

Paper 1 mini mock: The Cat

Source A: The opening of a short story called 'The Cat' by Mary E Wilkins Freeman (19th century).

- 1 The snow was falling, and the Cat's fur was stiffly pointed with it, but he was imperturbable¹. He sat crouched, ready for the death-spring, as he had sat for hours. It was night—but that made no difference—all times were as one to the Cat when he was in wait for prey. Then, too, he was under no constraint of human will, for he was living alone that winter. Nowhere in the world was any voice
- 5 calling him; on no hearth was there a waiting dish. He was quite free except for his own desires. The Cat was very hungry—almost famished, in fact.
- For days the weather had been very bitter, and all the feeble wild things which were his prey had kept, for the most part, in their burrows and nests, and the Cat's long hunt had availed him nothing. But he waited with the inconceivable patience and persistency of his race; besides, he was certain.
- 10 The Cat was a creature of absolute convictions, and his faith in his deductions never wavered. The rabbit had gone in there between those low-hung pine boughs. Now her little doorway had before it a shaggy curtain of snow, but in there she was. The Cat had seen her enter, so like a swift grey shadow that even his sharp and practised eyes had glanced back for the substance following, and then she was gone. So he sat down and waited, and he waited still in the white night, listening angrily to the
- 15 north wind starting in the upper heights of the mountains with distant screams, then swelling into an awful crescendo of rage, and swooping down with furious white wings of snow like a flock of fierce eagles into the valleys and ravines.
- Above him a few feet away towered the rock ascent as steep as the wall of a cathedral. When the rabbit came out she was trapped; her little cloven feet could not scale such unbroken steepes. So the
- 20 Cat waited. The place in which he was looked like a maelstrom² of the wood. The tangle of trees and bushes clinging to the mountain-side with a stern clutch of roots, the prostrate trunks and branches, the vines embracing everything with strong knots and coils of growth, had a curious effect, as of things which had whirled for ages in a current of raging water, only it was not water, but wind, which had disposed everything in circling lines of yielding to its fiercest points of onset. And now over all this whirl
- 25 of wood and rock and dead trunks and branches and vines descended the snow. It blew down like smoke over the rock-crest above and the Cat cowered. It was as if ice needles pricked his skin through his beautiful thick fur, but he never faltered and never once cried. He had nothing to gain from crying, and everything to lose; the rabbit would hear him cry and know he was waiting.
- It grew darker and darker, with a strange white smother, instead of the natural blackness of night. It
- 30 was a night of storm and death superadded to the night of nature. The mountains were all hidden, wrapped about, overawed, and tumultuously overborne by it, but in the midst of it waited, quite unconquered, this little, unswerving, living patience and power under a little coat of grey fur.
- A fiercer blast swept over the rock, spun on one mighty foot of whirlwind athwart the level, then was over the precipice.
- 35 Then the Cat saw two eyes luminous with terror, frantic with the impulse of flight, he saw a little, quivering, dilating nose, he saw two pointing ears, and he kept still, with every one of his fine nerves and muscles strained like wires. Then the rabbit was out—there was one long line of incarnate flight and terror—and the Cat had her.
- 39 Then the Cat went home, trailing his prey through the snow.
- 1 – imperturbable: calm, self-controlled. 2 – maelstrom: a powerful whirlpool

Questions

Q1 – 4 marks – 5 minutes

Use lines 1-6.

☐ 0 ☐ 1 How was the cat behaving?

Calmly

☐

Concerned.

☐

Sleepily.

☐

[1 mark]

0 1 . 2 What was the cat waiting for?

Bed.

☐

Prey.

☐

Death.

☐

[1 mark]

0 1 . 3 Who did the cat live with?

A family.

☐

His litter.

☐

Alone.

☐

[1 mark]

0 1 . 4 What did the cat want?

Company.

☐

Food.

☐

Sleep.

☐

[1 mark]

Q2– 8 marks – 10 minutes

Using lines 7-17.

How does the writer use language to describe the cat's actions/behaviour?

Q3– 8 marks – 10 minutes

Use the whole source.

How does the writer structure the text to create tension?

Q4 – 20 marks – 25 minutes

Use lines 16-40.

The writer makes us admire and respect the cat in these harsh conditions. When the rabbit appears, we want the cat to catch it.

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write your own impressions about the characters
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with references to the text.