

Green Group

Oranges In No Man's Land. (Chapter 3)

I stepped out of that crowded, overflowing, noisy flat one bright morning. It must have been early summer, I suppose, because the night had been cold, and the day looked as though it would be hot.

There had been a ferocious gun battle raging through the streets around us all through the night. There was an invisible line across Beirut in those days. It was known as the 'Green Line' and it divided the city as surely as a wall, though there was no actual line to be seen, only a vast maze of bombed-out buildings, infested with gunmen and a few old people. The different groups controlled the opposite sides, and battles were fought across it.

Back then, I never understood who was who or what was what. I still don't really know. What were they all fighting for? Religion? Politics? Was it the rich against the poor? Sometimes I wonder if the fighters themselves knew what they were doing.

That night, they'd been hard at it. The whole city had echoed to the crash of exploding bombs and shells and the rattle of machine gun-fire. Vehicles had roared through the streets, their tyres squealing, and ambulance sirens had sounded in the distance.

It was quiet in the street now. The fighting was over for the time being. The sky should have been a bright blue, but a light fog hung over the city from the dust of the ruins and the smoke from the burning buildings.

- 1) Why might Ayesha think that the day would be hot?
- 2) What does the word 'ferocious' mean?
- 3) Can you find a metaphor in the text?
- 4) What do you think Ayesha means when she said, 'I never understood who was who and what was what'? Explain your answer.
- 5) What type of descriptive language is 'Vehicles roared through the streets, their tyres squealing'? Can you describe the ambulance in that way?
- 6) Summarise the text into three sentences.