

**Describe somewhere so that what you saw or felt at the time is communicated to your reader. You might choose one of the following:**

- **a town at night**
- **a bustling city centre**
- **a busy or quiet beach scene**
- 

Cities on a Saturday are often such interesting places: full of people, full of cars, full of the hustle and bustle of modern life. And Leicester is no exception. I was born there so I can speak from personal experience. But something was different last Saturday. There were more people, more cars and much more hustle and bustle than I had ever seen or heard before.

I'd gone into town with my mates that Saturday - as we always do. We caught the same No. 149 bus from Oadby – that's a small town south of Leicester. Nothing unusual in that. The journey was as predictable as ever – I'm so used to it. I can't even remember getting on the bus; but I can certainly remember getting off...

By the time we did get off we were all pretty fed up. We were as hot as the proverbial Sahara and as bothered as a bumble bee trapped in a beer bottle. The usual breezy fifteen minutes' journey had taken us over an hour. We hadn't noticed to start with. You know what it's like chatting about this and that. And Big Brother had been pretty crazy last night, so that had kept us more than a little occupied. But you know what it's like on a hot, packed bus crawling through traffic that's more like thick porridge than jam? Pretty awful once you realise what's happening. And what was happening? Not a lot.

Looking out onto the London Road to see what was going on – that was after wiping away mist as thick as a cotton sheet from the steamed up window – it looked as if someone had said to the whole of Leicestershire, "Get yourself to Leicester today; there's a million quid going free under the Clock Tower!" The road looked more like the packed car park at an N.E.C. pop concert than a city road; and as for the numbers of people...

Anyway to cut a long story short, we did eventually climb – well tumble – off the bus. We'd have headed straight for our usual glass of cool Coke at Brucciani's but we were more interested to know what was going on. The crowds were incredible. It was as if every nation, every age, everybody was there! The noise hit us next – shouting, screaming, oohing and aahing. Then something else struck me. Was it my imagination, or was it darker than usual? There was something about the quality of the light

that made us all stop and look at each other. We didn't have to ask the question, for we knew we all had the same thought in our minds. There was something odd about the sky... You know that feeling you have just before a really bad thunder storm, when the sky turns inky and the air feels oddly cool and fresh? Well the sky had certainly turned inky, but there was no freshness. It was weird.

It was then that we noticed that what we had thought was a grey cloud was moving and swirling a whole lot more quickly than any cloud we had ever seen move before. We suddenly realised, it wasn't a cloud. It was smoke: thick, dark, haunting smoke. There was a fire somewhere – surely a huge fire. And everyone was pushing and shoving to get a closer look at what was going on.

As we managed to push further through the crowd the air began to feel electric. Ahead, the piercing flick, flick, flick of blue lights were visible all around and we felt that strange mixture of wanting to see and yet being too frightened to look. And there it was – the Shires' shopping centre. Ablaze. The smoke was like a wall of solid black, and the action unbelievable – fire-fighters, hoses, water jets and a crowd of faces looking on just like they would at a fireworks display, just looking and wondering.

If you saw the news last night, you'll know the rest. Not a lot to tell you if you missed it. Unbelievably, no one was badly hurt and the fire-fighters had it all under control pretty quickly. By the time I got that Coke, I can tell you it was cooler and longer than any Coke I'd had before or I've had since. But we didn't get it from Brucciani's. Their Shires branch wasn't selling Coke any longer... and no chance of any ice!