

Directions

Read the essay "Rough Road Ahead: Do Not Exceed Posted Speed Limit." Then answer Numbers through



Do Not Exceed Posted Speed Limit

by Joe Kurmaskie

FORGET THAT OLD SAYING ABOUT NEVER taking candy from strangers. No, a better piece of advice for the solo cyclist would be, "Never accept travel advice from a collection of old-timers who haven't left the confines of their porches since Carter¹ was in office." It's not that a group of old guys doesn't know the terrain. With age comes wisdom and all that, but the world is a fluid place. Things change.

At a reservoir campground outside of Lodi, California, I enjoyed the serenity of an early-summer evening and some lively conversation with these old codgers.² What I shouldn't have done was let them have a peek at my map. Like a foolish youth, the next morning I followed their advice and launched out at first light along a

"shortcut" that was to slice away hours from my ride to Yosemite National Park.

They'd sounded so sure of themselves when pointing out landmarks and spouting off towns I would come to along this breezy jaunt.

Things began well enough. I rode into the morning with strong legs and a smile on my face. About forty miles into the pedal, I arrived at the first "town." This place might have been a thriving little spot at one time—say, before the last world war—but on that morning it fit the traditional definition of a ghost town. I chuckled, checked my water supply, and moved on. The sun was beginning to beat down, but I barely noticed it. The cool pines and rushing rivers of Yosemite had my name written all over them.

¹Carter: Jimmy Carter, President of the United States, 1977-1981

²codgers: eccentric men



Twenty miles up the road, I came to a fork of sorts. One ramshackle shed, several rusty pumps, and a corral that couldn't hold in the lamest mule greeted me. This sight was troubling. I had been hitting my water bottles pretty regularly, and I was traveling through the high deserts of California in June.

I got down on my hands and knees, working the handle of the rusted water pump with all my strength. A tarlike substance oozed out, followed by brackish water feeling somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred degrees. I pumped that handle for several minutes, but the water wouldn't cool down. It didn't matter. When I tried a drop or two, it had the flavor of battery acid.

The old guys had sworn the next town was only eighteen miles down the road. I could make that! I would conserve my water and go inward for an hour or so—a test of my inner spirit.

Not two miles into this next section of the ride, I noticed the terrain changing. Flat road was replaced by short, rolling hills. After I had crested the first few of these, a large highway sign jumped out at me. It read: ROUGH ROAD AHEAD: DO NOT EXCEED POSTED SPEED LIMIT.

The speed limit was 55 mph. I was doing a water-depleting 12 mph. Sometimes life can feel so cruel.

I toiled on. At some point, tumbleweeds crossed my path and a ridiculously large snake—it really did look like a diamondback—blocked the majority of the

pavement in front of me. I eased past, trying to keep my balance in my dehydrated state.

The water bottles contained only a few tantalizing sips. Wide rings of dried sweat circled my shirt, and the growing realization that I could drop from heatstroke on a gorgeous day in June simply because I listened to some gentlemen who hadn't been off their porch in decades, caused me to laugh.

It was a sad, hopeless laugh, mind you, but at least I still had the energy to feel sorry for myself. There was no one in sight, not a building, car, or structure of any kind. I began breaking the ride down into distances I could see on the horizon, telling myself that if I could make it that far, I'd be fine.

Over one long, crippling hill, a building came into view. I wiped the sweat from my eyes to make sure it wasn't a mirage, and tried not to get too excited. With what I believed was my last burst of energy, I maneuvered down the hill.

In an ironic twist that should please all sadists reading this, the building—abandoned years earlier, by the looks of it—had been a Welch's Grape Juice factory and bottling plant. A sandblasted picture of a young boy pouring a refreshing glass of juice into his mouth could still be seen.

I hung my head.

That smoky blues tune "Summertime" rattled around in the dry honeycombs of my deteriorating brain.

I got back on the bike, but not before I gathered up a few pebbles and stuck them in my mouth. I'd read once that sucking on stones helps take your mind off thirst by allowing what spit you have left to circulate. With any luck I'd hit a bump and lodge one in my throat.

It didn't really matter. I was going to die and the birds would pick me clean, leaving only some expensive outdoor gear and a diary with the last entry in praise of old men, their wisdom, and their keen sense of direction. I made a mental note to change that paragraph if it looked like I was going to lose consciousness for the last time.

