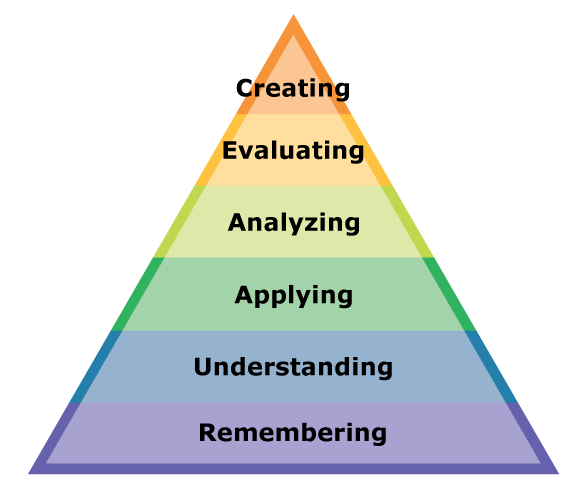
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| S1 Reading For Meaning:  Fiction |

Our Lady’s High School



**THINKING SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

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**COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH**

Prior Knowledge

Metalinguistic

Visualisation

Inference

Main Ideas

Summarising and Paraphrasing

**Introduction**

The aim of this booklet is to help to develop your Close Reading skills. These skills are very important and are a key part of English from S1 – S6.

**What will I Be Asked to do?**

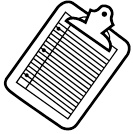
Reading for Meaning tests how well you can read a passage. It tests that you can: **UNDERSTAND** the main ideas, **ANALYSE** how the writer portrays these and **EVALUATE** how successful the writer has been in doing so.

It does this by asking you different types of questions about the passage. You will be asked to read the passage and answer questions on it. You should attempt all questions and not leave any out. If you are unsure about any questions make sure you ask your teacher. Do not leave the homework until the night before to complete. You should answer in full sentences.

**Different Types of Questions**

You will be asked different types of questions. For example:

1. To put something from the passage into your own words.
2. To pick out an expression or a phrase from the passage.
3. To pick out one word from the passage.
4. To comment on the structure of a sentence.
5. To comment on the writer’s attitude or tone.
6. To identify techniques/figures of speech the writer has used.

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| **Checklist of Questions**  In order to answer these questions you must first understand what the question requires you to do. You should refer back to this checklist to remind yourself what different questions require you to do.   1. **Answer in your own words**   In order to answer this type of question you need to go back to the passage and find the correct sentence that you have been asked to put into your own words. Identify key words from the sentence, then try to change these into your own words.   1. **Pick out an expression or a phrase**   This type of question is testing you on two things. Firstly, it is testing your understanding of what an expression is. Secondly, it is testing whether you can pick out the correct expression. An expression or a phrase is a few words taken directly from the passage.   1. **Pick out one word from the passage**   This type of question is again testing you on two things. The first thing is how carefully you have read the question and realise that it is only one word that you have to pick out. The second thing is can you pick out the correct word.   1. **Comment on the sentence structure**   This type of question is asking you to look at how a sentence has been written, not what the sentence means.  **The length of the sentences:**  Is there one big long sentence? If so think about why it might be used. It could be used to show the size or length of something or it could show that a lot of things are happening quickly.  Are there lots of short sentences? If so why have they been used? Sometimes short sentences can be used to create tension or suspense. Or they can be used to show that something is very short and does not take a lot of time.  **Punctuation:**  Another thing that you have to think about is the punctuation that is used.  The full stop. This is used to show that it is the end of a sentence.  This is used to divide words on a list.  The comma,  The exclamation mark! This is used to show that someone is speaking  loudly because they are angry, excited,   shocked or happy.  The question mark? This is used to show that a question has been asked.  Brackets ()  These are used to give extra information.  Direct speech marks  or quotation marks “ “  These are used to show that someone is speaking or because there is a quotation from someone.    **(4) Identify techniques the writer uses**  Sometimes you might be asked to pick out or comment on techniques that the writer has used. This type of question is testing how well you can pick out any figures of speech that the writer has used. It might also be looking for you to comment on length of sentences or punctuation.  **Figures of Speech**  **Alliteration**: This is when words in a sentence start with the same sound, for example **T**etley **t**eabags **t**ingle **t**aste buds. The repetition of the **t** sound is called alliteration. Often alliteration is used in newspaper headlines to create an eye-catching headline.  **Simile**: This is when the writer compares two things using like or as, for example **‘The night sky was as black as ink.’**  **Metaphor**: This is when the writer compares two things without using like or as. Instead they just say that the first thing is the second thing. **‘The man was a mountain.’**  **Onomatopoeia**: This is when words imitate the sound they describe, for example: **crash, smash, bang, whimper…**  **Personification**: This is a type of metaphor that makes objects sound as if they are alive. ‘**The angry sea swept the boat towards the rocks.’**  **Repetition**: This is simply when the writer repeats a word or phrase. This is usually done to draw attention to something.  **Tone** – Sometimes you might be asked to pick out the tone of a passage or of something that someone says. When you are asked about tone, try to imagine someone speaking the lines and the tone of voice they might use: Common tones are: **happy, sad, sympathetic, hurtful,** **doubtful, fearful, sarcastic, humorous, angry, ironic…** |

