



Artwork by Emma Reith, Year 13



St Albans High School
— for Girls —

11+ Entrance Examination

In

English Specimen Paper

1 Hour and 15 Minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 DO NOT OPEN THIS PAPER UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD THAT THE EXAMINATION HAS STARTED.
- 2 There are two sections in the paper. Always check that you have turned over the page and that you have not missed any pages.
- 3 You will need to work steadily but quickly, taking care to be as accurate as possible.
- 4 You may write in pencil or pen.



Section A – Comprehension (20 marks)

It is the year 1906. 17-year-old Mattie lives in a small town in the far North-East of the USA. She is cleaning her Aunt Josie's house, which is full of religious figurines¹. Her Aunt is in the kitchen with Mrs Alma McIntyre, who is the town's postwoman.

"Mattie, honey, you fixed all right for dust rags?"

"Yes, Aunt Josie."

My aunt never worried over how I was fixed for anything, and she never called me *honey*.

"I'm having the Reverend Miller for tea tomorrow; you'll make sure those figurines are sparkling, won't you?"

"Yes, Aunt Josie."

She wasn't concerned about her figurines. She just wanted to keep me up on my step stool dusting, and away from the parlour door, so I couldn't hear what she was saying or see what she was doing. If I bent my knees and craned my neck just so, though, I could see my aunt and Alma McIntyre through the gap. They were sitting at the kitchen table. My aunt was holding an envelope up to the light.

"This is *stealing*, Josie," I heard Mrs McIntyre say. "We're stealing Emmie Hubbard's mail."

"It's not 'stealing', Alma. It's *helping*. We're trying to help a neighbour, that's all," my aunt said.

My aunt said more, but her voice dropped and I couldn't hear it. I got down off the step stool and moved it closer to the door.

"You all right in there, Mattie?" she hollered.

"Yes, Aunt Josie. I'm just moving the step stool."

"Don't come too close to the door with it. The floor's uneven right around there and the stool's tottlish. I wouldn't want you to fall, dear."

"I won't, Aunt Josie."

Tottlish means tippy, and is used mostly to describe boats. Miss Wilcox, my English teacher, said words like it are *vernacular*². I wasn't sure I'd find *tottlish* in the dictionary. Or *frowy* either, which means to cry – the loud, whiny kind of crying a baby gives out with when she doesn't get her way. Or *meaching*. Which means skulking or slinking, and can describe a certain kind of expression, too. Like the one that must've been on my aunt's face right then, when Mrs McIntyre suddenly yelped, "Josie, don't you dare!" But it was too late. I heard the sound of water running and the kettle being filled, and I knew that the two of them weren't making a pot of tea. From their conversation I figured out that the man who owned Emmie Hubbard's house had sent her the letter. It had to be about her paying back the money she owed him - twelve dollars and seventy cents.

Where would Emmie get that kind of money? I wondered. I knew the answer: She wouldn't. Any one of her neighbours would've loaned it to her if they'd had it, but no one did. Aunt Josie did, though. She had twelve dollars and seventy cents, and plenty more besides. And if she really cared about Emmie Hubbard and her children, she could have given it to her. And if she'd really cared about me, she could have helped me get to New York City. But all she cared about was her damn figurines. Emmie would lose her house and land, and the county would take her kids. I couldn't bear the thought of her children being taken and separated and farmed out to strangers. It was one more hard and hopeless thing, and I was tired of hard and hopeless things.

¹ *religious figurines* – miniature toy models of characters from the Bible.

² *vernacular* – language which only people in a certain place use, like slang

I finished polishing the clock and picked up one of the figurines next to it. It was in the shape of an angel and on the angel's gown were printed the words: ALMIGHTY GOD, GIVE US SERENITY TO ACCEPT WHAT CANNOT BE CHANGED, COURAGE TO CHANGE WHAT SHOULD BE CHANGED, AND WISDOM TO KNOW THE ONE FROM THE OTHER.

What if you couldn't do that? Couldn't change things and couldn't accept them, either?

I took hold of the angel's head and snapped it off. And then I snapped one wing off, and then the other. I broke his arms off, too, and then I asked him how serene he was feeling now. I put the pieces in my pocket.

That got rid of most of my anger. I had to swallow what was left.

Now answer the following questions on lined paper:

- 1 What is Mattie doing at the beginning of the extract? (1 mark)
- 2 In your own words, explain what the word “meaching” means. (2 marks)
- 3 Give three examples of things that Aunt Josie does which suggest that she is unkind. (3 marks)
- 4 Read from “She had twelve dollars and seventeen cents...” to the end of the text. How does the writer use her language to demonstrate Mattie’s anger? You should give 3 examples of the writer using words or phrases in an interesting or unusual way, and explain how each of them shows her angry feelings. (6 marks)
- 5 a. Write down two words that you think sum up Mattie’s personality. For each one, give a reason for your choice. (4 marks)
b. Mattie loves making up words. Invent a word that you think best describes Mattie’s personality. Explain clearly what your word means. (2 marks)
- 6 Look at line – “I heard the sound of water running.....weren’t making a pot of tea.” Why were Aunt Josie and Mrs McIntyre boiling the kettle? (2 marks)

(Total: 20 marks)

