

## GALAPAGOS ISLANDS PROMPT

Both passages below, written in the nineteenth century, describe the same place, the Galapagos Islands (also called the Encantadas), off the coast of Ecuador. Read the passages carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the specific stylistic and rhetorical differences between the two descriptions.

### I

In the morning (17<sup>th</sup>) we landed on Chatham Island, which, like the others, rises with a tame and rounded outline, broken here and there by scattered hillock, the remains of former craters. Nothing could be less inviting than the first appearance. A broken field of black basaltic lave, thrown into the most rugged waves, and crossed by great fissures, is everywhere covered by stunted, sun-burnt brushwood, which shows little signs of life. The dry and parched surface, being heated by the noonday sun, gave to the air a close and sultry feeling, like that from a stove: we fancied even that the bushes smelt unpleasantly. Although I diligently tried to collect as many plants as possible, I succeeded in getting very few; and such wretched-looking little weeds would have better become an arctic than an equatorial flora. The brushwood appears from a short distance as leafless as our trees during winter; and it was some time before I discovered that not only almost every plant was now in full leaf, but that the greater number were in flower. The commonest bush is one of the Euphorbiaceae: an acacia and a great off-looking cactus are the only trees which afford any shade. After the season of heavy rains the islands are said to appear for a short time partially green. The volcanic island of Fernando de Noronha, placed in many respects under similar conditions, is the only other country where I have seen a vegetation at all like this of the Galapagos Islands.

(over)

## II

Line           Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here  
(5)           And there in an outside city lot; imagine them magnified  
                  Into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will  
                  have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas.  
                  or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes  
                  than of isles; looking much as the world at large might,  
                  after a penal conflagration.

(10)           It is to be doubted whether any spot of earth can, in  
                  desolateness, furnish a parallel to this group. Abandoned  
                  cemeteries of long ago, old cities by piecemeal tumbling  
                  to their ruin, these are melancholy enough; but, like all  
                  else which has but once been associated with humanity,  
                  they still awaken in us some thoughts of sympathy,  
                  however sad. Hence, even the Dead Sea, along with  
(15)           whatever other emotions it may at times inspire, does  
                  not fail to touch in the pilgrim some of his less unplea-  
                  surable feelings.

(20)           And as for solitariness; the great forests of the north,  
                  the expanses of unnavigated waters, the Greenland  
                  icefields, are the profoundest of solitudes to a human  
                  observer; still the magic of their changeable rides and  
                  seasons mitigates their terror; because, though unvisited  
                  by men, those forests are visited by the May; the remotest  
                  seas reflect familiar stars even as Lake Erie  
(25)           does; and in the clear air of a fine Polar day, the irradi-  
                  ated, azure ice shows beautifully as malachite.

(30)           But the special curse, as one may call it, of the En-  
                  cantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above  
                  idumea and the Pole is, that to them change never  
                  comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows.  
                  cut by the Equator, they know not autumn, and they  
                  know not spring; while already reduced to the lees of  
                  fire, ruin itself can work little more upon them. The  
                  showers refresh the deserts; but in these isles, rain never  
(35)           falls. Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun,  
                  they are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a  
                  torrid sky. "Have mercy on me," the wailing spirit of  
                  the Encantadas seems to cry, "and send Lazarus that  
                  he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool  
                  my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."