

*This extract is taken from a short story, 'The Singing Lesson', from the collection A Garden Party and other stories by Katherine Mansfield, published in 1922. This extract is the start of the story, when the singing teacher, Miss Meadows, starts her day at school having received disappointing news.*

### **'The Singing Lesson' by Katherine Mansfield**

With despair - cold, sharp despair - buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall. Girls of all ages, rosy from the air, and bubbling over with that gleeful excitement that comes from running to school on a fine autumn morning, hurried, skipped, fluttered by; from the hollow class-rooms came a quick drumming of voices; a bell rang; a voice like a bird cried, "Muriel." And then there came from the staircase a tremendous knock-knock-knocking. Someone had dropped her dumbbells.

The Science Mistress stopped Miss Meadows.

"Good mor-ning," she cried, in her sweet, affected drawl. "Isn't it cold? It might be win-ter."

Miss Meadows, hugging the knife, stared in hatred at the Science Mistress. Everything about her was sweet, pale, like honey. You would not have been surprised to see a bee caught in the tangles of that yellow hair.

"It is rather sharp," said Miss Meadows, grimly.

The other smiled her sugary smile.

"You look fro-zen," said she. Her blue eyes opened wide; there came a mocking light in them. (Had she noticed anything?)

"Oh, not quite as bad as that," said Miss Meadows, and she gave the Science Mistress, in exchange for her smile, a quick grimace and passed on ...

Forms Four, Five, and Six were assembled in the music hall. The noise was deafening. On the platform, by the piano, stood Mary Beazley, Miss Meadows' favourite, who played accompaniments. She was turning the music stool. When she saw Miss Meadows she gave a loud, warning "Sh-sh! girls!" and Miss Meadows, her hands thrust in her sleeves, the baton under her arm, strode down the centre aisle, mounted the steps, turned sharply, seized the brass music stand, planted it in front of her, and gave two sharp taps with her baton for silence.

"Silence, please! Immediately!" and, looking at nobody, her glance swept over that sea of coloured flannel blouses, with bobbing pink faces and hands, quivering butterfly hair-bows, and music-books outspread. She knew perfectly well what they were thinking. "Meady is in a wax." Well, let them think it! Her eyelids quivered; she tossed her head, defying them. What could the thoughts of those creatures matter to someone who stood there bleeding to death, pierced to the heart, to the heart, by such a letter –

(end of extract)

**Answer all of the following:**

Comprehension questions 1 and 2 (10 marks in total)

**AND**

Personal Writing (10 marks)

1. **Look again at lines 1 – 7 (below.) How does the writer use language here to describe Miss Meadows and her environment?**

With despair - cold, sharp despair - buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall. Girls of all ages, rosy from the air, and bubbling over with that gleeful excitement that comes from running to school on a fine autumn morning, hurried, skipped, fluttered by; from the hollow class-rooms came a quick drumming of voices; a bell rang; a voice like a bird cried, "Muriel." And then there came from the staircase a tremendous knock-knock-knocking. Someone had dropped her dumbbells.

**Make at least two points. Remember to include quotations and analysis.**

*You could look at*

- Words and phrases
- Language features and techniques
- Sentence forms

**(5)**

2. **How does the writer use language to show Miss Meadows' feelings throughout the extract?**

**Make at least two points. Remember to include quotations and analysis.**

**(5)****Personal Writing**

*In this extract, we see a character dealing with a person they do not like.*

**Write a piece of personal writing** in which you describe a time when you have met a person you didn't like.

*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

**(10)**