

Welcome to eleventh grade English! Over the summer, we would like you to read a few short pieces and complete a few assignments to help you get ready for your eleventh grade year.

**Readings:**

**"If"**

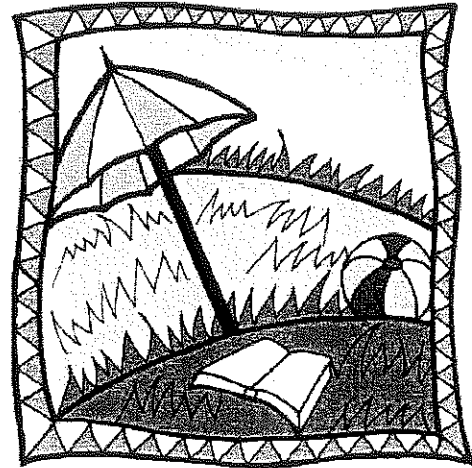
(poem by Rudyard Kipling; reproduced from Commonlit.org)

**"What is Your Life's Blueprint?"**

(a portion of a speech by MLK, Jr)

**"The Landlady"**

(short story by Roald Dahl; reproduced from Commonlit.org)



**Assignments to complete with the readings:**

- ⇒ Multiple choice and short answer questions for "If"
- ⇒ Short answer questions for "What is Your Life's Blueprint?"
- ⇒ Multiple choice and short answer questions for "The Landlady"
- ⇒ Questions to answer based on your favorite song

**Reading Log:**

Anytime you read this summer, whether an online article, a newspaper, a magazine, a book, or a poem, record what you read in the reading log provided. The top reading logs (those with the most titles and number of minutes read) will be eligible for **prizes** at the beginning of the year!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## If

By Rudyard Kipling  
1910

*Rudyard Kipling (1865-1939) was an English short story writer, poet, and novelist, perhaps best known for The Jungle Book (1894). Kipling wrote in Victorian England,<sup>1</sup> and the following poem is considered representative of the ideal qualities of a proper Englishman during that time. As you read, take notes on the structural form of the poem and how it contributes to the tone and message.*

- [1] If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
[5] If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your  
master;

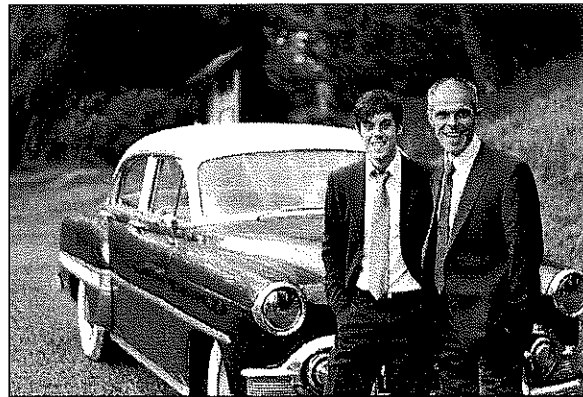
- [10] If you can think—and not make thoughts your  
aim;

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves<sup>2</sup> to make a trap for fools,

- [15] Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings

- [20] And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew<sup>3</sup>  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'



*"Father and Son" by Nicolas is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

- [25] If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue ,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
[30] With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

1. The Victorian era took place during the English Queen Victoria's rule (1837-1901). It was an era of relative peace and prosperity, considered the height of the British empire. Victorian culture, especially in the later years, consisted notably of strict moral and social conduct.  
2. Dishonest men  
3. Tissue connecting muscle to bone; something that binds together

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes a central theme of the text? [RL.2]
  - A. Friendship is an important support system to young adults.
  - B. Identity must come from within a person, not from what others tell you to be.
  - C. Growing up is complicated and challenging, but is ultimately worth it for what can be accomplished.
  - D. People, especially young people, should resist the social pressure to obey other people's rules.
  
