WARWICK
SCHOOL

Extract from '*A Child's Christmas in Wales*' by Dylan Thomas

SAMPLE PAPER

Section A. Comprehension.

You should spend 30 minutes on this section.

Read the passage below and then answer the questions in the spaces provided.

Extract from *A Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas

It was on the afternoon of the day of Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas; December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there are no reindeers. But there were cats.

Patient, cold and **callous**, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and terrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling they would slink and slide over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes. The wise cats never appeared. We were Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the **eternal** snows-eternal, ever since Wednesday. We were so still that we never heard Mrs Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbour's Polar Cat.

Soon the voice grew louder. 'Fire!' cried Mrs Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong. And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, towards the house, and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining room, and the gong was bombilating, and Mrs Prothero was announcing ruin like a town-crier in Pompeii. This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, **laden** with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room. Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face; but he was standing in the middle of the room, saying 'A fine Christmas!' and smacking at the smoke with a slipper.

'Call the fire-brigade,' cried Mrs Prothero as she beat the gong.

'They won't be there,' said Mr Prothero, 'it's Christmas.'

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting.

'Do something,' he said.

And we threw our snowballs into the smoke- I think we missed Mr Prothero- and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

‘Let’s call the police as well,’ Jim said.

‘And the ambulance.’

‘And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires.’

But we only called the fire-brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Miss Prothero, Jim’s aunt, came downstairs and peered in at them. Jim and I waited to hear what she would say. She always said the right thing. She looked at the three tall firemen in their shining helmets, standing among the smoke and cinders and dissolving snowballs, and she said: ‘Would you like something to read?’

1. On what day is the story set? (1 mark)

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2. Pick out the simile in the first paragraph. (1 mark)

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3. Look at how the cats are described in lines 5-8. How does the author make us believe that the cats are dangerous creatures that should be attacked by the boys? Use at least three pieces of evidence from the text and explain your answer. (5 marks)

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4. Look at the second paragraph. The author describes himself as a 'hunter'. Find three more pieces of evidence where the boys are described as if they are hunters and explain why you think the writer used these phrases. (5 marks)

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5. Give two reasons why the boys didn't hear Mrs Prothero calling. (2 marks)

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6. Look at the third paragraph. Pick out two phrases that show that the boys are excited by the fire. (2 marks)

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7. Give the meaning of the following words or phrases:

Callous (line 5) _____(1 mark)

Eternal (line 9) _____(1 mark)

Laden (line 16) _____(1 mark)

8. Look from line 14 to the end of the passage. How does the writer make what could be seen as a serious situation so amusing? Find four examples from the passage and explain the effect of the phrases you have selected. (5 marks)

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Section B. Writing.

You should spend 30 minutes on this section.

Read the extract again. Please continue the story, making up what you think happens next.

- Remember to plan your work and also check spelling and punctuation.

50 marks are available for this section.