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**Exercise One**

Below is an extract from ‘Red Sky in the Morning’. It describes how the main character Anna feels the morning after the birth of her handicapped brother Ben.

I felt pretty funny going to school the next morning, partly because I was completely exhausted, I suppose. Dad said I could stay at home if I liked. He’d got the week off work. But I wanted to go. One reason was to get out of the house, because there was an awfully gloomy atmosphere, and Mum cried a lot, and Dad was on the phone all the time. Katy was a pest too. She’d got it into her head to be all fluffy, and sugar sweet, and babyish, and I could have kicked her.  
 The other reason was that I was bursting to tell everyone at school. It’s not often that I have some real news. Not like Sandra, whole older brother is in the Marines, or Miranda, who goes to masses of discos, and does things with boys. Actually, I’m not all that popular at school. I used to be best friends with Debbie, ages ago, and that was fine, because everyone likes her, so they let me into their group too.  
 Debbie’s one of the most beautiful people I’ve ever seen. She’s got this wonderful deep chestnut hair that she can flick about her face and it falls back into place, like on the shampoo ads. And she’s got a long, finely chiselled nose, and perfectly even teeth, and transparent skin covered with a sort of bloom, like a peach, and huge luscious eyes that are big and brown like a spaniel’s.



**Questions**

1. In your own words explain why Anna wants to get out of the house. [2]

2. Pick out an expression that tells you that Anna is annoyed at her sister, Katy. [1]

3. Anna felt funny going to school because she was A) happy B) angry C) tired. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

4. Pick out one word, which tells you that Anna looked forward to sharing her news. [1]

5. Pick out 5 things that Anna admires about Debbie. [5]

6a. Pick out an example of a simile from the passage. [1]

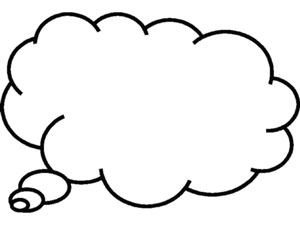
6b. Explain why you think it is effective. [2]

7. Find out what the words: ‘transparent’, ‘chiselled’ and ‘luscious’ mean. [3]

**Exercise Two**

Below is an extract from ‘Room 13’. In this extract one of the main characters Fliss describes a dream she has the night before she goes on a school trip to Whitby.

|  |
| --- |
| This is what Fliss dreamed the night before Year 7 went to Whitby.  She was walking on a road high above the sea. It was dark. She was alone. Waves were breaking at the foot of cliffs to her left, and further out, the moonlight made a sliver path on the water.  In front of her was a house. It was a tall house, looming blackly against the sky. There were many windows, all of them dark.  Fliss was afraid. She didn’t want to go inside the house. She didn’t even want to walk past but she has no control over her feet. They seemed to go by themselves, forcing her on.  She came to a gate. It was made of iron, worked into curly patterns. Near the top was a bit that was supposed to be a bird in flight – a seagull perhaps- but the gate had been painted black, and the paint had run and hardened into little stalactites along the bird’s wings, making it look like a bat. |