2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
  - A. "If you can keep your head when all about you / Are losing theirs and blaming it on you, / If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, / But make allowance for their doubting too;" (Lines 1-4)
  - B. "If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew / To serve your turn long after they are gone, / And so hold on when there is nothing in you / Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'" (Lines 21-24)
  - C. "If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, / Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch, / If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you, / If all men count with you, but none too much;" (Lines 25-28)
  - D. "Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, / And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!" (Lines 31-32)
  
3. PART A: Which of the following best describes the structural pattern of the poem? [RL.5]
  - A. It is organized through the repetition of "if... then" statements.
  - B. It is organized with increasingly longer statements and increasingly difficult guidelines.
  - C. It is organized into four stanzas, each with eight lines of iambic pentameter (5 feet per line/meter).
  - D. It is organized mainly through the repetition of "if" statements, building upon each other until the final assertion of the poem.
  
4. PART B: How does the structure of the poem, as indicated in Part A, contribute to the poem's tone? [RL.5] [RL.4]
  - A. The form creates a tone of redundancy, or unnecessary repetition.
  - B. This form creates a tone of authority and discipline, as the repetition emphasizes instructions for how to live one's life.
  - C. This form mimics the tone of a boy becoming a man: through many trials and errors.
  - D. This form creates a know-it-all tone, describing difficult rules like they are seemingly easy steps.

## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Consider the line, "If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, / But make allowance for their doubting too." Do you think it's important to allow people to doubt you or to doubt yourself? Explain your answer.
2. The speaker says it's important to not make your dreams your master. What does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
3. How does the author's national or cultural background influence the the poem, especially the advice given in the poem?
4. In the context of this poem, what does it mean to be grown up? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
5. This poem is told from the perspective of a father speaking to his son. In the context of this poem, what is the meaning of fatherhood? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
6. According to the speaker in this poem, what does it mean to be brave? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

5. What do the details of this poem reveal about the poet's point of view towards being [RL.6] a grown man? Cite evidence to support your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What Is Your Life's Blueprint?

*Six months before he was assassinated, King spoke to a group of students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967.*

*Reproduced from <http://mhvpus.weebly.com/historical-forum/martin-luther-king-jr-what-is-your-lifes-blueprint>*

I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is your life's blueprint?

Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.

I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life's blueprint. Number one in your life's blueprint, should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth and your own somebodiness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.

Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as the basic principle the determination to achieve excellence in your various fields of endeavor. You're going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold what you will do in life — what your life's work will be. Set out to do it well.

And I say to you, my young friends, doors are opening to you—doors of opportunities that were not open to your mothers and your fathers — and the great challenge facing you is to be ready to face these doors as they open....

And when you discover what you will be in your life, set out to do it as if God Almighty called you at this particular moment in history to do it. Don't just set out to do a good job. Set out to do such a good job that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better

If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Leontyne Price sings before the Metropolitan Opera. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't be a pine at the top of the hill, be a shrub in the valley. Be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.

Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.

— From the estate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Questions:

1. After reading the speech by Martin Luther King Jr., what is **your** life's blueprint?

What do you plan to do when you grow up?

---

---

---

2. How will you make sure you do the best you can at whatever you do?

---

---

---

---

3. What are your final thoughts about this speech and King's message to youth?

---

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Landlady

By Roald Dahl  
1959

*Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British novelist, short story writer, and poet. Dahl's stories are known for having darkly comic or unexpected endings. In this short story, a young man in search of lodgings is taken in by a seemingly kind and gentle landlady. As you read, take notes on how the author characterizes the landlady.*

- [1] Billy Weaver had travelled down from London on the slow afternoon train, with a change at Swindon<sup>1</sup> on the way, and by the time he got to Bath<sup>2</sup> it was about nine o'clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance. But the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks.

"Excuse me," he said, "but is there a fairly cheap hotel not too far away from here?"

"Try The Bell and Dragon," the porter<sup>3</sup> answered, pointing down the road. "They might take you in. It's about a quarter of a mile along on the other side."

Billy thanked him and picked up his suitcase and set out to walk the quarter-mile to The Bell and Dragon. He had never been to Bath before. He didn't know anyone who lived there. But Mr Greenslade at the Head Office in London had told him it was a splendid city. "Find your own lodgings," he had said, "and then go along and report to the Branch Manager as soon as you've got yourself settled."



*"The Linville River Farm bed and breakfast, no longer in operation," by Lindley Ashline is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.*

- [5] Billy was seventeen years old. He was wearing a new navy-blue overcoat, a new brown trilby hat,<sup>4</sup> and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. He walked briskly<sup>5</sup> down the street. He was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided, was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen. The big shots up at Head Office were absolutely fantastically brisk all the time. They were amazing.

