

SPECIMEN 4

SECTION A: *Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions that follow. Use your own words and give evidence. (50 marks)*

THE GHOST AT IVY COTTAGE

It was nearly dusk, and Mrs Smith was walking past the village playing field, when three girls came running out.

'Mrs Smith, Mrs Smith!' Nicky, Bryony, and Laura were breathless. 'Ivy Cottage is haunted!' Ivy cottage stood on its own on the other side of the field, behind a thick bramble hedge. Mrs Smith looked at the girls in surprise.

'Haunted? Whatever makes you think that?

'We saw a light in there!' cried Nicky. 'Through the hedge! But nobody lives there, do they?

'Well, it's for sale, and the people who own it have moved out,' said Mrs Smith. 'Perhaps the estate agent's showing someone round?'

'No, no!' insisted Bryony. 'It wasn't an ordinary light. It was green and it flickered.'

'And we heard something scream!' Laura added.

'Now, calm down!' Mrs Smith soothed. 'You're over-excited and scaring yourselves, that's all. There's no such thing as ghosts!'

'Sara says there is,' said Bryony. 'She told us Ivy Cottage is haunted.'

'Sara? Who's Sara?'

'Our friend. She's new.' The girls pointed to the playground gate. There was another girl standing there. Mrs Smith had never seen her before.

'Well, I think I'd better have a word with Sara.'

Mrs Smith went over to the strange girl, and told her that she shouldn't go round scaring her new friends with silly stories.

'But it isn't silly,' said Sara. 'There *is* a ghost.'

'Right,' said Mrs Smith. 'Come with me, and I'll show you you're wrong and there's nothing to be frightened of.'

They all crossed the field. Ivy Cottage was just visible through the dense bramble hedge. There *was* a faint glow in one window, but it wasn't flickering.

'There,' said Mrs Smith. 'It's just an electric light. The owners must be back.'

Then suddenly the light turned a cold, strange green, and winked out. At the same moment, a weird cry echoed out of the dusk. Nicky, Bryony, and Laura screamed and ran away. Only Sara didn't run. She just stood staring at Mrs Smith.

'See?' she said.

Mrs Smith was shaken, but collected herself. 'Now stop it,' she said.

'The light bulb went, that's all. And that noise must have been a bird; an owl, probably. There isn't a ghost!'

Sara said, 'Oh, yes, there is.'

She smiled at Mrs Smith. Then, very slowly, she faded away, until there was no one there.

SAMPLE

SPECIMEN 5

SECTION A:

Read the passage below and answer ALL the questions that follow in full. (50 marks)

GRANDFATHER'S LANGUAGE

I was never particularly kind to my grandfather. He was my mother's father, and he lived with us when I was a teenager. I remember him coming into the sitting room one night, and when he went to sit down, I said to my brother, 'I hope he doesn't sit down.' I didn't think my grandfather understood much English, but he understood enough, and as I watched, he straightened up again, and without a word, returned to his room. I was twelve years old.

My grandfather wrote poetry on great rolls of thin white paper with a paintbrush. He offered to read and explain his poems to me several times over the years, but I only let him do it once. I'd let my Chinese go by then, which made listening to him too much of an effort. Though I was raised speaking Chinese, it wasn't long before I lost my language skills. I spoke English all day at school, listened to English all night on TV. I didn't see the point of speaking Chinese. We lived in Australia.

From Monday to Friday, Granddad went to the city, dressed in a suit with a waistcoat, a hat, and carrying his walking stick. He would take the bus to the station, the train to the city, then the tram to Little Bourke Street. On Mondays, he'd be sitting at a large round table at Dragon Boat Restaurant with other old Chinese men. Tuesdays to Fridays, he was at a small square table by himself with a pot of tea and the Chinese newspaper. I watched him leave in the morning and come back in the afternoon, as punctual and as purposeful as any school child or office worker, for years.

At the funeral, my sadness was overshadowed by a sense of regret. I'd denied my grandfather the commonest of kindnesses. I was sixteen years old. I am now twenty-six. A few weeks ago, during a family dinner at a Chinese restaurant, the waiter complimented my mother on the fact that I was speaking to her in Chinese. The waiter told Mum with a sigh that his own children could barely string a sentence together in Chinese. Mum told the waiter I had stopped speaking Chinese a few years into primary school, but that I had suddenly started up again in my late teens.

I have often wondered how aware my mum is of the connection between Granddad's death and my improving Chinese. Whenever I am stuck for a word, I ask her. Whenever I am with her, or relatives, or a waiter at a Chinese restaurant, or a sales assistant at a Chinese department store, I practise. I am constantly adding new words to my Chinese vocabulary, and memorising phrases I can throw into a conversation. It is my way of re-learning a language. Textbooks and teachers are not necessary, since I am only interested in mastering the spoken word. I am not trying to 'discover my roots'. I am simply trying to ensure that the next time an elderly relative wants me to listen, I am not only willing, I am able.

4. How does her grandfather's death change Amy?

(6 marks)

5. What is your opinion of the ways she relearns Chinese?

(5 marks)

SECTION B

1. Describe ONE of your grandparents and the relationship you have with them.

OR

2. Write of story, real or imaginary, about a time you regretted treating someone badly.

(50 marks)

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