Somehow, I climbed away from the abandoned factory of juices and dreams, slowly gaining elevation while losing hope. Then, as easily as rounding a bend, my troubles, thirst, and fear were all behind me.

GARY AND WILBER'S FISH CAMP—IF YOU WANT BAIT FOR THE BIG ONES, WE'RE YOUR BEST BET!

"And the only bet," I remember thinking.

As I stumbled into a rather modern bathroom and drank deeply from the sink, I had an overwhelming urge to seek out Gary and Wilber, kiss them, and buy some bait—any bait, even though I didn't own a rod or reel.

An old guy sitting in a chair under some shade nodded in my direction. Cool water dripped from my head as I slumped against the wall beside him.

"Where you headed in such a hurry?"

"Yosemite," I whispered.

"Know the best way to get there?"

I watched him from the corner of my eye for a long moment. He was even older than the group I'd listened to in Lodi.

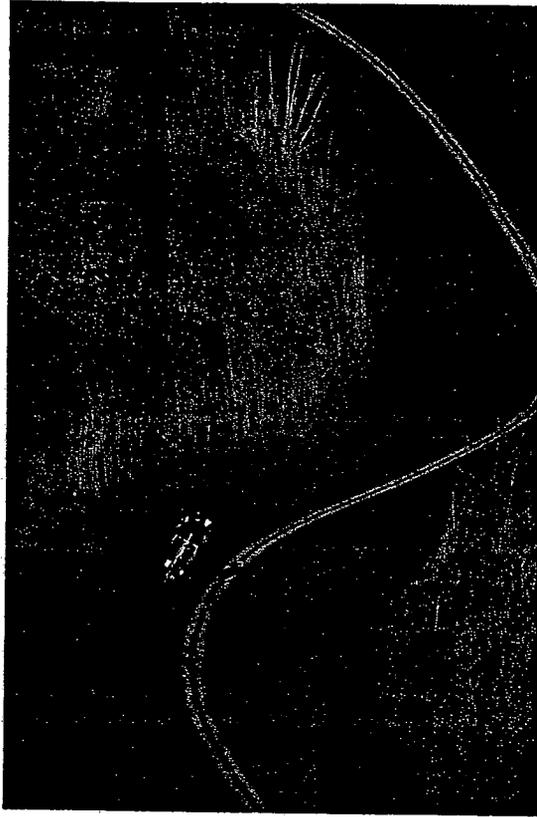
"Yes, sir! I own a very good map."

And I promised myself right then that I'd always stick to it in the future.

"Rough Road Ahead" by Joe Kurmaskie, from *Metal Cowboy*, copyright © 1999 Joe Kurmaskie. Used by permission of Breakaway Books.



Carefully examine the details of the photograph below.



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BCR

Write a response that explains how the features of the setting affect the cyclist. In your response, include examples from the essay that support your conclusion.

Use the space on page 16 in your Answer Book for planning your response. Then write your response on the lines on page 17.



In My opinion the Cyclist in the story's
Setting Affects the way the Character is
Presented because the Setting uses a certain
tone that emphasizes the way his actions
take place

Guide Response # 1

Score Level: 0

Although on topic (the cyclist in the story's setting), this response does not show evidence of an understanding of the text or question. The support presented (affects the way the character is presented because the setting uses a certain tone that emphasizes the way his actions take place) is vague and could be in reference to any story. No proof that reading has occurred is demonstrated.

Write your response to Number 43 on the lines below. Only what you write on these lines will be scored.

The setting made it harder for the cyclist to ride. It made him very thirsty.

Guide Response # 2

Score Level: 1

This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. Two brief but related comments are presented (made it harder for the cyclist to ride; made him very thirsty).

In the story the lack of water, hot weather, and lack of directions affected the cyclist. When the cyclist was low on water he was almost forced to drink hot water. The hot weather caused him to see Juice factory which was a mirage. The lack of directions made him go farther than he was going. In the end he found a bait place and got directions to get their faster.

Guide Response # 3

Score Level: 1

This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. Several ideas are presented (lack of water, hot weather, lack of directions) with some relevant paraphrased text support (When the cyclist was low on water he was almost forced to drink hot water). Although, "hot weather" is a correct idea, this idea is followed with a misreading (caused him to see a juice factory which was a mirage). A repeated, but unexplained idea is given (The lack of directions made him go farther than he was going). The last idea is partially correct (in the end he found a bait place) and partially incorrect (got directions to get their faster).

