

## Extract: *I'm the King of the Castle* by Susan Hill

*Introduction: Charles Kingshaw is running away from the house called Warings where he and his mother have recently come to stay when she was given the position of housekeeper. He is unhappy because he is being bullied by Edmund Hooper whose father owns the house and who is Mrs Kingshaw's employer. Both boys are referred to by their surnames (Kingshaw and Hooper) in the novel.*



1. The cornfield was high up. He stood in the very middle of it, now, and the sun came glaring down. He could feel the sweat running over his back, and in the creases of his thighs. His face was burning. He sat down, although the stubble pricked at him, through his jeans, and looked over at the dark line of trees on the edge of Hang Wood. They seemed very close – all the individual branches were clearly outlined. The fields around him were absolutely still.
2. When he first saw the crow, he took no notice. There had been several crows. This one glided down into the corn on its enormous, ragged black wings. He began to be aware of it when it rose up suddenly, circled overhead, and then dived, to land not very far away from him. Kingshaw could see the feathers on his head, shining black in between the butter-coloured corn-stalks. Then it rose, and circled, and came down again, this time not quite landing, but flapping about his head, beating its wings and making a sound like flat leather pieces being slapped together. It was the largest crow he had ever seen. As it came down for the third time, he looked up and noticed its beak, opening in a screech. The inside of its mouth was scarlet, it had small glinting eyes.
3. Kingshaw got up and flapped his arms. For a moment, the bird retreated a little way off, and higher up in the sky. He began to walk rather quickly back, through the path in the corn, looking ahead of him. Stupid to be scared of a rotten bird. What could a bird do? But he felt his own extreme isolation, high up in the cornfield.
4. For a moment, he could only hear the soft thudding of his own footsteps, and the silky sound of the corn, brushing against him. Then, there was a rush of air, as the great crow came beating down, and wheeled about his head. The beak opened and the hoarse caaw came out again and again, from inside the scarlet mouth.
5. Kingshaw began to run, not caring, now, if he trampled the corn, wanting to get away, down into the next field. He thought that the corn might be some kind of crow's food store, in which he was seen as an invader. Perhaps this was only the first of a whole battalion of crows, that would rise up and swoop at him. Get on to the grass then, he thought, get on to the grass, that'll be safe, it'll go away. He wondered if it had mistaken him for some hostile animal, lurking down in the corn.
6. His progress was very slow through the cornfield, the thick stalks bunched together and got in his way, and he had to shove them back with his arms. But he reached the gate and climbed it, and dropped on to the grass of the field on the other side. Sweat was running down his forehead and into his eyes. He looked up. The crow kept on coming. He ran.

7. But it wasn't easy to run down this field, either, because of the tractor ruts. He began to leap wildly from side to side of them, his legs stretched as wide as they could go, and for a short time, it seemed that he did go faster. The crow dived again, and, as it rose, Kingshaw felt the tip of its black wing, beating against his face. He gave a sudden, dry sob. Then, his left foot caught in one of the ruts and he keeled over, going down straight forwards.
8. He lay with his face in the coarse grass, panting and sobbing by turns, with the sound of his own blood pumping through his ears. He felt the sun on the back of his neck, and his ankle was wrenched. But he would be able to get up. He raised his head, and wiped two fingers across his face. A streak of blood came off, from where a thistle had scratched him. He got unsteadily to his feet, taking in deep, desperate breaths of the close air. He could not see the crow.
9. But when he began to walk forwards again, it rose up from the grass a little way off, and began to circle and swoop. Kingshaw broke into a run, sobbing and wiping the damp mess of tears and sweat off his face with one hand. There was a blister on his ankle, rubbed raw by the sandal strap. The crow was still quite high, soaring easily, to keep pace with him. Now, he had scrambled over the third gate, and he was in the field next to the one that belonged to Warings. He could see the back of the house. He began to run much faster.
10. This time, he fell and lay completely winded. Through the runnels of sweat and the sticky tufts of his own hair, he could see a figure, looking down at him from one of the top windows of the house.
11. Then, there was a single screech, and the terrible beating of wings, and the crow swooped down and landed in the middle of his back.
12. Kingshaw thought that, in the end, it must have been his screaming that frightened it off, for he dared not move. He lay and closed his eyes and felt the claws of the bird, digging into his skin, through the thin shirt, and began to scream in a queer, gasping sort of way. After a moment or two, the bird rose. He had expected it to begin pecking at him with his beak, remembering terrible stories about vultures that went for living people's eyes. He could not believe in his own escape.
13. He scrambled up, and ran on, and this time, the crow only hovered above, though not very high up, and still following him, but silently, and no longer attempting to swoop down. Kingshaw felt his legs go weak beneath him, as he climbed the last fence, and stood in the place from which he had started out on his walk, by the edge of the copse. He looked back fearfully. The crow circled a few times, and then dived into the thick foliage of the beech trees.

## Answer A (Comprehension questions)

**AND**

### **B (Personal Writing)**

**A)** 10 marks

1. How does the author create **suspense** and **tension** in the extract? Find examples in the text and explain the effects on the reader. **(10)**

*Write approximately two paragraphs.*

*You can comment on how language and structure creates effects.*

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**B)** 10 marks

*In this extract, the character feels terrified.*

Write a **piece of personal writing** in which you talk about at least one occasion in your life when you felt fear or terror. **(10)**

*Aim to write **one side**.*

- *Use paragraphs*
- *Include a range of sentence types / lengths*
- *Use ambitious vocabulary*
- *Structure your work*
- *Remember accurate punctuation and spelling*