

This extract is from the opening of *Phoenix* by S F Said (2013)

Lucky dreamed of the stars again that night. He loved the stars, and dreamed about them most nights. A million points of light, shining in the black.

But this dream was different. This time, the stars were calling him. They were trying to tell him something. They were making a small, soft silvery sound, like the chime of a faraway
5 bell.

The sound grew. It surged and swelled, rising up into the sky. Lucky's blood surged with it. His feet lifted off from the floor.

And in his dream, Lucky flew. He rose up and soared through space, into the stars and constellations.

10 It didn't feel like a dream. It seemed so real.

He rose higher and higher, until the sound wasn't distant any more. It was all around him now, surrounding him with waves of overwhelming power, though he still couldn't grasp its meaning. If he could just get a little nearer...

He flew so close, he could taste the stars, sparking on his tongue. He felt the heat on his
15 face.

They weren't little points of silver any more. They were suns: each one a giant blazing sun. Inside them burned impossible energies, stronger than the fires in a nuclear furnace, bigger than the blast of a billion atom bombs.

He reached out his hands to touch them – and woke up with a violent start.

20 He was in his bedroom, in his mother's apartment, back on Phoenix. It was just before dawn. The air-conditioning was on full blast, but he was drenched in sweat and fever hot. A headache throbbed behind his eyes.

He fumbled for the lights - and then he saw his sheets. The top sheet was burned. There was a massive hole through the middle of it. All around the hole, the white linen had gone black,
25 and crumbled into ash.

Lucky checked the bottom sheet. Normal. He looked back at the top one, and there it was again: a gaping hole. Smoke was still rising. His bedroom stank of it; he could taste it in his mouth.

30 Panic rose inside him, tightening his chest. *What's going on?!* he thought, coughing on the smoke. *Am I burned?*

He stood up. Black ash fluttered all around him. He waved it away with shaking hands, and examined his skin. No burn marks. He felt exhausted and his head ached, but his body didn't seem to be hurt. It was the same puny, clumsy body as always.

35 Everything else in his room looked normal. The school uniform strewn on the floor. The school bag by his desk. His bedroom walls flickering with starmaps, showing every system this side of the Spacewall. And flying among them, his collection of model starships.

Everything was in its place, undamaged. Yet his bedsheet was burned, his room stank of smoke, and there were ashes crumbling under his fingers, smearing on his hands. *Did I do this?* he wondered. *No way – it's impossible! I wasn't even awake...*

40 The memory of a dream flickered at the edge of his mind... and then slipped away.

Question 1: Read again the first part of the source, lines 1 to 9.

List four things from this part of the text about Lucky and his dream.

(4 marks)

Your answers can either quote the text directly or write them in your own words. Use short, complete sentences.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Question 2: Look at lines 6-19.

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How has the writer used language to describe the Lucky's dream?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

(8 marks)

Write an in-depth and insightful analysis of the effects of a variety of words and phrases. Use quotes to support your ideas. Zoom-in on words and analyse them.

Question 3: You now need to think about the whole of the source.

This text is from the first part of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

(8 marks)

Write about what the writer focuses on in the beginning, the middle, and the end of the extract. What contrasts are there in the extract?

Question 4. Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the source, from line 20 until the end.

A student, having read this section of the text said:

“When Lucky wakes up, the writer creates a sense of mystery, because we don’t know if the dream was real or not.”

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of Lucky and the dream
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with references to the text.

(20 marks)

Write an in-depth, personal response to the statement, with critical, detailed analysis of the writer’s choices. Explain your opinions in a convincing way and use quotations to support your ideas. Do you think it was just a dream, or were Lucky’s experiences real?