The Setting of the story affected the cyclist in many bad ways. At first he was riding in a desert on a bike with no town in sight. Then when he finds a town its real old and no signs of humans. Then he gets dirty hot water which makes him dehydrated. So I think the setting in the story almost caused the cyclist to die.

Guide Response # 4

Score Level: 1+

This response demonstrates a minimal understanding of the text. Discussion surrounding the beginning (at first he was riding in a desert on a bike with no town in sight) and middle of the story (he finds a town its real old and no signs of humans) is presented through a paraphrase of the text. The next idea is a slight misreading (then he gets dirty hot water which makes him dehydrated). The final sentence is an idea that could be derived from reading (the setting almost caused the cyclist to die), but this idea is not supported.

Write your response to Number 43 on the lines below. Only what you write on these lines will be scored.

Throughout the story, the author becomes exhausted. The path had snakes, tumble weeds and almost everything to make it hard for a cyclist to make his way through. He gets more and more thirsty but there is nowhere to get the water from. Finally he sees a building and the irony of it being an abandoned juice factory just makes him even more hopeless. The setting is perfectly arranged for everything to ~~g~~ simply go wrong, but that is ~~just~~ what makes the story so interesting.

Guide Response # 5

Score Level: 2

This response demonstrates a partial understanding of the text. Several appropriate ideas concerning how the setting affected the cyclist (becomes exhausted; more and more thirsty; makes him even more hopeless) are discussed. Expressed (The path had snakes, tumbleweeds; he sees an abandoned juice factory) and some implied information (made it hard for a cyclist to make his way through; there is nowhere to get water from; the irony; The setting is perfectly arranged for everything to simply go wrong) shows an understanding that moves beyond a minimal interpretation of the question and text.

Write your response to Number 43 on the lines below. Only what you write on these lines will be scored.

While reading the short story "Do not Exceed Posted Speed Limit", by Joe Kurmaskie the features of the setting affect the cyclist in various ways. In the beginning of the story the cyclist was full of confidence while riding through the pines of Yosemite Park. For example, (paragraph 4, lines 1-2) "Things began well enough. I rode into the morning with strong legs and a smile on my face." As the story progresses and the setting changes, the cyclist mood quickly changes from optimistic into desperation. For example, he pedals through snakes. Last, he is relieved when the cyclist finds water. In conclusion, this is how the setting affects the cyclist in this short story.

Guide Response # 6

Score Level: 2

This response demonstrates a partial understanding of the text. The student agrees that the setting affects the cyclist in "various ways". These ideas are listed (was full of confidence; the cyclist mood quickly changes from optimistic into desperation; he is relieved) and supported through text quotes ("Things began well enough. I rode into the morning with strong legs and a smile on my face.") and paraphrasing (while riding through the pines of Yosemite Park; he pedals through snakes; the cyclist finds water), therefore representing a score level 2 response.

Write your response to Number 43 on the lines below. Only what you write on these lines will be scored.

The cyclist started the journey with confidence in the old men, enthusiasm and determination. He followed the route given to him by the old men. The route which was supposed to be a shortcut.

His determination on the foundations of his determination shook when he came to the place which was supposed to be a town. It was deserted and spooky. "At some point, tumbleweeds crossed my path and a ridiculously large snake blocked the majority of the pavement." Shows how deserted the place was and how it had been taken over by untamed creatures.

He looked forward to a town with people but was disappointed with what he saw which affected him, almost losing hope until he saw the fish camp. He even didn't believe that it was a fish camp until he got up close.

Guide Response # 7

Score Level: 2+

This response demonstrates a partial understanding of the text. Many ideas concerning how the setting affected the cyclist are presented (confidence; enthusiasm; determination; his determination shook; he looked forward; but was disappointed; losing hope; he didn't believe). These ideas are only partially supported through expressed (he followed the route given to him by the old men – shortcut; came to a place that was supposed to be a town; "At some point...majority of the pavement"; saw the fish camp) and implied information (it was deserted and spooky; shows how deserted the place was and how it had been taken over by untamed creatures; he didn't believe it was a fish camp until he got up close) derived from reading "Rough Road Ahead".

