Bold Girls by Rona Munro Exemplar Answer

Marie’s house. Belfast. Late afternoon. Present day

***It is irons and ironing boards and piles of clothes waiting to be smoothed, socks and pegs and damp sheets waiting for a break in the Belfast drizzle for the line; it’s toys in pieces and toys that are just cardboard boxes and toys that are new and gleaming and flashing with lights and have swallowed up the year’s savings. It’s pots and pans and steam and the kettle always hot for tea; it’s furniture that’s bald with age and a hearth in front of the coal fire that’s gleaming clean.***

***At the moment it’s empty, an unnatural, expectant emptiness that suggests this room is never deserted; it’s too stuffed with human bits and pieces, all the clutter of housework and life.***

***There is a small picture of the virgin on one wall, a large grainy blow-up photo of a smiling young man on the other. He has a seventies haircut and moustache.***

***Deirdre is not in this room, she is crouching on all fours on her own talking out of darkness in which only her face is visible. She is wary, young.***

**DEIRDRE:** (*moving from all fours*) The sun is going down behind the hills, the sky is grey. There’s hills at the back there, green. I can’t hardly see them because the stones between here and there are grey, the street is grey. Somewhere a bird is singing and falling in the sky. I hear the ice cream van and the traffic and the helicopter overhead.

***Black-out; after a few minutes Lights come up on Marie’s house.***

***Marie bursts into the room with her arms laden with four packets of crisps, two of Silk Cut and a packet of chocolate biscuits. She is cheerful, efficient, young. She drops one of the crisps, tuts in exasperation, and looks at it***

**MARIE:** (*shouting back out the door*) Mickey! Mickey were you wanting smoky bacon?... Well this is salt and vinegar . . . Well, why did you not say? Away you and swap this . . . Catch now. (*She hurls the bag*) No you cannot . . . No . . . because you’ll not eat your tea if you do! (*At the doorway*) Mickey, pick up those crisps and don’t be so bold.

***Marie comes back into the room and starts two jobs simultaneously. First she puts the crisps etc away, then she fills a pan with water and throws it on the stove. She starts sorting her dry washing into what needs ironing and what doesn’t; she sorts a few items then starts peeling potatoes; all her movements have a frenetic efficiency.***

**Questions**

1. Look at the description of Marie’s house. By referring to word choice and/or sentence structure, explain what impression this creates of Marie’s daily life. 4 marks

**EXAMPLE ANSWERS**

* “irons and ironing boards and piles of clothes…” LIST – emphasising all the mountain of housework she has to do showing how busy she is
* “piles” suggests so much to do, neverending
* “toys that are new and gleaming” – suggests the toys are shiny and untouched – shows she cares about her children and spends her money on them
* “swallowed up this year’s savings” – “swallowed” suggests consumed whole, all at once, nothing left – shows she spends all her money on her kids
* “pots and pans and steam and the kettle always hot for tea” – list – emphasising how homely Marie’s home is – she welcomes everyone; it’s the place everyone goes
* “always hot” – suggests there is no let up, activity is relentless
* “furniture that’s bald with age” – rundown, doesn’t have a lot of money to replace thing – would rather spend her money on her kids
* “never deserted” – suggests she is always busy/never a free moment
* “clutter of housework” – suggests lots to do, never ending
* “blown-up photo” – suggests sentimentality

**At least 20 marks available for a 4 mark question!**

1. With close reference to the text, explain what Deirdre’s actions and speech tell us about her relationship to her surroundings. You could consider: word choice, tone, the use of imagery etc . . .4 marks

**EXAMPLE ANSWERS**

* “not in the room” – suggests she is an outsider, an interloper, intruding
* “crouching on all fours” – suggests she is hiding, frightened, trying to make herself disappear
* “only her face visible” – suggests concealment/mystery
* “wary” – she is frightened, unsure of her surroundings
* “moving from all fours” – suggests she is animalistic, wary of her surroundings, she is suspicious
* “Sky is grey” – suggests she is a dark, pessimistic character who sees the worst in things
* “I can’t hardly see them” – suggests she is trapped, surrounded, unable to escape, see a future
* “helicopter overhead” – suggests police presence, conflict/violence
* “somewhere there is a bird singing” – suggests she feels a bit of hope
* “singing and falling” – suggests pessimism, everything good ends

**At least 20 marks available for a four mark question!**

3. The playwright introduces Marie. What do we find out about:

(a) her attitude towards Mickey; 2 marks

**EXAMPLE ANSWERS**

* She is kind to him/spoils him by buying him crisps (1) allowing him to swap them (1); explains her decisions to him (1)
* She is strict/disciplines him telling him to pick up the crisps (1) and to watch what he is saying to her as he has clearly answered back (1); (making sure he’ll eat his dinner (1)

**6 marks available for a 2 mark question!**

(b) her attitude towards her daily routine. 2 marks

EXAMPLE ANSWERS

* She isn’t bothered by it (1)
* “frenetic efficiency” – suggests she goes about her jobs in a competent way; gets things done (1)
* “bursts into room” – suggests she is full of energy
* “starts two jobs simultaneously” – suggests an ease with her daily routine, she is used to it, a dab hand
* “fills pan with water and throws it on the stove” – suggests an ease/familiarity with the tasks
* “sorting washing…needs ironing…doesn’t need ironing…” – suggests efficiency – doesn’t do what doesn’t need to be done; concentrates her efforts elsewhere/more important tasks

**At least 6 marks available for her a 2 mark question!**

1. The play goes on to develop our understanding of how challenging life is in many respects for the “bold girls”. By referring to this extract and at least one other example from the play, discuss what these challenges are. 8 marks

**EXAMPLE ANSWER (1)**

**Commonality:** The women of the play face challenges in their personal relationships and lives such as Nora and Cassie arguing about Sean all the time and how he treated Nora (1) as well as external challenges they have no control over such as the violence resulting from The Troubles (1)

**Extract** “furniture bald with age” (1) Suggests that there is not a lot of money to spend on replacing things when they become worn and broken (1)

**Elsewhere in play 1:** The women can’t get down the road to the club because of road block (1)Shows that they cannot get on with their everyday activities because of the conflict going on outside (1)

**Elsewhere in play 2:** Nora and Cassie argue about Sean hitting Nora in Scene 4 (1)Shows the challenges in their relationship as they cannot agree on how Sean treated Nora – Cassie will always take her dad’s side showing that their relationship is challenging and full of conflict. (1)

**EXAMPLE ANSWER (2)**

**Commonality:** The women of the play face challenges in their personal relationships and lives such struggling with money and struggling with family relationships

**Extract** “furniture bald with age” (1) Suggests that there is not a lot of money to spend on replacing things when they become worn and broken (1)

**Elsewhere in play 1:** “you’ve two red bills on your mantelpiece” (1) Cassie suggests that Marie is struggling to pay for everything she needs on her single wage

**Elsewhere in play 2:**  “and sure Brian’s getting all the cuddles and ice cream that Martin got when he was young” (1) shows that Cassie is struggling to bond with her own children and that they would rather spend time with Nora than their own mother.