

SECTION A: 40 marks

Read carefully the passage below. Then answer all the questions which follow it.

The novel from which this passage is taken is set in Botswana, which is a country in southern Africa.

I am Obed Ramotswe. I love my country and I am proud I was born in Botswana. There's no other country in Africa that can hold its head up as we can. I had no desire to leave my country, but things were bad in the past. Before we built our country we had to go off to South Africa to work. We went to the mines. The mines sucked our men in and left the old men and the children at home. We dug for gold and diamonds and made those white men rich. They built their big houses. And we dug below them and brought out the rock on which they built it all. I was eighteen when I went to the mines. My father said I should go, as his lands were not good enough to support me and a wife. We did not have many cattle, and we grew just enough crops to keep us through the year.

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- 10 So when the recruiting truck came from over the border I went to them and they put me on a scale and listened to my chest and made me run up and down a ladder for ten minutes. Then a man said that I would make a good miner and they made me write my name on a piece of paper. They asked me whether I had ever been in any trouble with the police. That was all. In Johannesburg they spent two weeks training us. We were all quite fit and strong, but nobody
- 15 could be sent down the mines until he had been made even stronger. So they took us to a building which they had heated with steam and they made us jump up and down on the benches for four hours each day.

- They told us how we would be taken down into the mines and about the work we would be expected to do. They talked to us about safety, and how the rock could fall and crush us if we were careless. They carried in a man with no legs and put him on a table and made us listen to him as he told us what had happened to him. They taught us Funagalo, which is the language used for giving orders underground. It is a strange language. There are many words for push, shove, carry, load, and no words for love, or happiness, or the sounds which birds make in the morning. Then we went down the shafts. They put us in cages, beneath great wheels, and these
- 20 cages shot down as fast as hawks falling on their prey. They had small trains down there and they took us to the end of long, dark tunnels, which were filled with green rock and dust. My job was to load rock after it had been blasted and I did this for ten hours every day. I worked for years in those mines, and I saved all my money. Other men spent it on women, and drink and fancy clothes. I bought nothing. I sent the money home and then I bought cattle with it. Slowly my herd
- 25 got bigger.
- 30

- I would have stayed in the mines, I suppose, had I not witnessed a terrible thing. It happened after I had been there fifteen years. I had been given a much better job, as an assistant to a blaster. They would not give us blasting jobs, as that was a job the white men kept for themselves, but I was given the job of carrying explosives for a blaster. This was a good job and
- 35 I liked the man I worked for. He had left something in a tunnel once – his tin can in which he carried his sandwiches – and he had asked me to fetch it. So I set off down this tunnel where he had been working. The tunnel was lit by bulbs, but you still had to be careful because here and there were great galleries which had been blasted out of the rock. These could be two hundred feet deep and men fell into them from time to time. I turned a corner in this tunnel and found
- 40 myself in a round chamber. There was a gallery at the end of this and a warning sign. Four men were standing at the edge of this gallery and they were holding another man by his arms and legs. As I came around the corner, they threw him over the edge and into the dark. The man screamed something about a child. Then he was gone. I stood where I was. The men had not seen me yet, but one turned around and shouted out in Zulu. Then they began to run towards me.
- 45 I turned and ran back down the tunnel. I knew that if they caught me I would follow their victim

into the gallery. It was not a race I could let myself lose.

Although I got away, I knew that those men had seen me and that I would be killed. I had seen their murder and could be a witness, and so I knew I could not stay in the mines. I spoke to the blaster. He was a good man and he listened to me carefully when I told him I would have to go.

50 There was no other white man I could have spoken to like that, but he understood. Still, he tried to persuade me to go to the police. "Tell them what you saw," he said. "Tell them. They can catch those Zulus and hang them."

"I don't know who those men are. They'll catch me first. I am going home." He looked at me and nodded. Then he took my hand and shook it, which is the first time a white man had done that to me. So I called him my brother, which is the first time I had done that to a white man. "You go back home to your wife," he said. "If a man leaves his wife too long, she starts to make trouble for him. Believe me."

60 So I left the mines, secretly, like a thief, and came back to Botswana in 1960. I cannot tell you how full my heart was when I crossed the border. In the mines I had felt every day that I might die. Danger and sorrow hung over Johannesburg like a cloud. In Botswana it was different. There were no policemen with dogs; you did not wake up every morning to a wailing siren calling you down into the hot earth. There were not great crowds of men, all from some different place, all sickening for home. I had left a prison – a great, groaning prison, under the sunlight.

Alexander McCall Smith

Read lines 1-9.

A1. List **five** reasons why Obed Ramotswe went to South Africa. [5]

Read lines 10-17.

A2. How does the writer show what Obed went through to become a miner? [5]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer.

Read lines 18-30.

A3. What impressions do you get of the work in the mines from these lines?

You must refer to the text to support your answer. [10]

Read lines 31-46.

A4. How does the writer make these lines tense and dramatic? [10]

You should write about:

- what happens to build tension and drama;
- the writer's use of language to create tension and drama;
- the effects on the reader.

Read lines 47 to the end.

A5. "In the last twenty or so lines of this passage, the writer encourages the reader to feel sympathy for Obed." [10]

To what extent do you agree with this view?

You should write about:

- your own impressions of Obed as he is presented here and in the passage as a whole;
- how the writer has created these impressions.

You must refer to the text to support your answer.