Write your response to Number 43 on the lines below. Only what you write on these lines will be scored.

The features of the setting in this story affect the cyclist at first, "the morning is cool as he rides" with strong legs and a smile on [his] face." This setting changes as he sees a "traditional ghost town," that was supposed to provide water. The sun "beginning to beat down" probably worries him a bit but not too bad. When the road changes and he sees the "short, rolling hills," his confidence drops again and again when he sees a snake. When the water runs out, he fears "[dropping] from a heatstroke." As the sun gets hotter, his morale ~~de~~ decreases because he also doesn't have much water. He loses hope everytime he sees the old men he got directions from were wrong. When the cyclist gains hope at the site of the building, the setting affect him. But then he realizes that the building is run down & abandoned, and he hangs his head in sorrow this is how the features of the setting affect the cyclist.

Guide Response # 8

Score Level: 3-

This response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text. The various settings of the story (the morning is cool; he sees a "traditional ghost town"; the sun; the road changes; the water runs out; sun gets hotter) along with how the cyclist is affected (probably worries him; his confidence drops again and again; he fears; morale decreases; loses hope; gains hope; hangs his head in sorrow) is discussed through a balance of text references ("as he rides with strong legs and a smile on his face"; "beginning to beat down"; he sees a snake; "dropping from a heatstroke"; the old men he got directions from were wrong; site of the building; building is run down and abandoned) and an implied interpretation of the text (supposed to provide water; probably...because...when...but then...) which moves beyond a literal meaning of the story and question.

The setting seems to be as formidable an opponent as the actual workout. It seems as if everything is against the cyclist, including nature. As the day progresses, and the cyclist's journey continues, the setting becomes harsher and harsher. After passing the first "town", the "sun was beginning to beat down." In need of water, all a cruel pump gives him is "a tarlike substance." His sufferings continue, increasingly pummeled by his surroundings and his thirst for water. If dehydration was not enough, the flat terrain gave way to "rolling hills" which would only punish his legs more. Reaching possible salvation, his hopes are crushed when the "Welch's Grape Juice Factory" turns out to be abandoned. All these punts are enough to destroy anyone's spirit. The cyclist almost gives up hope to accept certain death. He has been ferociously beaten by his very surroundings. It appears as if he is fated to die alone in the blistering heat. Although he hangs his head in despair, he still continues on the path of disappointment. In a twist of fate, he encounters a thriving store where he buys and drinks. Finally encountering his salvation, this particular setting brings new hope and relief to the cyclist who has finally survived his trek through nature.

Guide Response # 9

Score Level: 3

In this response demonstrating an understanding of the complexities of the text, the student extends and clarifies understanding beyond the literal by describing the setting as "as formidable an opponent as the actual workout" (setting becomes harsher and harsher; town, sun beating down, cruel pump, flat terrain gave way to rolling hills, the juice factory). The student explains that "everything is against the cyclist, including nature" and the effects are harsh (sufferings continue, pummeled by his surroundings, hopes were crushed). About the setting and the effects on the cyclist, the student insightfully writes, "All these events are enough to destroy anyone's spirit. The cyclist almost gives up hope to accept certain death. He has been ferociously beaten by his very surroundings." The student acknowledges a "twist of fate" as the cyclist encounters his "salvation" in a thriving store and experiences "new hope and relief." The student concludes, ". . . the cyclist has finally survived his trek through nature."

Answer Key

Team _____ Name _____

Rough Road Ahead		A Sea Worry		Abuelo	
TS 1	TS 2	TS 1	TS 2	TS 1	TS 2
1 2	1 2	1 1	1 1-	1 1	1 2+
2 1+	2 2	2 2-	2 2-	2 2-	2 1-
3 2	3 1	3 1-	3 1+	3 1-	3 2-
4 1	4 2	4 2+	4 2+	4 3	4 1+
5 2	5 2	5 1*	5 1	5 1+	5 2
6 1+	6 1+	6 2+	6 3-	6 2	6 3-
7 2	7 2	7 1	7 2	7 1	7 1
8 1	8 2-	8 3-	8 1+	8 2	8 2
9 2	9 1-	9 2+	9 2+	9 1	9 1
10 1	10 2	10 1	10 1	10 3 (added)	10 3 (added)

Well most of the settings affected him. The worst one was the heat, how hot it was, it made him tired, sweaty and very thirsty. There wasn't anyone in sight, because if there was he could have been there getting water. There were a couple of abandoned things that he came past, that he thought would have helped him. Like the factory or the water faucet that sprayed out hot, battery tasting acid. If he would have had enough water he wouldn't have suffered.

