had stumbled on through the roasting heat of the dunes, till late at night when I had seen him and gone to meet him as I described.

“All this he told me that night in the tent, now and again starting and glancing fearfully out and across the sands to point out the dread watcher he believed hovered near him. I tried to soothe him, to laugh away his fears, to tell him it was all a dream. And then? Well, he fumbled in his shirt and drew forth a little package tied up in a rag, and with many a fearful glance his trembling fingers undid it, and there poured forth a little cascade of magnificent diamonds – far finer than anything I had ever seen before or since in German West: a fortune in fact! I sat astounded, for I had not dreamed of this. Where they came from there must be more – a fortune for us all! Then I found my tongue. ‘Carfax, man; I said, ‘this is wonderful! Can you find your way back? It will make us all rich’.

He shuddered. ‘No! no!’ he said, his hands pressed to his eyes as though to shut out the scene of horror; ‘he is there! No, he cannot be; he is watching here for me – he will follow me always! Oh! Jason, don’t leave me alone, old man; don’t leave me; we’ll get away when the boat comes! There’s enough for us both! Don’t leave me!’

“After a time he sank into a deep sleep; but to me sleep was now out of the question. Where on earth had he found the diamonds? They, at least, were real. Had he really found a spot where the terrific gale had shifted the sand and laid bare a treasure and tragedy of long ago? Such things might be. I had seen dead men in the dunes myself, and the overwrought state of Carfax, due to his sufferings, would account for the rest. If only he could find his way back when he came to his proper sense again!

“Thus musing I paced up and down outside the tent in the bright moonlight. Carfax was still sleeping, but uneasily, and muttering a lot in his sleep. There across the dunes the diamonds must be – there somewhere. He had come from yonder towards the big dune. And almost mechanically my footsteps wandered away from the tent towards where I had met Carfax. Here was the spot, here was the place where he had half scared me with his weird story of being followed, and where I had half believed myself that I had seen the follower. Here, for the wind had once more blown the sand from the filled-in footprints, were our spools – mine meeting his; here we turned back; but why was this? *Whose* spool was this, that followed upon our own, back towards where the tent stood?

“My hair rose on my head as I looked. The ghastly white moonlight showed the other spool quite plainly – the print of a broad, square-toed, low heeled shoe.

“Every man of us wore *veldtschoens*; there was not a heel among the four of us, and as I marveled and superstitious fear crept upon me there came scream after scream of terror from the direction of the tent; and as I looked Carfax, barefoot as he had slept, came flying from the tent, his ghastly face contorted, with horror, glancing behind him as he ran, and holding out his arms as though to ward off a pursuer.

“Past me he flew, straight across the sand towards the dunes from which he had lately come, his shrieks getting fainter and fainter as he sped until they ceased, and the faint breeze that heralded the dawn brought back the sound of mocking laughter.

“Fear held possession of me, for *something* had passed me in pursuit of the haunted man, and with terror gripping my faculties, I scarce dared turn my eyes to where the fresh spoor of Carfax’s naked feet showed in the sand. Yes! It was there; a heavy, broad, square-toed print following and treading over Carfax’s own and showing the signs of a mad pursuit.

