

Student Name:
Teacher Name: Eddy
Class Name/Subject: English 4
Period: 1
Assignment Week #: 2

Hot Zone quick write (5 points)

Describe in five sentences or more how the coronavirus scare has impacted yourself and your family.

Directions: read, annotate, and answer questions below in complete sentences

Hot Zone: A Terrifying True Story

Excerpt from Part One: The Shadow of Mount Elgon

"Something in the Forest"

Charles Monet was a loner. He was a Frenchman who lived by himself in a little wooden bungalow on the private lands of the Nzoia Sugar Factory, a plantation in western Kenya that spread along the Nzoia River within sight of Mount Elgon, a huge, solitary, extinct volcano that rises to a height of fourteen thousand feet near the edge of the Rift Valley.

Monet's history is a little obscure. As with so many expatriates who end up in Africa, it is not clear what brought him there. Perhaps he had been in some kind of trouble in France. Or perhaps he had been drawn to Kenya by the beauty of the country. He was an amateur naturalist, fond of birds and animals but not of humanity in general. He was fifty-six years old, of medium height and medium build with smooth, straight brown hair; a good-looking man. It seems that his only close friends were women who lived in towns around the mountain, yet even they could not recall much about him for the doctors who investigated his death. His job was to take care of the sugar factory's water-pumping machinery, which drew water from the Nzoia River and delivered it to many miles of sugar-cane fields. They say that he spent most of his day inside the pump house by the river as if it pleased him to watch and listen to the machines doing their work.

So often in a case like this, it's hard to pin down the details. The doctors remember the clinical signs, because no one who has seen the effects of a Biosafety Level 4 hot agent on a human being can ever forget them, but the effects pile up, one after the other, until they obliterate the person beneath them. The case of Charles Monet emerges in a cold geometry of clinical fact mixed with flashes of horror so brilliant and disturbing that we draw back and blink, as if we are staring into a discolored alien sun.

Monet came into the country in the summer of 1979, around the time that human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, which causes AIDS, made a final breakout from the rain forest

of central Africa and began its long burn through the human race. AIDS had already fallen like a shadow over the population, although no one yet knew it existed. It had been spreading quietly along the Kinshasa Highway, a transcontinental road that wanders across Africa from east to west and passes along the shores of Lake Victoria within sight of Mount Elgon. HIV is a highly lethal but not very infective Biosafety Level 2 agent. It does not travel easily from person to person, and it does not travel through the air. You don't need to wear a biological suit while handling blood infected with HIV.

Monet worked hard in the pump house during the week, and on his weekends and holidays he would visit forested areas near the sugar factory. He would bring food with him, and he would scatter it around and watch while birds and animals ate it. He could sit in perfect stillness while he observed an animal. People who knew him recalled that he was affectionate with wild monkeys, that he had a special way with them. They said that he would sit holding a piece of food while a monkey approached him, and the animal would eat from his hand. ...

When Monet failed to show up for work, his colleagues began to wonder about him, and eventually they went to his bungalow to see if he was all right. The black-and-white crow sat on the roof and watched them as they went inside. They looked at Monet and decided that he needed to get to a hospital. Since he was very unwell and no longer able to drive a car, one of his co-workers drove him to a private hospital in the city of Kisumu, on the shore of Lake Victoria. The doctors at the hospital examined Monet, and could not come up with any explanation for what had happened to his eyes or his face or his mind. Thinking that he might have some kind of bacterial infection, they gave him injections of antibiotics, but the antibiotics had no effect on his illness.

The doctors thought he should go to Nairobi Hospital, which is the best private hospital in East Africa. The telephone system hardly worked, and it did not seem worth the effort to call any doctors to tell them that he was coming. He could still walk, and he seemed able to travel by himself. He had money; he understood he had to get to Nairobi. They put him in a taxi to the airport, and he boarded a Kenya Airways flight.

A hot virus from the rain forest lives within a twenty-four hour plane flight from every city on earth. All of the earth's cities are connected by a web of airline routes. The web is a network. Once a virus hits the net, it can shoot anywhere in a day: Paris, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, wherever planes fly. Charles Monet and the life form inside him had entered the net.

The plane was a Fokker Friendship with propellers, a commuter aircraft that seats thirty-five people. It started its engines and took off over Lake Victoria, blue and sparkling, dotted with the dugout canoes of fishermen. The Friendship turned and banked eastward, climbing over green hills quilted with tea plantations and small farms. The commuter flights that drone across Africa are often jammed with people, and this flight was probably full. The plane climbed over belts of forest and clusters of round huts and villages with tin roofs. The land suddenly dropped away, going down in shelves and ravines, and changed in color from green to brown. The plane was

crossing the Eastern rift valley. The passengers looked out the windows at the place where the human species was born. They saw specks of huts clustered inside circles of thornbush, with cattle trails radiating from the huts. The propellers moaned, and the friendship passed through cloud streets, lines of puffy rift clouds, and began to bounce and sway. Monet became airsick.

The seats are narrow and jammed together on these commuter airplanes, and you notice everything that is happening inside the cabin. The cabin is tightly closed, and the air recirculates. If there are any smells in the air, you perceive them. You would not have been able to ignore the man who was getting sick.

Excerpted from The Hot Zone: A Terrifying True Story by Richard Preston, published by Anchor Books.

The Hot Zone: A Terrifying True Story Q&A (5 points each)

- 1. How does the author introduce the virus in the third paragraph? What information is given to the reader? Explain in two or three sentences, citing specific examples.**
- 2. What likely happened in between the two sections? Write your best inference here based on the evidence in the text.**
- 4. How does Preston build suspense in the final three paragraphs of the excerpt? What does the reader know that the subjects in the story don't? Explain briefly, including text evidence in your response.**
- 5. The word *obscure* has two different forms, as an adjective and a verb. How are the meanings similar? Write both definitions here, explaining the nuance in the respective meanings. What does *obscure* mean as it appears in the excerpt?**
- 6. Based on context, what do you think the term *expatriates* means? Write your best definition of *expatriates* here, along with a brief explanation of how you arrived at its meaning.**