As the cyclist listens to
some old man who haven't let there porch in a while. When
they gave him a short cut he ended up on a long
road in the desert. He hasn't seen a town yet
and his water supply is running very low. When he
finally reaches a town the water tastes like battery
acid and he was losing energy from the heat. He
finally reaches a town with water and another old
man gives him a shortcut from his map.

The setting of the essay made me feel like I was there with the cyclist. The description were absolutely fantastic. For example the cyclist was getting dehydrated and ironically we see "a sandblasted picture of a young boy pouring a refreshing glass of juice into his mouth." While the cyclist is in a desert where the temperature of the water pretty much exceeded 200° , this picture could still be seen. The feeling made him want to give up but he kept peddling on. When he finally made it to a destination where he could get water he was very grateful.

The feature of the setting affected the cyclist, by the different times of day. For example, in the morning he rode with strong legs and a smile on his face pg. 32. This shows how the cyclist was confident in what he was doing. The cyclist was so determined on where he had to be that he didn't notice the sun beating down on him. pg. 32. These are some examples how the feature of the setting affected the cyclist.

The biker in the story is affected by both the overwhelming lack of water and the poor settings around him. One example of the poor settings affecting him is when the author writes "a large highway sign jumped out at me. It read rough road ahead..." This shows how the poor road caused a major obstacle for the biker. Another example is when the author mentions "Over a long, crippling hill..." This shows the uneven surface of the roads which tired the biker. Even though the tough, exhausting road conditions the biker still pulled through and made his way to water.

The settings affect him in a few ways. One of the main ways is that they make him feel worse. For example when he saw the sign that said "Rough road... Posted speed limit" he felt sorry because he was ~~went~~ and he could not go faster than 12 when the speed limit was 55. Also he thought it was ironic that he got the witch's grape juice factor when he was parched. These are just a few reasons the settings affected him.

The features of the setting discourage the cyclist. Along the way the cyclist has a very limited amount of water. The first water pump he goes to only has hot water and tastes like battery acid. Then he reads the sign that says speed limit is 55. And he is only going 12. The terrain also changes and he has to ride over rolling hills. He also faces obstacles as a snake and tumbleweeds crossed his path. He then passes by a old abandoned grape juice factory, that discourages him even more. His main challenge was the lack of water and the setting was in June in the desert. All these descriptions of the setting discourages him.

The features of the setting affected the cyclist because first it is really hot out there and the cyclist had to use a lot of energy because there were hills he had to ride up. he had to slow down when tumbleweeds were blowing across the road and he had to slow down because snakes was in the middle of the road blocking it.

In the story "Rough Road Ahead: Do not Exceed Posted Speed Limit", the features of the setting affected the cyclist. The main problem in the story was that he was getting dehydrated and he was getting weak. That still would have been the problem if the story took place somewhere else, but it wouldn't have been as bad. The story took place in California, where it is hot and has desert like conditions. He wouldn't have been as dehydrated as he was if he wasn't in the desert. If he would have stuck to his original route, he probably wouldn't have had this problem. His route probably would have been somewhere where he knew he could get water and stay if he needed to.

The features of the setting affect the cyclist because he is starved for water. He is riding through scorching heat and is out of water. He starts to feel himself become dehydrated. He takes directions from other people on where the road is, but he ends up getting lost.

In the story, "Do not exceed Posted Speed limit," the author encounters ~~on~~ a grueling and harsh road and setting out in Yosemite. The climate in the Yosemite National Park is one of cool pines and crystal blue streams, but this is not so for the road that the writer had taken. The road he described in the book was one of hard rough ground, diamondback snakes and abandoned buildings and towns.

This made it one hard trip and it also provides no water to the cyclist who had no water. This is how the features of the setting were described and how it affected the cyclist.