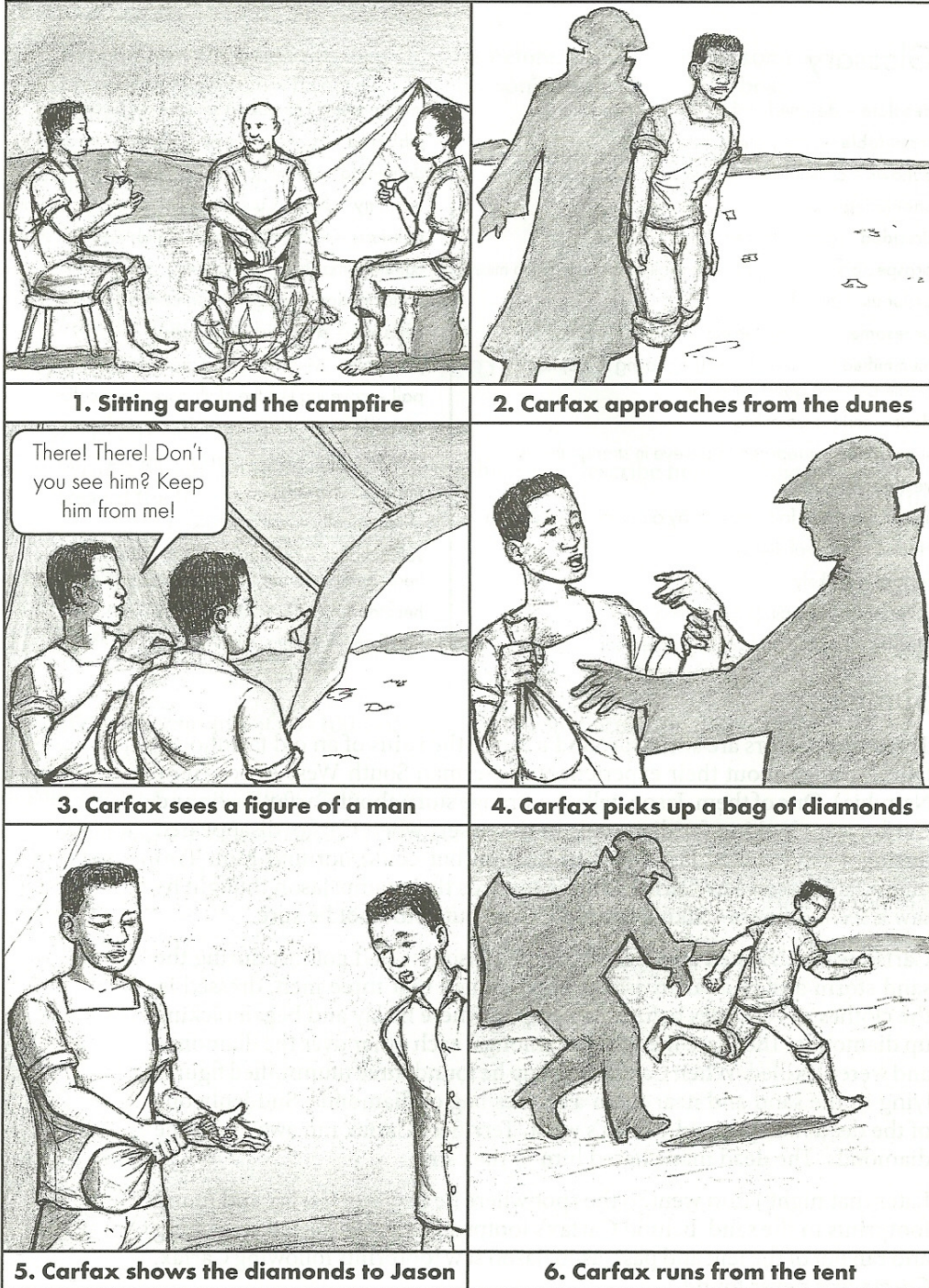
“Did I follow them? No! I’m not ashamed to say I did not – at any rate not then. Instead, I walked down to the shore, where the solemn breakers offered some sort of companionship, and prayed for morning to come and blot out the ghastly moon and all it had shown me, and save my reason.

“The sun came at last, and with it an awful hurricane that equalled that of the previous week, and I was hard put to it to save our few belongings from being swept away and from being myself overwhelmed. In the evening came the calm, and with it the boat; and thank God! I had not to face the moonlight again alone.

“Yes, we searched; but the storm had changed the whole aspect of the dunes, and the spoors lay buried under many feet of sand, and – well, Carfax was never seen again!”

Jason ended his narrative abruptly, and, rising, lit his pipe with an ember from the dying fire and stood gazing across the river to where the vague mysterious dunes of German West showed silver-white beyond the farther bank. “Good country to be out of!” he said with a shiver. “Come, boys, you’d better turn in. I can’t sleep when there’s a moon.”

