One

Until he was four years old, James Henry Trotter had a happy life. He lived peacefully with his mother and father in a beautiful house beside the sea. There were always plenty of other children for him to play with, and there was the sandy beach for him to run about on, and the ocean to paddle in. It was the perfect life for a small boy.

Then, one day, James's mother and father went to London to do some shopping, and there a terrible thing happened. Both of them suddenly got eaten up (in full daylight, mind you, and on a crowded street) by an enormous angry rhinoceros which had escaped from the London Zoo.

Now this, as you can well imagine, was a rather nasty experience for two such gentle parents. But in the long run it was far nastier for James than it was for them. *Their* troubles were all over in a jiffy. They were dead and gone in thirty-five seconds flat. Poor James, on the other hand, was still very much alive, and all at once he found himself alone and frightened in a vast unfriendly world. The lovely house by the seaside had to be sold immediately, and the little boy, carrying nothing but a small suitcase containing a pair of pyjamas and a toothbrush, was sent away to live with his two aunts.

Their names were Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker, and I am sorry to say that they were both really horrible people. They were selfish and lazy and

James and the Giant Peach

1. Select three adjectives to show James had a good life **(V – 1 mark)**
2. What does the word "vast" mean? **(V – 1 mark)**
3. Predict what other adjective could finish off the last sentences **(P – 1 mark)**
4. What animal killed James' parents? **(R – 1 mark)**
5. Do you think the narrator likes Aunt Sponge and Aunt Spiker? Explain **(I/E – 2 marks)**

He was out there now, no doubt rescuing some small child from a rampaging robot, or catching a falling plane, or rounding up some criminal kingpin and his henchmen.

There was a distant rumble and the horizon burst into light, the explosion sending bright-orange flames into the sky to silhouette the rooftops of our home town of Bromley.

Had to be Zack.

I might learn the details of tonight's adventure when he returned later, but in all likelihood the only thing I'd get from him would be a grunt as he pushed past me to the fridge for a snack. He was always hungry after a mission. That was his style: peckish after, and reluctant before. He'd never wanted the responsibility of being a superhero, not from that first moment when a purple-caped, egg-headed alien called Zorbon the Decider had chosen him to save the world. Zack couldn't see the point of having powers and it was never far from his thoughts. Earlier that evening he'd brought it up for the gazillionth time.

"And another thing," he'd said as we washed up the dinner dishes together. "Superheroes are expensive."

"But you don't get paid," I reminded him.

My Cousin is a Time Traveller

by David Solomons

1. What does the word "rampaging" mean? **(V – 1 mark)**
2. What job does Zack have? What is he? **(R – 1 mark)**
3. What is the alien called? **(R – 1 mark)**
4. Select the word which shows Zack mentioned his powers more than once **(R/V – 1 mark)**
5. How do you think the narrator is related to Zack? Explain **(I/E – 2 marks)**

The Umbrella Mouse
by Anna Fargher

CHAPTER ONE

JAMES SMITH & SONS
UMBRELLA SHOP, LONDON, 1944

The grandfather clock had just struck five when Pip Hanway saw Mr and Mrs Smith for the last time. Watching them closely, with her whiskers twitching on her cheeks, she peered out from under her umbrella canopy and tightened her tail around the end of one of its metal ribs, hoping more customers would soon visit the shop to tell more stories of the far-flung places she dreamed to see.

Mr Smith was standing behind the long mahogany counter, smiling at his wife as she dusted the umbrellas in the shop window. She fluttered from one umbrella to the next as the June sunlight poured inside, all the time having no idea that a small family of mice were secretly living inside her precious antique umbrella, occupying pride of place at the front of the display.

1. What time is it? What time of year is it? **(R – 2 marks)**
2. Select two phrases which shows you Pip is not human **(R – 2 mark)**
3. What does "pride of place" mean? **(V – 1 mark)**
4. What did Pip want to see? **(R – 1 mark)**
5. What does the verb "fluttered" tell you about how she moved? **(I/E – 2 marks)**
6. Finish off the next sentence: "It had once belonged to the first man who..." **(P/I – 1 mark)**

The Train to Impossible Places

by P.G. Bell

It started with a flash.

A green flash, as bright and quick as lightning, there and then gone again. It happened so quickly that Suzy wasn't sure she had seen anything at all, although she raised her head from her homework and looked about.

"What was that?" she asked.

"What was what, darling?" said her mother from the sofa, where she and Suzy's father were both sprawled in a heap, still in their work clothes.

Suzy frowned. "Did you see it, Dad?"

"See what, sweetheart?" Her father was hunched over his tablet, reading the news and muttering to himself about the state of the government.

"That green flash. Didn't either of you see it?"

"Hmmmm," said her mother, shaking her braids loose whilst trying to stifle an enormous yawn.

Her father looked around the room in bleary-eyed confusion. "I didn't notice anything."

Suzy pressed her lips together. Perhaps it had been the TV? She peered over her mother's shoulder at the screen, but she was watching another costume drama – men with tall hats riding on horses in the countryside. No green flashes there.

"You've been overdoing the homework again," said her father, scratching at his unruly mop of ginger hair. "Give your eyes a rest and come and sit with us for a bit."

"I'm almost finished," Suzy said, and turned back to her workbook.

1. What does the word "sprawled" mean? **(V – 1 mark)**
2. What colour was the green flash? **(R – 1 mark)**
3. Select two phrases which show the parents are tired **(R – 2 marks)**
4. Find a synonym in the text for uncontrollable **(V/R – 1 mark)**
5. Do you think Suzy likes homework? Explain your answer **(I/E – 2 marks)**

More than one hundred years ago, in the time of gas lamps and candlelight, when shops had wooden counters and the streets were full of horses, a baby girl was born. Nobody was pleased about this except the baby's mother. The baby's father did not like children, not even his own, and Peter, the baby's brother, was only three years old and did not understand the need for any extra people in his world.