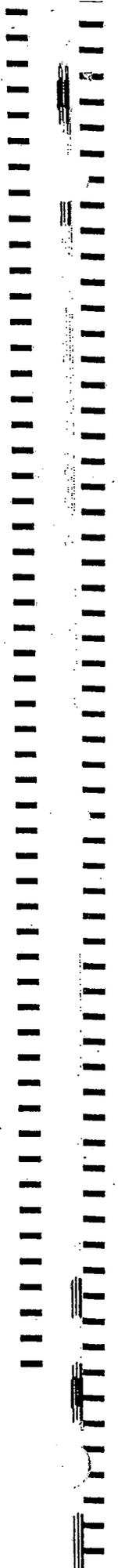
The features in the setting all added to the difficulty of the cyclist's journey. The hot temperature in the desert, and rolling hills made the cyclist need more water and added to his dehydration. The roads surrounded by no towns decreased the cyclist's hopes of survival, which were already slim. The tumble weeds and diamondback posed the threat of making him fall. The pebbles were considered a way of relief from dehydration and a possible form of suicide. At the end though the Fish Camp relieved him of his worries.

The features of the setting affects the Cyclist dramatically. The Cyclist explains the setting in a well, detailed way. He says hee is in the California dessert, at one point, he passed a large Snake. He came across an abundet factory. The setting is well pictured.

In the short story, "Do Not Exceed posted Speed Limit" by Joe Kurmaskie the cyclist is faced with features affecting his journey. "Not two miles into this next section of the ride, I noticed the terrain changing. Flat road was replaced by short rolling hills." The cyclist had to slow his pace down to make it over these hills, which prolonged his journey. Also, "At some point, tumbleweeds crossed my path and a ridiculously large snake." This also was a distraction and made the cyclist paranoid through to the end of the ride. From my own personal experience, it is hard to keep pushing your self down a trail when you have no clue where you are going, especially when the heat is beating down on you. That's why I like to go to the C. & O Canal and bike where it's semi-shady.

The features in the setting affect the biker in a negative way. As he travels along the road the terrain gets rougher and rougher. He says, "... on that morning it fit the traditional definition of a ghost town." This shows how he is realizing that the information he received from the old men is at least a small bit of a mis-interpretation. As he travels on he describes the environment as more like a desert than Yosemite National park. As the deterioration of the setting progresses the speaker becomes more and more concerned about the validity of the information that he received and his dwindling water supply. So there is a direct relation to the setting and the speaker's realization of the trouble he is in. This is how the description of the setting affects the cyclist.

Although it was "a gorgeous day in June," the cyclist was traveling through the high deserts of California. This setting drained him of his energy. Since there was "no one in sight, not a building, car, or structure of any kind," this weakened his determination to finish the journey. The cyclist was no doubt exhausted and over heated.



The setting during the story closely mirrors the general feeling of the cyclist. As he first sets out on his journey, "cool pines, rushing rivers of Yosemite," the scene is cheerful and relaxing. As the story goes on, the setting becomes more barren and desolate, "tumultuously crossing my path," reflecting on the cyclist's loss of spirit and utter helplessness. When the cyclist finally reaches winter, the bathroom is described as "relatively modern looking", this depicts how the cyclist has been saved and is returning to civilization. As the story progresses, the the setting changes, showing the bitter winter state and the general state of the situation.

The features of the setting affect the cyclist because the cyclist's water bottles only contained a few tantalizing sips. Since the cyclist was at a place with not a building, car, or structure in sight; having little water affects him tremendously. The cyclist had gone dehydrated and could have dropped from heatstroke. There was no place he could have gone for more water and he was minutes from becoming unconscious. That is why the features of the setting affect the cyclist.

The features of the Cyclist affect the setting because if there is no road and dirt and rocks you can become tired. When there is road and hills it provides energy, confidence, and intensity to wear you need to go. If it was rainy it would be slippery. If hot/cool difficult to ride.

In "Rough Road Ahead: Do Not Exceed Posted Speed Limit," the setting plays a very important role. The setting is the antagonist while the cyclist is the protagonist.

The setting's immense heat adds to the cyclist's dehydration by overheating him and overheating the water from the water pump. It also changes its terrain making the bike path much more rigorous and difficult. These factors add to the cyclist's despair and lack of energy.

Although the setting is uncomfortable, it sets up a nice contrast to that of the cyclist's destination, Yosemite National Park. This contrast provides an incentive for the cyclist to continue on his journey.