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**Questions**

1. Look at paragraph two. What do you notice about the **length** of some of the **sentences**? Explain why you think they have been written like this. [2]

2a. Pick out an example of a **metaphor** from paragraph two. [1]

2b. Explain why you think it is effective. [2]

3. On your **own words** describe what the house that Fliss sees looks like. [2]

4. Pick out an **expression** that shows that Fliss could not stop herself from going towards the house even though she did not want to. [1]

5a. What are your first impressions of the house? [1]

5b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

6. Find out the meaning of ‘stalactites’. [2]

**Exercise Three**Below is an extract from the novel ‘Artemis Fowl’. In this extract a boy called Artemis Fowl is chasing a fairy called Holly.

|  |
| --- |
| Something whizzed over Holly’s head, something that glinted in the starlight. Holly had enough on-the-job experience to realise that she was under fire, and immediately curled her elfin frame into a ball, minimising the target.  She drew her pistol, rolling towards the shelter of the tree trunk. Her brain scrambled for possibilities. Who could be shooting at her and why?  Something was waiting beside the tree. Something roughly the size of a mountain, but considerably more mobile.  ‘Nice pea-shooter,’ grinned the figure, smothering Holly’s gun hand in a turnip-sized fist.  Holly managed to extricate her fingers a nanosecond before they snapped like brittle spaghetti.  ‘I don’t suppose you would consider peaceful surrender?’ said a cold voice behind her.  Holly turned, elbows raised for combat.  ‘No,’ sighed the boy melodramatically. ‘I suppose not.’ |

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**Questions**

1. Pick out a figure of speech used in paragraph one. Name it and explain why it is effective. [2]

2. What does the author mean by ‘on-the-job experience’? [2]

3. Pick out one word from paragraph one which tells you that Holly is a small fairy. [1]

4. What impression do you get of the character of Holly? [2]

5. Looking at paragraph one, explain in your **own words** how Holly tries to avoid being hit by Artemis. [2]

6. Pick out an **expression** that tells you that Holly had to think quickly. [1]

7. In paragraph three the author repeats the word ‘something’. Explain what the effect of this is. [2]

8a. Pick out the **figure of speech** used in paragraph 5. [1]

8b. Why it is effective? [2]

9. Find out the meanings of: minimising, mobile, extricate, brittle and melodramatically. [5]

**Exercise Four**Below is an extract from ‘Carrie’s War’. In it the character Carrie returns to a place that she has not been to since she was a child with her own children.

|  |
| --- |
| Carrie has often dreamed about coming back. In her dreams she was twelve years old again; short, scratched legs in red socks and scuffed, brown sandals, walking along the narrow, dirt path at the side of the railway line to where it plunged down, off the high ridge, through the Druid’s Grove. The yew trees in the Grove were dark green and so old that they had grown twisted and lumpy, like arthritic fingers. And in Carrie’s dream, the fingers reached out for her, plucking at her hair and her skirt as she ran. She was always running by the end of this dream, running away from the house, uphill towards the railway line.  But when she did come back, with her own children, the railway line had been closed. The sleepers had been taken up and the flat, stony top of the ridge was so overgrown with blackberries and wild rose and hazelnut bushes that it was like pushing through a forgotten forest in a fairy tale. The tangled wood round Sleeping Beauty’s castle. Pulling off the sticky brambles that clung to their jeans, Carrie’s children said, “No one’s been here for hundreds of years…” |

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**Questions**

1. Look at the second sentence in the passage. What do you notice about the **length of the sentence** and the **punctuation**? Explain why you think the sentence has been written like this. [2]

2a. Pick out the **figure of speech** used in paragraph one. [1]

