

Whispers in the snow

Read the extract below, taken from *Storms of Silence*.

The snow fell like soft voices whispering through the walls of my tent. I lay back in my sleeping bag and listened to the dry scratching sounds, watching as grey-blue shadows briefly formed on the Gore-Tex and then slithered down in a murmur of indistinct, husky rumours. I closed my eyes and the sounds swirled around inside the dome of my tent, filtering into my mind like the words silently articulated in my head. I could not quite make sense of them. I seemed to be on the edge of a hundred conversations, confused by a quiet vortex of sounds, all talking to me. It made me think about avalanches ... It was as if everything was holding its breath, waiting to see whether I would pay attention. Out of tiredness and stupidity I had closed my mind to the whispers.

Seconds later I was falling thousands of feet in the boiling maelstrom of an avalanche on the north-east face of the Courtes in the French Alps.

- What does this extract describe?
- Highlight the descriptive technique used in the first line. What technique is this?
- Why do you think this comparison has been used?
- Look at the rest of the extract and highlight any words or phrases that link back to the simile you found in the first line.
- What label would you give the rest of these descriptions?
- Below is the opening of a description of a river. Using this as your starting point, continue the description by building on the simile in the same way as the writer does in *Storms of Silence*.

The river bubbled over and around the stones on the bed like a small child playing hopscotch ...