Summary in pictures



The Follower

F.C. Cornell

Glossary

desolate - deserted, with no people living there

formidable - heavy and solid

outlaws - criminals running away from the law

undulating - like waves

dreaded - greatly feared

prospectors - people who are looking for minerals to mine

arduous - difficult

gruesome - causing feelings of disgust and horror

mummified - a dead body (appearing to be) kept whole and in a good condition

dour - serious, unsmiling

superstition - prepared to believe in strange things

vestige - a trace

spoor - track or footprints left by an animal or a person

Hades - home of the dead

forlorn - unlikely

falteringly - stopping and starting

ghastly - horrible and causing deep fear

incoherent - not making sense

gibbered - spoke in a way that made no sense

demented - insane, crazy

uncanny - strange, unsettling, not able to be explained

delirious - feverish and in an unstable mental state

cutter - small fast-moving boat

hallucination - imaginary sights and sounds

cutlasses - short, curved swords

prostrate - lying flat on the ground

pall - covering like the cloth covering a coffin

cascade - stream

overwrought - very upset and anxious

musings - thinking

mechanically - without thinking

veldtschoens - (Afrikaans) rough shoes that have no heels and are made from animal skins

heralded - came before

hurricane - violent storm

Summary

Three prospectors are sitting around a fire in the ruins of an old farmhouse telling stories about their experiences in German South West Africa (now Namibia). One of them, Jason, tells the strange story about Carfax. Jason and Carfax were looking for diamonds in the desert when Carfax disappeared during a sand storm. Jason looked for him but could not find him. Two nights later, Jason saw Carfax coming towards their camp. Jason thought he saw a second figure walking behind Carfax but could not be sure.

Carfax was exhausted and fearful. He told Jason he had got lost during the sand storm and had fallen asleep. He dreamed that three men, dressed in the clothes of centuries before, came up to where he lay and began picking up diamonds. The three men fought amongst each other over the diamonds and were all killed. When Carfax woke up he found three mummified figures lying in the sand and near them a leather bag of diamonds. Suddenly one of the dead men gripped Carfax's wrist. Terrified, Carfax ran away with the diamonds. The dead man chased him to the camp.

Later that night Jason went to the spot where he had met Carfax and found footprints in the sand, behind Carfax's footprints. Carfax started screaming and ran out of the tent and past Jason. Jason saw footprints following Carfax. Carfax was never found.

Explanation and analysis

Background and setting

- **Namibian desert** (in old German South West Africa)
- **Night time**

The story is set in the Namibian desert near the mouth of the Orange River. The environment is harsh and many people have died in the desert looking for diamonds. Most of the action takes place at night, which makes the story more unearthly, exciting and scary.

The story has two narrators: the third-person narrator who tells the whole story and the character Jason who tells the story within the story to us as if we are sitting around the fireside with him listening to his “ghost” story. This involves us directly in the story and makes it more exciting and makes us curious about what will happen next.

The narrator builds up suspense by telling us about the strange and frightening things that happen in the desert: the wind moves whole sand dunes “leaving gruesome things disclosed in the hollows.” He leaves us to imagine what these “gruesome things” could be, which makes us want to read on.

Themes

- **Human greed**
- **Illusion and reality**

The story suggests that people’s greed can destroy them. The three men who appear in Carfax’s dream (or are actual ghosts?) end up killing each other over a bag of diamonds. When Carfax takes the bag of diamonds after they have all died (according to his “dream”), it brings him no peace. He is convinced that he is being followed by one of the dead men, becomes obsessed with fear and becomes ill and insane, and in the end runs off into the desert and is never found.

The writer teases the readers’ imagination and leaves us unsettled and wondering about what is real in the story and what is imagined by the character. Were the three men in Carfax’s “dream” real? Were they a figment of Carfax’s feverish imagination? Were they ghosts? While we are never sure whether the three men are real, the bag of diamonds is real, according to Jason’s account. We can not be sure whether Jason imagined or made up Carfax’s “follower” because he convinces us that he saw the footprint of an old-fashioned shoe of the type that was worn hundreds of years ago.

Character

- **Jason:** prospector, tells the story
- **Carfax:** superstitious, nervous, obsessed with his “follower”, greedy

Key quote

“... I could scarcely make out if there was one figure or two: one seemed to follow the other at a little distance.”

Key quote

“... he shall not have them back; he has been dead hundreds of years ...”

Key quote

“Yes! It was there: a heavy broad, square-toed print following and treading over Carfax’s own and showing the signs of a mad pursuit.”