2b. Why is it effective? [2]

3a. What impression do you get of Carrie as a young girl? [1]

3b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

4. Where does Carrie always end up going in her dream? [1]

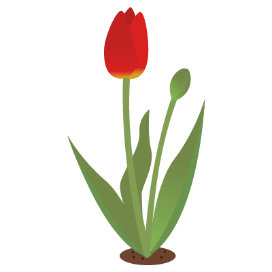
5. Pick out two **expressions** from the second paragraph that tell you that the railway line is no longer in use. [2]

6. What does Carrie compare this wilderness to? [1]

7. Find out the meanings of: ridge, plunged and arthritic. [3]

**Exercise Five**Below is an extract from ‘The Tulip Touch.’ In the extract a disturbed pupil called Tulip Pierce draws a self-portrait in her art class that reveals how she feels inside.

|  |
| --- |
| And I stopped pretending that I wasn’t watching and looked at it too. It was the strangest thing. The fury and contempt of Tulip’s brushwork had turned to whirlpools of violence on the paper. Everything about it was dark and furious, and every inch of it seemed to suck you in and swirl you round, making you feel dizzy and anxious. And every where you looked, your eyes were drawn back, over and over, to the centre, where, out of the blackness, two huge forlorn eyes stared out as usual, half-begging, half-accusing.  I waited for the explosion. Would it be ‘wasting paper’ or ‘dumb insolence’?, or ‘I *warned* you, Tulip. No more self-pitying little staring round eyes’? But Mrs Minniver just said,  “*Look* at it. Now that you’ve finished, at least take a *look*.”  Putting her hands on Tulip’s shoulders, she turned her to face the easel. Tulip’s eyes went cold and hard. Mrs Minniver waited. But when it became obvious that Tulip wasn’t going to say a work, she simply sighed.  “Well, then. Off you go,” she said gently.  Tulip reached out to rip the painting off the easel, but Mrs Minniver put out a hand.  “No. I’ll keep this.” |



**Questions**

1. What impression do you get of Tulip from her painting? [2]

2a. The author says that “…every inch of it seemed to suck you in and swirl you round…” Pick out the **figure of speech** used here. [1]

2b. Explain why it is effective. [2]

3. Pick out **one word** from paragraph one that tells you that Tulip is an angry girl. [1]

4. In your **own words** explain what is at the centre of Tulip’s picture. [2]

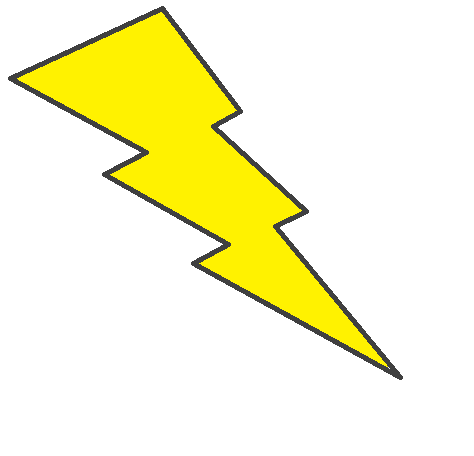
5. Mrs Minniver tells Tulip “*Look* at it…”. Why is the word ‘*Look’* in italics? [2]

6. Explain why you think Mrs Minniver decides to keep Tulip’s painting. [1]

7. Find out the meanings of: whirlpools, easel and forlorn. [3]

**Exercise Six**Below is an extract from ‘Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone’. In this extract the writer describes life for Harry Potter in the Dursley’s house.

