

GLOSSARY

outgoing: *che porta fuori città*
scattered: *diversi*
arched in: *arrivava formando un arco*
wound: *girava*
stuck: *bloccato*
socking: *darmi cazzotti*
dismal: *cupo*
cried for: *invocai*
plantlike sieves: *permeabili come le fronde di una pianta*
head for: *dirigersi*
screwed up: *andava in frantumi*

MORE ABOUT...

'Beat Generation' was the name given to a group of American post-World War II writers. They began as a small group of close friends and later emerged as a movement during the 1950s. The Beat Generation included Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady and William S. Burroughs. The central themes of 'Beat' culture included experimentation with drugs, spiritual and sexual liberation and the rejection of materialism.

The American 'way': *On the Road*

On the Road is a novel by Jack Kerouac which tells the story of Sal Paradise and his friend Dean Moriarty and their adventures as they travel across the United States.

The following passage is taken from chapter 2, and relates the departure of Sal from New York.

I'd been pouring over maps of the United States in Paterson for months, even reading books about the pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron and so on, and on the road-map was one long red line called Route 6 that led from the tip of Cape Cod



clear to Ely, Nevada, and there dipped down to Los Angeles. I'll just stay on 6 all the way to Ely, I said to myself and confidently started. To get to 6 I had to go up to Bear Mountain. Filled with dreams of what I'd do in Chicago, in Denver, and then finally in San Fran, I took the Seventh Avenue subway to the end of the line at 242nd Street, and there took a trolley into Yonkers; in downtown Yonkers I transferred to an outgoing trolley and went to the city limits on the east bank of the Hudson River. If you drop a rose in the Hudson River at its mysterious source in the Adirondacks, think of all the places it journeys by as it goes out to sea forever – think of that wonderful Hudson Valley. I started hitching up the thing. Five scattered rides took me to the desired Bear Mountain Bridge, where Route 6 arched in from New England. It began to rain in torrents when I was let off there. It was mountainous. Route 6 came over the river, wound around a traffic circle, and disappeared into the wilderness. Not only was there no traffic but the rain came down in buckets and I had no shelter. I had to run under some pines to take cover; this did no good; I began crying and swearing and socking myself on the head for being such a damn fool. I was forty miles north of New York; all the way up I'd been worried about the fact that on this, my big opening day, I was only moving north instead of the so-long-for-west. Now I was stuck on my northernmost hangup. I ran a quarter-mile to an abandoned cute English-style filling station and stood under the dripping eaves. High up over my head the great hairy Bear Mountain sent down thunderclaps that put the fear of God in me. All I could see were smoky trees and dismal wilderness rising to the skies. 'What the hell am I doing up here?', I cursed, I cried for Chicago. 'Even now they're all having a big time, they're doing this, I'm not there, when will I get there!' – and so on. Finally a car stopped at the empty filling station; the man and the two women in it wanted to study a map. I stepped right up and gestured in the rain: they consulted; I looked like a maniac, of course, with my hair all wet, my shoes sopping. My shoes, damn fool that I am, were Mexican huaraches, plantlike sieves not fit for the rainy night of America and the raw road night. But the people let me in and rode me north to Newburgh, which I accepted as a better alternative than being trapped in the Bear Mountain wilderness all night. 'Besides,' said the man, 'there's no traffic passes through 6. If you want to go to Chicago you'd do better going across the Holland Tunnel in New York and head for Pittsburgh,' and I knew he was right. It was my dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes.

From *On the Road* by J. Kerouac

READING COMPREHENSION

1 Read the passage and choose the correct option.

- 1 Why does Sal consult lots of maps and books before starting his journey?
 - A He wants to relax because the journey will be long and tiring.
 - B He wants to plan his journey.
 - C Studying maps and reading books is part of his job.

- 2 Why do you think he finds the pioneers fascinating?
 - A He can identify with them because of their journey westward.
 - B He has a lot of spare time and he likes reading.
 - C He is doing a project on American history.

- 3 What is the final destination of his journey?
 - A Los Angeles
 - B Ely
 - C San Francisco

- 4 When Sal sees the Hudson river he realizes...
 - A he is going in the same direction as the river.
 - B the river is perpendicular to his direction.
 - C he is going in the opposite direction of the river.

- 5 Sal feels a fool because...
 - A he has lost his road map.
 - B he realises he shouldn't have gone north.
 - C he has ruined his shoes.

- 6 Why does a car stop at the filling station?
 - A Because the people in the car want to have a rest.
 - B Because they want to consult the road map.
 - C Because they want to wait for the rain storm to stop.

- 7 At first the people in the car hesitate to let Sal in...
 - A because he looks like a fool.
 - B because they do not understand what he wants.
 - C because they are not going to Chicago.

- 8 The man suggests Sal change route...
 - A because there is another route, which is shorter.
 - B because Route 6 does not have enough traffic.
 - C because Pittsburgh is a city worth visiting.

2 The road in the title is a metaphor for life in general, and the protagonist takes to the road for several reasons. Choose among the following and explain your choice.

- 1 freedom _____
- 2 opportunity _____
- 3 discovery _____
- 4 adventure _____
- 5 loneliness _____
- 6 confusion _____
- 7 desolation _____
- 8 change _____
- 9 challenge _____

VOCABULARY

3 Match the following words and expressions with their meaning or definition.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1 to savor | a <input type="checkbox"/> in the city centre or going towards it |
| 2 tip | b <input type="checkbox"/> gutter |
| 3 to tip down | c <input type="checkbox"/> to hitch hike along |
| 4 trolley | d <input type="checkbox"/> to go down quickly to a lower level |
| 5 downtown | e <input type="checkbox"/> to enjoy food or an experience slowly, in order to enjoy it as much as possible |
| 6 to hitch up | f <input type="checkbox"/> tram |
| 7 all the way | g <input type="checkbox"/> a lazybones' idea |
| 8 so-longed-for | h <input type="checkbox"/> extremely wet |
| 9 hangup | i <input type="checkbox"/> for the whole journey |
| 10 filling station | j <input type="checkbox"/> obsession |
| 11 eaves | k <input type="checkbox"/> the pointed end of something, especially something which is long and thin |
| 12 sopping | l <input type="checkbox"/> petrol station |
| 13 hearthside idea | m <input type="checkbox"/> strongly desired |

WRITING

4 **FCE** Write a short essay (120-150 words) about a journey you have been on. Include the following points.

- Preparation
- Departure
- Route
- Return
- What you learnt from that experience