1. a large town in South West England
2. a region in the countryside in South West England
3. A "porter" is a person employed to carry luggage.
4. a soft felt hat with a narrow brim
5. **Briskly** (*adverb*): quick and active

There were no shops on this wide street that he was walking along, only a line of tall houses on each side, all them identical. They had porches and pillars and four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was obvious that once upon a time they had been very swanky<sup>6</sup> residences. But now, even in the darkness, he could see that the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and that the handsome white façades<sup>7</sup> were cracked and blotchy from neglect.

Suddenly, in a downstairs window that was brilliantly illuminated by a street-lamp not six yards away, Billy caught sight of a printed notice propped up against the glass in one of the upper panes. It said BED AND BREAKFAST. There was a vase of yellow chrysanthemums, tall and beautiful, standing just underneath the notice.

He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer.

Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either side of the window. The chrysanthemums looked wonderful beside them. He went right up and peered through the glass into the room, and the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth. On the carpet in front of the fire, a pretty little dachshund<sup>8</sup> was curled up asleep with its nose tucked into its belly.

- [10] The room itself, so far as he could see in the half-darkness, was filled with pleasant furniture. There was a baby-grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs; and in one corner he spotted a large parrot in a cage. Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself; and all in all, it looked to him as though it would be a pretty decent house to stay in. Certainly it would be more comfortable than The Bell and Dragon.

On the other hand, a pub would be more congenial<sup>9</sup> than a boarding-house. There would be beer and darts in the evenings, and lots of people to talk to, and it would probably be a good bit cheaper, too. He had stayed a couple of nights in a pub once before and he had liked it. He had never stayed in any boarding-houses, and, to be perfectly honest, he was a tiny bit frightened of them. The name itself conjured<sup>10</sup> up images of watery cabbage, rapacious<sup>11</sup> landladies, and a powerful smell of kippers<sup>12</sup> in the living-room.

After dithering<sup>13</sup> about like this in the cold for two or three minutes, Billy decided that he would walk on and take a look at The Bell and Dragon before making up his mind. He turned to go. And now a queer<sup>14</sup> thing happened to him. He was in the act of stepping back and turning away from the window when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar<sup>15</sup> manner by the small notice that was there. BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST. Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell.

6. **Swanky** (*adjective*): stylish and expensive
7. A "façade" is the face of a building, especially the front that looks on a street.
8. a type of dog with short legs and a long body
9. **Congenial** (*adjective*): pleasant and enjoyable
10. **Conjure** (*verb*): to produce or cause something to appear
11. **Rapacious** (*adjective*): aggressively greedy
12. a type of fish
13. to be indecisive
14. strange or odd
15. **Peculiar** (*adjective*): strange or odd; unusual

He pressed the bell. Far away in a back room he heard it ringing, and then at once — it must have been at once because he hadn't even had time to take his finger from the bell-button — the door swung open and a woman was standing there.

Normally you ring the bell and you have at least a half-minute's wait before the door opens. But this dame<sup>16</sup> was a like a jack-in-the-box. He pressed the bell — and out she popped! It made him jump.

- [15] She was about forty-five or fifty years old, and the moment she saw him, she gave him a warm welcoming smile.

"Please come in," she said pleasantly. She stepped aside, holding the door wide open, and Billy found himself automatically starting forward into the house. The compulsion<sup>17</sup> or, more accurately, the desire to follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong.

"I saw the notice in the window," he said, holding himself back.

"Yes, I know."

"I was wondering about a room."

- [20] "It's all ready for you, my dear," she said. She had a round pink face and very gentle blue eyes.

"I was on my way to The Bell and Dragon," Billy told her. "But the notice in your window just happened to catch my eye."

"My dear boy," she said, "why don't you come in out of the cold?"

"How much do you charge?"

"Five and sixpence a night, including breakfast."

- [25] It was fantastically cheap. It was less than half of what he had been willing to pay.

"If that is too much," she added, "then perhaps I can reduce it just a tiny bit. Do you desire an egg for breakfast? Eggs are expensive at the moment. It would be sixpence less without the egg."

