

Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint

ENGLISH

0861/02

Paper 2 Fiction

April 2025

INSERT

1 hour 10 minutes

INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading text.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Text for **Section A**, an extract from *A Sky Painted Gold* by Laura Wood

It all started with an apple. Trouble often does, I suppose, and this particular apple was a real troublemaker – a Pendragon, red-fleshed and sweet, that I stole from someone else’s orchard.

I don’t know why I chose that particular day to make my way over to the island. After years of staring longingly across the water, it seemed suddenly urgent that I make it there, that I put my feet on the shore. When I arrived, I practically fell into the orchard, plucking the shining red apple from its branch without a second thought. With the first bite of that apple I was lost. 5

By then the Cardew House in all its sprawling faded beauty had not seen a single friendly face (or an unfriendly one, for that matter) in over five years. The walled orchard, like the house, had been abandoned, growing tangled and wild until I crept in and started helping myself. After that first taste I didn’t even try to stay away. I came back the next day, and the next, always exploring a tiny bit further, pushing deeper into the secret island, making each part of it my own. 10

The house itself was on top of the island, a grand old building with far-reaching views. The front, facing towards the village on the mainland, was long and low with tall windows cut into the honey-coloured stone and tangled ivy. Rough steps reached down through overgrown gardens to a sloping gravel driveway that stretched to meet the causeway¹. At the back, a huge lawn overlooked the changeable sea – at times a dazzling turquoise, at others a murky, mysterious grey-green. The orchard that first drew me to the island curled around one side of the house, groaning with apples or ruby-skinned cherries, or velvet plums depending on the time of year. On the other side of the building, more crumbling steps wound their way down to a small hidden cove of golden sand where the sheltered waters were still and warm. It was a jewel, this island, a treasure left alone and unloved for too long. 15 20

A restless feeling hung over my visits, and I knew that it was only a matter of time before my curiosity moved beyond the grounds to the building itself. I began by skirting around the house, as though afraid of antagonizing it. When I discovered a broken window latch on the ground floor, it felt as though the decision had been made for me. 25

The old building should have been unwelcoming in its emptiness, with the furniture draped in sheets and the shutters closed up tight, but to me it felt calm and friendly. Odd shafts of light cut through the gloom here and there, illuminating clouds of dancing dust particles and giving the place an air of drowsy sadness. It seemed like the sleeping princess in a fairy tale just waiting to be brought back to life. 30

For almost a year after that first apple I escaped to the house at any opportunity – to raid the neglected library and to curl up on a faded oriental rug, enjoying the quiet. My own home was never quiet, but all that noise didn’t stop me from feeling lonely at times. Somehow, despite being more alone than ever, I never felt lonely when I came here. Slowly I began to feel that the sleeping house and I were getting to know one another. I daydreamed about what it would be like if it was full of people – about the conversations they would have, about the parties they might throw and the way the rooms would come to life, full of blazing light. I wrote pages of nonsense, scribbling furiously in my notebook, or I read detective novels and ate stolen apples, throwing the cores into the fire that I lit to warm the huge, empty sitting room. In the end it was the fire that gave me away. 35 40

It was a cold, wet Friday when I first saw them. Grey sheets of rain pounded outside while waves hammered against the rocks to the back of the house. I was oblivious to the noises, quite happily lost in an Agatha Christie novel, making myself sick on too much fruit. I had been there a couple of hours, maybe more, when I heard a sound: something new, something more than the usual groans of the old house settling. I froze, the book dangling from my fingers, and strained my ears, listening carefully. 45

Voices.

Someone was here.

Someone had finally come.

50

And more than one someone: I could tell that the voices belonged, that they fit into the house like missing puzzle pieces. Footsteps clipped along the floors, echoing through the empty hallways, growing louder as they came closer and closer to where I sat, still frozen.

Glossary

¹causeway: a raised road or track used to reach an island

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Cambridge Lower Secondary Checkpoint

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Paper 2 Fiction

April 2025

1 hour 10 minutes

You must answer on the question paper.

You will need: Insert (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Use a black or dark blue pen.
- Write your name, centre number and candidate number in the boxes at the top of the page.
- Write your answer to each question in the space provided.
- Do **not** use an erasable pen or correction fluid.
- Do **not** write on any bar codes.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].
- The insert contains the reading text.

This document has **8** pages.

Section A: Reading

Spend 35 minutes on this section.

Read the **text** in the insert, and answer Questions 1–8.

1 Look at the first and second paragraphs (lines 2–7).

(a) Which adverb tells the reader that the writer really wanted to visit the island?

..... [1]

(b) Give a **four-word** phrase which means doing something 'before considering the consequences'.

..... [1]

2 Look at the third paragraph (lines 8–12).

(a) Give a **three-word** phrase that makes a reference to both the size **and** neglect of the building.

..... [1]

(b) Give **one** quotation which shows the theme of neglect extends beyond the building.

..... [1]

(c) Why does the writer use brackets () in this paragraph?
Tick (✓) **one** box.

- to give an example
- to explain text that follows
- to define the meaning of a phrase
- to emphasise previous information

[1]

3 Look at the fourth paragraph (lines 13–22).

(a) Why is it possible to see the village from the house?

..... [1]

(b) Why is the orchard *groaning*?
Tick (✓) **one** box.

There is too much fruit on the trees.

The fruit trees have been neglected for too long.

There are too many different types of fruit trees.

The trees are too old to produce much fruit.

[1]

(c) Why is the water beyond the crumbling steps so calm?

..... [1]

(d) The narrator refers to the island as a treasure.
Give **one** word from this paragraph that supports this idea.

..... [1]

4 Look at the fifth paragraph (lines 23–26).

The narrator uses personification to refer to the house.
Give the quotation.

Explain using your own words what the narrator feels about the house.

Quotation:

Explanation:

[2]

5 Look at the sixth and seventh paragraphs (lines 27–41).
Do you think the description of the house interior makes it sound like a comfortable place?
Tick (✓) **one** box.

Yes

No

Give **two** reasons for your opinion.
Support **each** reason with a quotation from the text.

Reason 1:

Quotation 1:

Reason 2:

Quotation 2:

[4]

6 Look at line 42.
The writer uses the pronoun *them*. How does this help to create tension?

..... [1]

7 Look at lines 43–53.

(a) Give **two** words which show how violent the storm is.

-
.....
-
.....

[2]

(b) The writer builds up tension from line 48 to the end of the text.
Explain how the writer uses sentence structure and text structure to do this.
Give **two** ideas.

-
.....
-
.....

[2]

8 Look at the whole text again.

(a) How does the writer gain our attention in the first paragraph?

.....
..... [2]

(b) In lines 2–3, the idea of an apple is first introduced. Why are apples important throughout the rest of the text?
Give **three** ideas.

-
.....
-
.....
-
.....

[3]

Section B: Writing

Spend 35 minutes on this section.

- 9 Imagine you are one of the people who find the narrator in the house. Write a story about the encounter.

You should consider:

- who you are and why you are in the house
- how you react to finding the narrator
- what happens next.

Use the space in the box below to plan your answer.

Do **not** use the space for your answer. You **must** write your answer on the answer lines on the next page.

Space for your plan:

