

The following excerpt is taken from *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1879).

Stevenson has set out on a long journey on foot. He has taken a donkey with him to carry his stuff. However, Modestine (the donkey) is not being very useful.

Task 1

Read the paragraph below. Five words have been missed out. Write one word into each blank.

Fill each blank with a word that:

- makes sense, and
- helps us to understand the mood of the scene and the narrator.

It was blazing hot up the valley, windless, with vehement sun upon my shoulders; and I had to labour so consistently with my stick that the sweat _____ (1) into my eyes. Every five minutes, too, the pack, the basket, and the pilot-coat would take an ugly _____ (2) to one side or the other; and I had to stop Modestine, just when I had got her to a tolerable pace of about two miles an hour, to _____ (3), push, shoulder, and readjust the load. And at last, in the village of Ussel, saddle and all, the whole hypothec turned round and _____ (4) in the dust below the donkey's belly. She, none better pleased, incontinently drew up and seemed to smile; and a party of one man, two women, and two children came up, and, standing round me in a half-circle, _____ (5) her by their example.

strong

dark wool

coat often

worn by

sailors

everything,

the whole lot

immediately

Task 2

Before you read the excerpt below, compare your word choices with a partner's. Have you chosen the same sorts of words? Do you agree/disagree with their choices? If so, why?

Task 3

Now read the excerpt. Were you right? If not, do your words do a similar job to the actual words?

It was blazing hot up the valley, windless, with vehement sun upon my shoulders; and I had to labour so consistently with my stick that the sweat ran into my eyes. Every five minutes, too, the pack, the basket, and the **pilot-coat** would take an ugly **slew** to one side or the other; and I had to stop Modestine, just when I had got her to a tolerable pace of about two miles an hour, to tug, push, shoulder, and readjust the load. And at last, in the village of Ussel, saddle and all, the whole **hypothech** turned round and grovelled in the dust below the donkey's belly. She, none better pleased, **incontinently** drew up and seemed to smile; and a party of one man, two women, and two children came up, and, standing round me in a half-circle, encouraged her by their example.

Glossary:

pilot-coat: dark wool coat often worn by sailors

slew: slide

hypothech: everything, the whole lot

incontinently: immediately