|  |
| --- |
| Nearly ten years had passed since the Dursleys had woken up to findtheir nephew on the front step, but Privet Drive had hardly changed at all. The sun rose on the same tidy front gardens and lit up the brass number four on the Dursley’s front door; it crept into their living-room, which was almost exactly the same as it had been on the night when Mr Dursley has seen that fateful news report about the owls. Only the photographs on the mantelpiece really showed howmuch time had passed. Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-coloured bobble hats – but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby, and now the photographs showed a large blond boy riding his first bicycle, on the roundabout at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too.  Yet Harry potter was still there, asleep at the moment, but not for long. His Aunt Petunia was awake and it was her shrill voice which made the first noise of the day. “Up! Get up! Now! Harry woke with a start. His aunt rapped on the door again. “Up!” she screeched. Harry heard her walking towards the kitchen and then the sound of the frying pan being put on the cooker. He rolled on to his back and tried to remember the dream he had been having. It had been a good one. There had been a flying motorbike in it. He had a funny feeling he’d had the same dream before. |



**Questions**

1a. What impression do you get of Privet Drive from the author’s description of it? [2]

1b. Pick out an **expression** as evidence. [1]

2. ‘Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures…’ This **sentence** is extremely **long**. Give a reason why the writer chose to use such along sentence here. [2]

3a. To what is Dudley Dursley compared? [1]

3b. Name the **figure of speech** used and explain why it is effective. [2]

4. In your **own words** explain how Dudley is treated by his parents. [2]

5a. How is Harry Potter treated? [2]

5b. Pick out an **expression** as evidence. [1]

6a. ‘Up! Get up! Now!” Name the piece of **punctuation** that has been used here. [1]

6b. Explain why you think it has been used. [2]

7. Pick out **one word** that tells you that Aunt Petunia’s voice was not pleasant. [1]

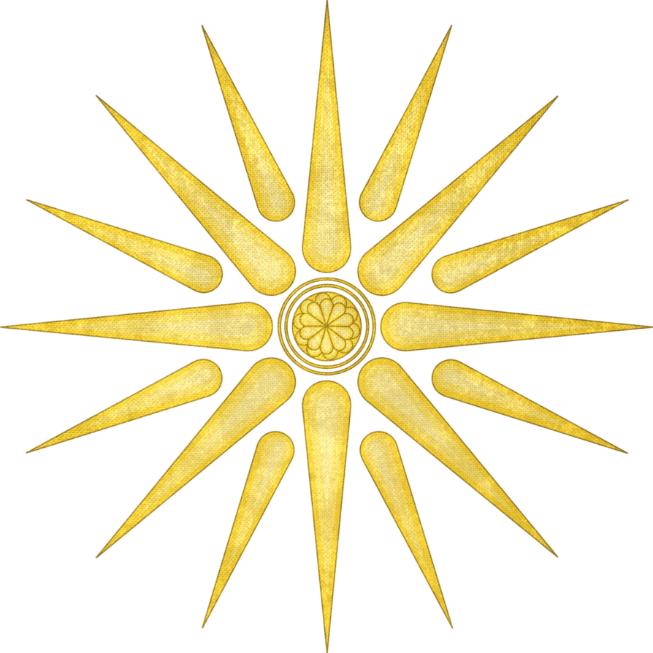
8. The writer describes a dream that Harry had been having when he was awoken. Comment on the **structure of the sentences** that describe his dream. Explain why you think they have been written this way. [2]

9. Find out the meaning of shrill. [1]

**Exercise Seven**

Below is an extract from ‘Underground to Canada’. In this extract the main character Julilly. It tells the story of how Julilly and her friend escape from slavery on a Mississippi plantation and head northward to Canada.

|  |
| --- |
| The Wagon of slave children jogged slowly down the road. The clang of the chained men behind it took up a rhythm. To Julilly, it was a slow, sad rhythm – sad as the bells tolling a death from the village church near Massa Hensen’s.  Juililly could think only of Mammy Sally. Each time the cart turned into a new road, she expected to see the tall strong woman with the black head-rag come to take her from the wagon and direct the slaves to turn around and go back to Massa Hensen’s. But each new road was empty.  The little children around her wore skimpy clothes. They pressed against Julilly with their hot, dry skin and whimpered like tiny, forgotten sheep. Juililly held two, small hands, both sticky with sweat and dust.  The sun flamed gold and blistering above them, and the sky became hard and bright blue. There wasn’t a wisp of cloud to soften it. Julilly saw the white man who drove their wagon wipe his forehead with a large blue cloth. The brim of his hat hid his face, but his neck was red with sunburn. He cracked his whip over the plodding horse. The fat, oily man behind them snapped his whip over the backs of Ben and Adam and Lester who shuttled along with their chains.  The cart jogged past green cotton fields and spreading tobacco plants. Slaves chopped along the rows with their hoes, just as at Master Hensen’s. Julilly wondered if they would stop in one of these fields. Why did they go on and on? Where was the “Deep South” she heard the slave traders mumbling about? |