Jason is the first-person narrator of the story within the story. We learn something about his character from the way in which he tells the story. He is a hardened prospector who has seen and experienced many difficult and strange things in the desert. He is a skilful teller of a fireside tale. He is also loyal to his fellow prospectors as evidenced when he stays to look after Carfax when the others go off on a prospecting trip. He does not suffer from the overwhelming greed that motivated the men in Carfax's dream and seemed to motivate Carfax himself.

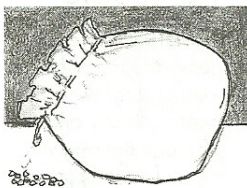
The writer describes **Carfax** as "tall, bony, powerful, quiet and dour and with a strong vein of superstition in him". The writer is subtly suggesting that Carfax could be open to believing any strange story or event without questioning it.

Plot

The story told by the narrator and the story within the story told by Jason make up a fireside tale. Both narrators build up an atmosphere of suspense and mystery, which makes us want to read on, or to hear more. The first climax occurs when Carfax relates his "dream" and produces the bag of diamonds. The climax at the end of the story occurs when Carfax runs off in terror into the desert. There is an ironic twist at the end. Until the point when Jason finds the footprint of the strange old-fashioned shoe in the sand we are not sure whether there is a "follower" or not. The resolution (or non-resolution) occurs when Jason describes the unexplained footprint in the sand near the end of the story. The third-person narrator ends the story on a note of mystery with Jason gazing over the river to "the vague mysterious dunes of German West".

Key quote

"... well, Carfax was never seen again!"



Symbols

- **Footprints in the sand.** On one level they represent the mercilessness of the desert. If a man is lost and the wind or a sandstorm covers up his footprints he may never be found. In the story the "heavy broad, square-toed print following and treading over Carfax's own" is a powerful symbol. It is both "evidence" of and stands for "the follower" of Carfax.
- **The bag of diamonds** symbolises greed. It is also "evidence" of the reality of Carfax's "dream".

Language

The story is written in the style of the oral tradition. The writer uses repetition and **alliteration**.

Near the beginning of the story (from "The talk had been of the dunes ..." to "... diamonds, danger and death") the writer repeats the word "of" five times. This provides the rhythm of stories that are told. Reinforcing

the rhythm in this extract is alliteration. The writer repeats the letters 'd' and 's' several times, "of diamonds, danger and death".

Carfax's language vividly conveys terror and insane desperation: "No! No! he said, his hand pressed to his eyes as though to shut out a scene of horror; 'he is there! No, he cannot be ...".

The writer's many descriptions of the desert, particularly in the moonlight, are vivid and mysterious: "... the long stretches of white dunes lay clear and bright in the white moonlight".

Key quote

"There! There! See!
He follows me always
since I found the
diamonds!"

Exam preparation

Sample contextual question

This question contains TWO extracts. Answer the questions on both extracts.

Extract 1

Read the extract from "*It was in the direction of the dunes*" to "*how they died and how long they'd been there*" and answer these questions:

1. "... *the broken and roofless walls*"
 - 1.1 Where had the three men met after "months of lonely wanderings"? (1)
 - 1.2 What had been the purpose of their "wanderings"? (1)
2. Say whether the following statement is true or false, and give a reason or quote from the extract in support of your answer: In the course of their wanderings the three men had travelled along many different roads and paths. (2)
- 3.1 Write down the word that is repeated in the section of the extract, "*The talk had been of the dunes ... diamonds, danger and death.*" (1)
- 3.2 What effect is the writer trying to create by repeating this word? (3)
(Look again at the notes on "Language".)
- 3.3 Write down an example of alliteration in this section. (1)
4. "... *the bodies of a dozen white men, all together and mummified ...*"
Briefly describe the circumstances under which he made this find. (3)

[12]

AND

Extract 2

Read the extract from "*As he pointed his face was ghastly with fear*" to "... *keep him from me – they are mine!*" and answer these questions:

5. "... *his face was ghastly with fear ...*"
By whom or what did Carfax think he was being followed? (2)
6. Say whether the following statement is true or false. Give a reason or quote from the extract in support of your answer: At this point in the story the narrator was absolutely certain there was a person following them. (3)
7. Write down a word from the first paragraph of the extract that tells us that Carfax spoke in a way that made no sense. (1)
(For help, check the glossary.)