But the baby's mother *was* pleased. She named the baby Clarissa, after her own lost mother. '*Clear and bright*,' she whispered to her brand-new baby. 'That's what your name means: *Clear and bright*. Clarry.'

Clarry was three days old when her mother died. Many things were said about this great calamity, and some of them were regretted later, when people had calmed down and there were fewer tears and more worried frowns in the narrow stone house where the baby had so inconsiderately arrived and her mother had so inconveniently departed. For it was, as the baby's father remarked (in no one's presence, unless a week-old baby counted), a blasted nuisance. And if it had to happen, and she had to die, the father added bitterly, then it was a pity that the baby had not also . . .

The Skylarks' War
by Hilary McKay

1. Select two things to show it was set a long time ago **(R – 2 marks)**
2. Why do you think Peter did not understand the new baby? **(I – 1 mark)**
3. What does "calamity" mean? **(V – 1 mark)**
4. Clarissa means "clear and bright". Can you find out what your name means? **(E – 1 mark)**
5. What do you think is going to happen to baby Clarry? **(P – 2 marks)**

I disappeared on the night before my twelfth birthday. July 28 1988. Only now can I at last tell the whole extraordinary story, the true story. Kensuke made me promise that I would say nothing, nothing at all, until at least ten years had passed. It was almost the last thing he said to me. I promised, and because of that I have had to live out a lie. I could let sleeping lies sleep on, but more than ten years have passed now. I have done school, done college, and had time to think. I owe it to my family and to my friends, all of whom I have deceived for so long, to tell the truth about my long disappearance, about how I lived to come back from the dead.

But there is another reason for speaking out now, a far, far better reason. Kensuke was a great man, a good man, and he was my friend. I want the world to know him as I knew him.

Until I was nearly eleven, until the letter came, life was just normal. There were the four of us in the house: my mother, my father, me and Stella – Stella Artois, that is, my-one-ear up and one-ear-down black and white sheepdog, who always seemed to know what was about to happen before it did. But even she could not have foreseen how that letter was going to change our lives for ever.

Kensuke's Kingdom

by Michael Morpurgo

1. How old was the narrator when they disappeared? (R – 1 mark)
2. What year do you think it is now? Why? (I/E – 2 marks)
3. Why is the narrator speaking out now? (R/E – 1 marks)
4. Write the next three sentences (P – 2 marks)
5. What does "foreseen" mean? (V – 1 mark)

Malala Yousafzai

by Lisa Williamson

Introduction

When: 9th October 2012
Where: Mingora, Swat Valley, Pakistan

Malala was in a good mood travelling home from school. She was pretty sure she'd aced the morning's exam and was looking forward to a chilled-out afternoon at home.

She was having a giggle with her best friend, Moniba, when **the school bus stopped suddenly**. A young man was standing in the road in front of it. He wore long white robes and a baseball cap. 'Is this the Khushal School bus?' he asked.

Another young man jumped onto the back of the bus and leaned in. A hush fell over the girls as both men glared at them. Her heart hammering in her chest, Malala found Moniba's hand and gave it a squeeze. Around twenty girls were crammed onto the hard plastic benches and they stared back, stunned, as the men scanned the bus.

'Who is Malala?' the second man asked gruffly. No one answered his question, but a few of the girls glanced in Malala's direction before they could stop themselves. Then the same man **raised a pistol** for all the girls to see.

Malala froze with fear.

1. Where is Malala from? **(R – 1 mark)**
2. "...she was pretty sure she'd aced the morning's exam". What does this mean? **(E – 1 mark)**
3. How was Malala feeling? Explain **(I – 2 marks)**
4. "A hush fell over the girls..." What does this mean? **(E – 1 mark)**
5. Find a synonym in the text for "searched" **(V – 1 mark)**

Rose Rivers

by Jacqueline Wilson

'I HAVE A LITTLE present for you, Rose,' said Papa.

He handed me a rectangular package tied with string that looked promisingly like a book. I love reading more than anything else, especially the books in Papa's studio. He doesn't know that I borrow them. I don't bother with the ones in the cabinet in the drawing room – they are Mama's silly romantic tosh.

I opened my package eagerly, though I feared it would be a Mrs Molesworth or a Miss Yonge, the sort of authors considered suitable for a girl of thirteen.

'I thought this would be a good time for you to start sketching seriously, sweetheart. I know you've been feeling rather mopey since Rupert left for school,' said Papa.

I didn't know what to say. He was trying so hard to cheer me up. And it's not as if I don't like drawing. I've spent half my childhood drawing witches and dragons and mermaids and tigers and goblins. Goblins are fun because I give them the faces of people I particularly detest. When my brother Algie crayoned all over the pages of my book of Tennyson's poetry, I created an entire community of grotesque goblins with his features.

I also like drawing girls. Not pretty girls with long brushed hair and demure dresses. Wild girls who have cut off their curls and tucked up their skirts or borrowed boy's breeches. They climb trees and leap streams and teeter on the very edge of cliffs. Sometimes I draw them being chastised. They are sent away in disgrace. They don't care!

Mama always tuts when she sees my drawings.

1. Which word show Rose was hoping for the package to be a book? **(V – 1 mark)**
2. "...they are Mama's silly romantic tosh" What do you think this means? Does Rose like her mother's books? **(I – 2 marks)**
3. What does "mopey" means? **(V – 1 mark)**
4. List three things that Rose draws **(R – 1 mark)**
5. "Mama always tuts when she sees them." What does this suggest about Rose's mother? **(I – 2 marks)**