

This extract is taken from a novel written in 2011 by Carol Birch about a boy's relationship with a group of exotic animals in London. In this extract, the boy has his first ever encounter with a tiger.

### *Jamrach's Menagerie*

Of course, I'd seen a cat before. You couldn't sleep for them in Bermondsey, creeping about over the roofs and wailing like devils. They lived in packs, spiky, wild-eyed, stalking the wooden walkways and bridges, fighting with the rats. But this cat ...

5 The sun himself came down and walked on earth.

Just as the birds of Bermondsey were small and brown, and those of my new home were large and rainbow-hued, so it seemed the cats of Ratcliffe Highway must be an altogether superior breed to our scrawny south-of-the-river mogs.

10 This cat was the size of a small horse, solid, massively chested, rippling powerfully about the shoulders. He was gold, and the pattern painted so carefully all over him, so utterly perfect, was the blackest black in the world. His paws were the size of footstools, his chest snow white.

15 I'd seen him somewhere, his picture in a poster in London Street, over the river. He was jumping through a ring of fire and his mouth was open. A mythical beast.

I have no recall of one foot in front of the other, cobblestones under my feet. He drew me like honey draws a wasp. I had no fear. I came before the godly indifference of his face and looked into his clear yellow eyes. His nose was a slope of downy gold, his nostrils pink and moist as a pup's. He raised his thick, white dotted lips and smiled, and his whiskers bloomed.

20 I became aware of my heart somewhere too high up, beating as if it was a little fist trying to get out.

25 Nothing in the world could have prevented me from lifting my hand and stroking the broad warm nap of his nose. Even now I feel how beautiful that touch was. Nothing had ever been so soft and clean. A ripple ran through his right shoulder as he raised his paw - bigger than my head - and lazily knocked me off my feet. It was like being felled by a cushion. I hit the ground but was not much hurt, only winded, and after that it was a dream. There was, I remember, much screaming and shouting, but from a distance, as if I was sinking underwater. The world turned upside down and went by me in a bright stream, the ground moved under me, my hair hung in my eyes. There was a kind of joy in me, I do know that - and nothing that could go by the name of fear, only a wildness. I was in his jaws. His breath burned the back of my neck. My bare toes trailed, hurting distantly. I could see his feet, tawny orange with white toes, pacing the ground

35 away, gentle as feathers.

Answer**A1 & A2: Comprehension questions (10 marks)****AND****B: Personal Writing (10 marks)**

**Question A1:** Look again at lines 5 to 15.

**1. How does the writer use language here to describe the tiger?**

The sun himself came down and walked on earth.

Just as the birds of Bermondsey were small and brown, and those of my new home were large and rainbow-hued, so it seemed the cats of Ratcliffe Highway must be an altogether superior breed to our scrawny south-of-the-river mogs. This cat was the size of a small horse, solid, massively chested, rippling powerfully about the shoulders. He was gold, and the pattern painted so carefully all over him, so utterly perfect, was the blackest black in the world. His paws were the size of footstools, his chest snow white.

I'd seen him somewhere, his picture in a poster in London Street, over the river. He was jumping through a ring of fire and his mouth was open. A mythical beast.

Write a paragraph. Remember to include quotations and analysis.

*You could look at*

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

**(5)**

**Question A2:** Look now from lines 23 to the end of the text

**2. How does the writer use language to describe the attack and the boy's reaction?** **(5)**

Write a paragraph.

## **B: Personal Writing**

*In this extract, we see a character dealing with an exciting but dangerous event.*

Write a **piece of personal writing** in which you describe an exciting, dangerous or dramatic event you experienced. **(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*

**(10)**