8. "... he was delirious for days" tells us he was:
 a. asleep for days; b. very happy for days; c. half crazy for days; d. very hungry for days (1)
(Check the glossary for help. Cross out the incorrect answers first.)
9. "Look at his square-toed boots ..."
 9.1 To whom did these boots belong? (1)
 9.2 What do these boots have to do with the footprint that Jason the narrator found near the end of his story? (3)
10. "... he shall not have them back ... they are mine!"
 10.1 To what is Carfax referring when he says "... they are mine"? (1)
 10.2 Where did he find them and under what circumstances? (4)
11. Say whether the following statement is true or false and give a reason for or quote from the extract in support of your answer: The place where Jason and Carfax were was heavily populated. (3)
12. Complete this sentence: When he thought of the 'follower' Carfax felt ... (3)
(Try to imagine how Carfax was feeling about being followed by a dead man.)
13. Which word in the second paragraph of the extract tells us that the narrator thought that the follower was entirely in Carfax's imagination? (1)
- [23]**

Total marks: 35

Sample essay question

Write the following essay as well as the two paragraphs.

Structured essay

- A** The theme of the story is that people's greed nearly always leads to their destruction.

Discuss this statement. Refer to incidents in the story. (Length: 100–120 words) [15]

Before you begin writing decide which people were greedy. Jot down all the incidents in the story that show them being greedy and what happened to them.

AND

Paragraph questions

- B** Write a paragraph of 80–100 words in which you describe the "dream" Carfax had about the three men and the diamonds when he was lost in the desert. Include what the men looked like and what happened when Carfax woke up. [10]

AND

- C** Write a paragraph of 80–100 words in which you describe how Jason first responded to Carfax's claims about being followed, how he responded to his story about the three men, and what happened afterwards to convince Jason that Carfax's story was true and not just a dream. [10]

Total marks: 35

MEMORANDUM

The Follower (page 109)

Contextual question

Extract 1

- 1.1 In the ruins of an old farmhouse✓ (or near the mouth of the Orange River in Old German South West✓) (1)
- 1.2 They had been prospecting (or searching for minerals).✓ (1)
2. False✓ There were no roads or paths in the desert✓ (or “trackless” sands✓) (2)
- 3.1 of✓ (1)
- 3.2 The rhythm (or poetic effect)✓ of storytelling✓ (rhythm of a story✓ that is meant to be heard not read✓) (3)
- 3.3 (discretionary) diamonds, danger, death (or storms...sand) (1)
4. When he was lost he dreamed that three men fought and killed each other✓ over a bag of diamonds.✓ When he woke he found their mummified bodies and next to them the diamonds.✓ (3)

[12]

Extract 2

5. The ghost (dead man) from long ago✓ and from whom Carfax thought he had stolen diamonds.✓ (2)
6. False✓ He thought at this point that his eyes were deceiving him✓ that the shadow could be a jackal.✓ (3)
7. gibbered✓ (1)
8. c✓ (1)
- 9.1 The ghost (dead man) who was following Carfax.✓ (1)
- 9.2 Towards the end of the story Carfax fled into the desert. ✓ Jason found footprints of these same boots in the sand.✓ The prints were following those of Carfax.✓ (3)
- 10.1 The diamonds✓ (1)
- 10.2 He found them next to the mummified bodies of the three dead men ✓ from long ago.✓ He had “dreamed” that he saw them fighting

- to the death over the diamonds.✓ When he woke he found the diamonds.✓ (4)
11. False.✓ Nobody lived in the desert. It was empty.✓ They were “alone in that desolate spot”.✓ (3)
12. desperate, ✓ overcome with terror✓ and guilt.✓ (3)
13. hallucination✓ (1)
- [23]

Total marks: 35

Essay question

A Structured essay

In Carfax’s dream the three men murder each other for the diamonds because each one of them wants all of the diamonds. None of them wants to share them so all of them die.

Carfax himself, although terrified when the mummified dead man from long ago grabs his wrist, does not drop the diamonds but flees across the dunes “still clutching the stones”.

