The Cone-Gatherers by Robin Jenkins

**This extract from Chapter Eleven is set in the beach hut.**

As they stared towards the door, there came a scratching on it as of paws, and a whining.

A minute later they heard the lady cry out: “Thank God!” and then a key rattled in the lock.

The door was flung open to the accompaniment of the loudest peal of thunder since the start

of the storm.

5 From a safe distance the little dog barked at the trespassers. The lady had only a silken

handkerchief over her head; her green tweed costume was black in places with damp. In the

midst of the thunder she shouted: “What is the meaning of this?” Though astonishment, and

perhaps dampness, made her voice hoarse, it was nevertheless far more appalling to the two

men than any thunder. They could not meet the anger in her face. They gazed at her feet;

10 her stockings were splashed with mud and her shoes had sand on them.

Neil did not know what to do or say. Every second of silent abjectness was a betrayal of

himself, and especially of his brother who was innocent. All his vows of never again being

ashamed of Calum were being broken. His rheumatism tortured him, as if coals from the

stolen fire had been pressed into his shoulders and knees; but he wished that the pain was

15 twenty times greater to punish him as he deserved. He could not lift his head; he tried, so

that he could meet the lady’s gaze at least once, no matter how scornful and contemptuous

it was; but he could not. A lifetime of frightened submissiveness held it down.

Suddenly he realised that Calum was speaking.

“It’s not Neil’s fault, lady,” he was saying. “He did it because I was cold and wet.”

20 “For God’s sake,” murmured the lady, and Neil felt rather than saw how she recoiled from

Calum, as if from something obnoxious, and took her children with her. For both the boy and

girl were present.

The dog had not stopped barking.

Even that insult to Calum could not break the grip shame had of Neil. Still with lowered

25 head, he dragged on his jacket.

“Get out,” cried the lady. “For God’s sake, get out.”

Neil had to help Calum on with his jacket. Like an infant, Calum presented the wrong hand,

so that they had to try again. The girl giggled, but the boy said nothing.

At last they were ready.

30 “I’ll have to get my cones,” whispered Calum.

“Get them.”

Calum went over and picked up the bag lying beside the hamper of toys.

Neil led the way past the lady, who drew back. He mumbled he was sorry.

Calum repeated the apology.

35 She stood in the doorway and gazed out at them running away into the rain. The dog barked

after them from the edge of the verandah.

“You’ll hear more about this,” she said.

Questions

1. Look at lines 1—10.

By referring to at least two examples, analyse how the writer’s use of language in these lines creates a tense atmosphere. 4

2. Look at lines 11—17.

Analyse how the writer’s use of language in these lines emphasises Neil’s distress. 2

3. Look at lines 20—37.

By referring to at least two examples, analyse how the writer’s use of language in these lines creates a clear picture of the character of Lady Runcie Campbell. 4

4. By referring to this extract and to elsewhere in the novel, discuss the characterisation of Lady Runcie Campbell. 10

**Marking Scheme**

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| **Question** | **Expected Answer** | **Max Marks** | **Additional Guidance** |
| **1** | Candidates should analyse how the writer’s use of language creates a tense  atmosphere.  2 marks for an insightful comment and reference.  1 mark for a basic comment and reference.  0 marks for reference/quotation alone | **4** | * the cinematic focus on the door * slightly menacing structure of “there came a scratching . . .” * “as of . . .” suggests uncertainty * “A minute later” represents quite a long pause before the next step * “cry out” suggests voice is loud, perhaps disturbing * “a key rattled in the lock”—a slight hint of invasion; focus on inanimate objects * “flung open” suggests abrupt, violent action * •“the loudest peal of thunder”—the use of superlative heightens the tension * “From a safe distance” suggests presence of danger * “trespassers” suggests disapproval of their presence * “In the midst of the thunder she shouted” combines two loud noises, suggests a * cacophony of sound * “far more appalling . . . than any thunder” emphasises the impact on the cone-gatherers * “gazed at her feet” + details they see—dramatic, cinematic focus away from face to * emphasise their fear, sense of dislocation |
| **2** | Candidates should analyse how the writer’s use of language emphasises Neil’s distress.  2 marks for an insightful comment and reference.  1 mark for a basic comment and reference.  0 marks for reference/quotation alone. | **2** | * the monosyllabic first sentence suggests a sense of shock, inability to feel * “Every second” emphasises the totality of the experience * “abjectness” suggests his deep misery, wretchedness * “betrayal” suggests he feels he is behaving treacherously * “especially of his brother” emphasises that letting down Calum is particularly upsetting * “vows . . . broken” suggests that solemn, binding promises are involved * “tortured” suggests punishing physical pain * “as if coals . . .” emphasises the extreme nature of the pain he wishes on himself * the structure of the sentence “He could not . . .” suggests jerky, painful movement * “lifetime” emphasises how has felt permanently oppressed * “submissiveness” emphasises his feeling of being meekly compliant |
| **3** | Candidates should analyse how the writer’s use of language creates a clear picture of the character of Lady Runcie Campbell.  2 marks for an insightful comment and reference.  1 mark for a basic comment and reference.  0 marks for reference/quotation alone | **4** | * the murmured “For God’s sake” is her only response to Calum—suggests unwillingness to communicate with the lower orders * “recoiled from Calum” suggests she finds something repellent in him * “took her children with her” suggests desire to protect them from something dangerous, distasteful * the repeated “Get out” shows her as imperious, forceful * the absence of any reaction to Roderick’s giggling could be seen as significant * the perfunctory “Get them” is very abrupt, as if she is unwilling to waste any words on the cone-gatherers * “drew back” suggests need to distance herself physically from the cone-gatherers * the fact that Neil “mumbled” is perhaps indicative of her overbearing presence * “stood in the doorway and gazed out at them running” suggests she is establishing herself as the dominant figure * “You’ll hear more about this” is threatening, establishing her power, perhaps typical of a desire to have the last word. |
| **4** | Candidates should discuss the  characterisation of Lady Runcie  Campbell.  0 marks for reference/quotation alone.  Candidates can answer in  bullet points in this final question,or write a number of linked statements. | **10** | Up to 2 marks can be achieved for identifying elements of commonality as identified in  the question  A further 2 marks can be achieved for reference to the extract given.  6 additional marks can be awarded for discussion of similar references to at least one other poem by the poet.  In practice this means:  Identification of commonality (2) (e.g.: theme, characterisation, use of imagery, setting,  or any other key element…)  from the extract:  1 x relevant reference to technique/idea/feature (1)  1 x appropriate comment (1)  (maximum of 2 marks only for discussion of extract) from at least one other text/part of the text:  as above (x3) for up to 6 marks  OR  more detailed comment x2 for up to 6 marks  Thus, the final 6 marks can be gained by a combination of 3, 2 and 1 marks depending on  the level of depth/detail/insight.  The aim would be to encourage quality of comment, rather than quantity of references.  Reference could be made to the  following:   * her haughty, imperious behaviour to the cone-gatherers in the beach hut * her physical revulsion at them * the aristocrat with a conscience and a   sense of justice (from father)   * the inner conflict between her Christianity and her role as representative of ruling class * her conventional attitudes, e.g. to the lower classes, to the   conscientious objectors, to the killing of deer   * her sense of noblesse oblige (e.g. taking flowers to Duror’s wife) * the irony of her trust in Duror for   advice   * her strained relationship with Roderick * her behaviour at the end: agreeing to plead with Calum and Neil; reaction   to finding Calum’s body—“She could not pray but she could weep.”  Many other references are possible. |