**Questions**

1a. What is the mood or the tone at the beginning of the passage? [1]

1b. Pick out an expression as evidence. [1]

2a. The writer tells us that ‘Julilly could think only of Mamma Sally’. What kind of person do you think Mamma Sally might be? [1]

2b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

3. How are the children dressed? Choose the most suitable option:

(A) In heavy clothes (B) In new clothes (C) In light clothes [1]

4a. Pick out the figure of speech used to describe how the children are feeling. [1]

4b. Explain why it is effective. [2]

5. Give two pieces of information that suggests that the children have been travelling for some time. [2]

6. In your own words describe what the weather was like that day. [2]

7. The travellers enjoyed the sunshine. [1]

TRUE FALSE CANNOT TELL

7b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

8. What is the attitude of the fat, oily man towards the slaves? Choose the most suitable option.   
(A) Kind (B) Cruel (C) Sympathetic [1]

9. Find out the meanings of: skimpy, whimpered and blistering. [2]

**Exercise Eight**  
Below is an extract from Gowie Corby Plays Chicken’. The novel tells the story of a boy called Gowie who is always getting into trouble at school. In this extract he meets his new teacher Miss Plum and has an argument with a girl called Heather.

|  |
| --- |
| “My name is Miss Plum,” she addresses the rest of the class, and waits for a moment, but there isn’t a flicker of a whisper or laugh, nudge, nudge. “I hope we shall have a pleasant year together and do some interesting things,”she goes on, and yes, miss, they all chorus like sheep bleating, baa, baa, baa, the creeps. I jab the underside of the table with my knife. She hands out cardboard. “First, I should like you all to make folders to keep your work in, and record cards to record what you have been doing. You may decorate the folders if you wish, with a suitable picture or pattern, and remember to write your names clearly.”  Soon we are all scribbling like crazy. I borrow Heather’s new felt tips and draw bombs, machine guns and swastikas over mine, together with my sign, the vampire. It looks very nice and cosy when finished, so I sit and admire it, adding a few finishing touched from time to time. The teeth, with blood oozing, are particularly good. The buzzer goes for play and we surge back to our own classroom area, where Heather bears down on me like a female hippo with weight problems and offers me a pink biscuit. “No, thanks, it’s contaminated,” I refuse it, and then she, suddenly, for no reason at all, shouts wildly at me, her chin wobbling, popping eyes glaring at me through her tatty hair, like an old English sheepdog with rabies. “Why are you such a mean boy, Gowie Corby? What makes you so mean? Why, you are the meanest boy in the class, the meanest boy in the school, the meanest boy in the world!”  This takes me by surprise, I don’t know why she’s getting at me, and so I mimic her wet, drippy, draggy, grotty, spew-making voice, except it’s impossible to make it bad enough. |



**Questions**

1. Why do you think the teacher waits for a second after she introduces herself to the class? [1]

2. How does most of the class respond to Miss Plum? [2]

3. In your o**wn words** explain how Gowie Corby feels about their response. [2]

4a. Gowie draws ‘bombs, machine guns and swastikas’ over his folder. W**hich word** best describes the kind of person Gowie Corby seems to be:

(A) Gentle (B) Violent (C) Quiet [1]

4b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

5. What **word** used in paragraph four describes how all the children moved together when the bell goes. [1]

6a. Pick out the **figure of speech** that Gowie uses to describe Heather. [1]

6b. Explain what **image** or picture it gives you of her. [2]

7. What does the word ‘contaminated’ mean? Choose from one of the following options:   
(A) Horrible (B) Polluted (C) Mouldy [1]

8. In paragraph six Heather asks Gowie “Why are you the meanest boy in the class, the meanest boy in the school, the meanest boy in the world!” Explain why you think Heather repeats the word ‘meanest’ so many times. [2]

**Exercise Nine**Below is an extract from ‘Coraline’. It tells the story of a girl called who finds a secret corridor behind a locked door.

|  |
| --- |
| Coraline was woken by the mid-morning sun, full on her face.  For a moment she felt utterly dislocated. She did not know where she was; she was not entirely sure *who* she was. It is astonishing just how much of what we are can be tied to the beds we wake up in the morning, and it is astonishing how fragile that can be.   Sometimes Coraline would forget who she was while she was daydreaming that she was exploring the Arctic, or the Amazon rainforest, or darkest Africa, and it was not until someone tapped her on the shoulder or said her name that Coraline would come back from a million miles away with a start, and all in a fraction of a second have to remember who she was, and what her name was, and that she was even there at all.  Now there was sun on her face, and she was Coraline Jones. Yes. And then the green and pinkness of the room she was in, and the rustling of a large painted paper butterfly as it fluttered and beat its way about the ceiling, told her where she had woken up.  She climbed out of the bed. She could not wear her pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers during the day, she decided, even if it meant wearing the other Coraline’s clothes. (Was there another Coraline? No, she decided, there wasn’t. There was just her.) There were no proper clothes in the cupboard, though. |



**Questions**

1. What woke Coraline up? [1]

2. What **word** in paragraph one means something similar to ‘confused’? [1]

3a. What impression do you get of the type of girl Coraline seems to be? [1]

3b. Give a reason for your answer. [2]

4. How is Coraline usually awoken from her daze? [1]

5a. Pick out an example of a **figure of speech** used in paragraph four. [1]

5b. Why is it effective? [2]

6. In paragraph five the author uses **brackets**. Give a reason why you think they have been used. [2]

7. Find out the meanings of the following words: dislocated, astonishing, fragile and fraction. [4]

**Exercise Ten**Below is an extract from ‘Whispers in the Graveyard’. It tells the story of a boy named Solomon who discovers an evil force at work in the local graveyard where he likes to go to spend time by himself.

|  |
| --- |
| I’m running. My chest is tight and sore. Breath rasping and whistling in my lungs. Branches whip against my face. Brambles tear at my legs and arms. There is a voice screaming. Out loud. The sound ripping through the trees, screaming and screaming. It’s my voice. ‘Amy! Amy!’  Now I’m at the back dyke and the solid wooden fencing has been torn aside. Blasted apart as if some careless giant had passed by and trodden on it. I stare at the wood, not splintered or broken, but melted. Dissolved and warped. Curled aside to make a small space. Space enough for a child to walk through. What could do that? What power is there that would leave that mark?  I hesitate, feeling the first great lurch of fear for myself. ‘Amy?’ I cry out. Beyond me the gaping dark of the cemetery.  There is a soft shudder in my head. A strange flicker which fastens on my fear. Nothing calling for me this time. No whispers in my face tonight. Why?  Because Amy is in there. With one child captive, there is no need for two. |



**Questions**

1a. What do you notice about the **sentences** in the opening paragraph? [1]

1b. Suggest a reason why they have been written like this. [2]

2. Explain in your **own words** what is happening in paragraph one. [2]

3. How would you describe the **mood** at the beginning of the passage. [2]

4. There are a few different **figures of speech** used in the first paragraph. Identify two and explain why they are effective. [4]

5. Pick out **an expression** that tells you that the fence is completely destroyed. [1]

6. What is unusual about the destruction of the fence? [2]

7. Pick out **one word** from the passage that means the same as to break up into pieces and disintegrate. [1]

8. Find out the meanings of: rasping, splintered, warped, dissolved, lurch, gaping and captive. [7]