When Jason sees the stones he is “astounded” and demands that Carfax try to find his way back to the place where the diamonds were found, in spite of the fact that Carfax is very disturbed in his mind by the experience he has had. This shows that Jason was momentarily seized by greed but managed to save himself from destruction.

Jason returns to the spot where he had met Carfax on his return from the desert. While he is examining the spot, Carfax comes screaming out of the tent and rushes past him. Carfax is never found again and certainly died in the desert. So we could say that his greed destroyed him.

Jason, in order to save his own sanity and to survive the experience, does not follow Carfax but goes down to the seashore to wait until morning. [15]

Paragraph questions

B

Carfax dreamed that three men in cocked hats, broad trousers and shoes with heels and brass buckles were picking up diamonds in the dunes and putting them into a bag. When the bag was full they started fighting over it. Two managed to kill each other. When Carfax woke up he found three mummified bodies near him and near the bodies a bag of diamonds. He grabbed the bag of diamonds but before he could leave the scene, one of the dead men grabbed his wrist to try to prevent him from taking the bag. This man, or ghost, then followed him back to the camp. [10]

Storyline:

Sidney, Ransford, and Jason are **prospectors** who meet after months of wandering alone. Around the campfire, they talk of danger and death linked to the diamond rush. Jason then tells them about Carfax's disappearance.

He was one of their group of four, searching unsuccessfully for diamonds in a barren stretch of coast. After a particularly blinding sandstorm, Carfax did not return to camp and was feared dead. On a moonlit night, two days after he disappeared, Carfax stumbled into camp, exhausted and terrified, shouting "There! See! He follows me always, since I found the diamonds! Look!" Jason, who had been unable to sleep, at first thought he saw two figures, but then saw Carfax was alone. Delirious and too ill to travel up the coast, Carfax stayed with Jason in a **makeshift** tent. When he was calmer, he told Jason that he had been caught in a sandstorm. Lost and exhausted, he fell asleep and had a vivid dream of three men dressed in cocked hats, breeches, buckled shoes, and cutlasses. They took no notice of Carfax, but bent down and gathered the diamonds lying in the sand. A fierce quarrel broke out and soon all three men were dead. The sound of a gunshot woke Carfax who looked around and saw the three dead men, dressed just as they were in his dream, as well as a leather bag of diamonds! He was examining the diamonds when the "icy grasp" of one of the dead men grabbed his wrist. Carfax stumbled away, clutching the bag of diamonds and eventually got back to the campsite. At this point in his story, Carfax revealed the bag of diamonds. Jason wanted to go back to the place where the diamonds were, but Carfax refused. Leaving Carfax in the tent, Jason went back to the spot where he had found Carfax. Alongside their shoeprints in the sand, Jason noticed a shoeprint made by a square-toed shoe and this made him feel afraid. Just then Carfax screamed and rushed from the tent. As he passed Jason, Jason looked down and saw the same square-toed shoeprint following Carfax. Jason did not follow him and Carfax was never seen again.

The prospectors (and the readers) are left wondering if there really was a ghost following Carfax.

Setting:

- Two settings: the roofless ruin of an old farmhouse near the Orange River mouth where the story is being told around a campfire, and the barren, dry coast surrounded by the shifting sand dunes of South West Africa (today called Namibia) where Carfax disappeared
- Two time periods: the time period of the narrator, and the events he witnessed two years before that

Themes:

- Appearance and reality
- The supernatural
- Greed

Narrative technique:

- Multiple narrative voices – third person narrator (observer) who begins and ends the story; first person narrator, Jason, who tells the story Carfax told him and recounts the events when Carfax went missing
- Detailed descriptions create a vivid picture of **bleak** desolate surroundings well-suited to a ghost story
- Direct speech used when narrating Carfax's story makes it seem realistic and creates tension
- Repetition of words ("ghastly") and ideas (moonlight, shifting sands, square-toed shoes) creates an **eerie** atmosphere
- Alliteration ("diamonds, danger and death"), similes ("the heat was like Hades"), and metaphors ("icy grasp") add to the eerie atmosphere

Characters:

- Jason – prospector, cannot sleep when moon is full, stays behind to nurse Carfax, **covets** more diamonds
- Carfax – tall, bony, powerful, reliable and a good prospector; not very talkative; superstitious
- Sidney and Ransford – prospectors

Contextual questions

1. The story is called “The follower”.
 - a) Who is the follower? (1)
 - b) Who is he following? (1)
 - c) Why is he following him? (1)
2. Why does the narrator tell us that Carfax was “reliable”? (1)
3. Who describes the scene around the campfire? (1)
4. a) Choose the correct answer.

