

JOHN WYNDHAM: *The Chrysalids*

- 3 **Either** (a) How does Wyndham make the Aunt Harriet episode such a memorable and significant part of the novel?
- Or** (b) How do you think Wyndham makes Sophie Wender such a tragic figure in the novel?
- Or** (c) Read this passage carefully, and then answer the questions that follow it:

The door shut with a thud. The machine started to vibrate and blow a great dusty wind across the clearing. Through the windows we could see Michael bracing himself against it, his clothes flapping. Even the devotional trees about the clearing were stirring in their webby shrouds.

The floor tilted beneath us. There was a slight lurch, then the ground began to drop away as we climbed faster and faster into the evening sky. Soon we steadied, pointed towards the south-west. 5

Petra was excited, and a bit over strength.

'It's awfully wonderful,' she announced. 'I can see for simply miles and miles and miles. Oh, Michael, you do look funny and tiny down there!' 10

The lone, miniature figure in the clearing waved its arm.

'Just at present,' Michael's thought came up to us, 'I seem to be feeling a bit funny and tiny down here, Petra, dear. But it'll pass. We'll be coming after you.'

It was just as I had seen it in my dreams. A brighter sun than Waknuk ever knew poured down upon the wide blue bay where the lines of white-topped breakers crawled slowly to the beach. Small boats, some with coloured sails, and some with none, were making for the harbour already dotted with craft. Clustered along the shore, and thinning as it stretched back towards the hills, lay the city with its white houses embedded among green parks and gardens. I could even make out the tiny vehicles sliding along the wide, tree-bordered avenues. A little inland, beside a square of green, a bright light was blinking from a tower and a fish-shaped machine was floating to the ground. 15 20

It was so familiar that I almost misgave. For a swift moment I imagined that I should wake to find myself back in my bed in Waknuk. I took hold of Rosalind's hand to reassure myself. 25

'It *is* real, isn't it? You can see it, too?' I asked her.

'It's beautiful, David. I never thought there could be anything so lovely. ... And there's something else, too, that you never told me about.' 30

'What?' I asked.

'Listen! ... Can't you feel it? Open your mind more. ... Petra, darling, if you *could* stop bubbling over for a few minutes ...'

I did as she told me. I was aware of the engineer in our machine communicating with someone below, but behind that, as a background to it, there was something new and unknown to me. In terms of sound it could be not unlike the buzzing of a hive of bees; in terms of light, a suffused glow. 35

'What is it?' I said, puzzled.

'Can't you guess, David? It's people. Lots and lots of our kind of people.' 40

I realized she must be right, and I listened to it for a bit – until Petra's excitement got the better of her, and I had to protect myself.

We were over the land now, and looked down at the city coming up to meet us. 45

'I'm beginning to believe it's real and true at last,' I told Rosalind. 'You were never with me those other times.'

She turned her head. The under-Rosalind was in her face, smiling, shiny-eyed. The armour was gone. She let me look beneath it. It was like a flower opening. ...

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'This time, David –' she began.

Then she was blotted out. We staggered, and put our hands to our heads. Even the floor under our feet jerked a little.

Anguished protests came from all directions.

'Oh, sorry,' Petra apologized to the ship's crew, and to the city in general, 'but it *is* awfully exciting.'

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'This time, darling, we'll forgive you,' Rosalind told her. 'It *is*.'

- (i) How does Wyndham bring out the thoughts and feelings of the characters in **this passage**?
- (ii) How effective an ending to the novel do you think this is? Support your answer by reference to earlier parts of the novel.