Which genre or type does this story fall into?

 - A Ghost story
 - B Science fiction
 - C Documentary
 - D Murder mystery
- b) Explain how the setting described in the opening four paragraphs of the story suits the genre. (1)
5. Describe the conditions on the day Carfax goes missing the first time. (5)
6. Briefly describe Carfax’s dream. (2)
7. a) Name the figure of speech used in “the heat was like Hades itself”. (7)
- b) What two things are being compared? (1)
- c) What does the author want to convey by using this comparison? (2)
8. Explain the significance of the moonlight. (3)
9. What is the climax of Jason’s story? (2)
10. Would you have followed Carfax into the dunes? Why or why not? (3)

Essay questions and other activities

1. Describe the supernatural elements found in this story. Write your answer in a paragraph of 80–100 words. (10)



Word check

prospectors: people who explore and search for gold or precious stones, such as diamonds

makeshift: something temporary, improvised because there is nothing better at the time

bleak: cold and bare

eerie: mysterious and frightening

covets: wants something very much



Tips

- Read the explanations for “genre”, “setting” and “climax” in the glossary.
- In multiple-choice questions, write down only the letter of your choice, using a *capital* letter.



Did you know?

The coastal area where this story is set is known as the Skeleton Coast because of the harsh desert conditions that have caused many people to die there.

The follower – F C Cornell (page 22)
Contextual questions

1. a) The ghost of the dead man in Carfax's dream. ✓ (1)
 b) Carfax. ✓ (1)
 c) Carfax stole his diamonds. ✓ (1)
2. We are told this so we will believe Carfax's story. ✓ (1)
3. A third person narrator who observes the men around the campfire. ✓ (1)
4. a) A (Ghost story) ✓ (1)
 b) A spooky atmosphere is created by the deserted / desolate surroundings, ✓ the tumbledown / ruined building, ✓ the moonlight, ✓ the fireside, ✓ and the conversation about danger and death. ✓ (5)
5. There is a severe / blinding sandstorm ✓ that covers the tracks / footprints. ✓ (2)
6. Three men dressed in old-fashioned clothing ✓ were collecting the diamonds that lay in the sand close to where Carfax lay. ✓ Two men quarrelled and drew their swords. ✓ Soon one of the men was stabbed. ✓ Then the hawk-eyed man who was watching stabbed the victor. ✓ The hawk-eyed man laughed as he held the bag of diamonds up for the dying men to see. ✓ While he stood there laughing, one of the men drew his pistol and shot him. ✓ (7)
7. a) Simile ✓ (1)
 b) The heat is being compared to Hades / hell. ✓✓ (2)
 c) He wants to convey that the air temperature is extremely hot, ✓ almost as if there is a fire. ✓ (2)
8. Carfax returns to camp and runs screaming from the campsite when there is a full / bright moon ✓ and Jason narrates the story on a moonlit night. ✓ This is significant because it suggests that something eerie / ghostly could happen to the men listening to Jason's story. ✓ (3)
9. The climax is when Jason looks down and sees the square-toed footprints that match the

footprints of the dead man in Carfax's dream,
follow Carfax into the desert. ✓✓ (2)

10. No, ✓ Carfax was a reliable person and would
not make up a story, ✓ and the footprints
following him suggest that there is a ghost. ✓

OR

Yes, ✓ Carfax was probably delirious and
needed help, ✓ and there are no such things as
ghosts. ✓ (3)

Essay questions and other activities

Question 1

- Mummified bodies of dead men dressed in clothing from a bygone era.
- One of the dead men grasps Carfax by the wrist.
- The shadowy figure follows Carfax.
- Jason has an "uncanny feeling" that they are being followed.
- Footprints matching the shoeprints of the dead men follow Carfax. (10)