"Five and sixpence is fine," he answered. "I should like very much to stay here."

"I knew you would. Do come in."

She seemed terribly nice. She looked exactly like the mother of one's best school-friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays. Billy took off his hat, and stepped over the threshold.<sup>18</sup>

- [30] "Just hang it there," she said, "and let me help you with your coat."

16. "Dame" is another term for a woman.

17. **Compulsion** (*noun*): an irresistible urge to behave in a certain way

18. a point of entering

There were no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking-sticks — nothing.

"We have it all to ourselves," she said, smiling at him over her shoulder as she led the way upstairs.

"You see, it isn't very often I have the pleasure of taking a visitor into my little nest."

The old girl is slightly dotty,<sup>19</sup> Billy told himself. But at five and sixpence a night, who gives a damn about that? — "I should've thought you'd be simply swamped<sup>20</sup> with applicants," he said politely.

- [35] "Oh, I am, my dear, I am, of course I am. But the trouble is that I'm inclined to be just a teeny weeny bit choosy and particular — if you see what I mean."

"Ah, yes."

"But I'm always ready. Everything is always ready day and night in this house just on the off-chance that an acceptable young gentleman will come along. And it is such a pleasure, my dear, such a very great pleasure when now and again I open the door and I see someone standing there who is just exactly right." She was half-way up the stairs, and she paused with one hand on the stair-rail, turning her head and smiling down at him with pale lips. "Like you," she added, and her blue eyes travelled slowly all the way down the length of Billy's body, to his feet, and then up again.

On the first-floor landing she said to him, "This floor is mine."

They climbed up a second flight. "And this one is all yours," she said. "Here's your room. I do hope you'll like it." She took him into a small but charming front bedroom, switching on the light as she went in.

- [40] "The morning sun comes right in the window, Mr Perkins. It is Mr Perkins, isn't it?"

"No," he said. "It's Weaver."

"Mr Weaver. How nice. I've put a water-bottle between the sheets to air them out, Mr Weaver. It's such a comfort to have a hot water-bottle in a strange bed with clean sheets, don't you agree? And you may light the gas fire at any time if you feel chilly."

"Thank you," Billy said. "Thank you ever so much." He noticed that the bedspread had been taken off the bed, and that the bedclothes had been neatly turned back on one side, all ready for someone to get in.

"I'm so glad you appeared," she said, looking earnestly<sup>21</sup> into his face. "I was beginning to get worried."

- [45] "That's all right," Billy answered brightly. "You mustn't worry about me." He put his suitcase on the chair and started to open it.

"And what about supper, my dear? Did you manage to get anything to eat before you came here?"

19. "Dotty" means somewhat mad.

20. **Swamp (verb):** to overwhelm with an excessive amount of something

21. **Earnest (adjective):** serious and sincere

"I'm not a bit hungry, thank you," he said. "I think I'll just go to bed as soon as possible because tomorrow I've got to get up rather early and report to the office."

"Very well, then. I'll leave you now so that you can unpack. But before you go to bed, would you be kind enough to pop into the sitting-room on the ground floor and sign the book? Everyone has to do that because it's the law of the land, and we don't want to go breaking any laws at this stage in the proceedings, do we?" She gave him a little wave of the hand and went quickly out of the room and closed the door.

Now, the fact that his landlady appeared to be slightly off her rocker<sup>22</sup> didn't worry Billy in the least. After all, she was not only harmless — there was no question about that — but she was also quite obviously a kind and generous soul. He guessed that she had probably lost a son in the war, or something like that, and had never got over it.

- [50] So a few minutes later, after unpacking his suitcase and washing his hands, he trotted downstairs to the ground floor and entered the living-room. His landlady wasn't there, but the fire was glowing in the hearth, and the little dachshund was still sleeping in front of it. The room was wonderfully warm and cosy. I'm a lucky fellow, he thought, rubbing his hands. This is a bit of all right.

He found the guest-book lying open on the piano, so he took out his pen and wrote down his name and address. There were only two other entries above his on the page, and, as one always does with guest-books, he started to read them. One was a Christopher Mulholland from Cardiff. The other was Gregory W. Temple from Bristol. That's funny, he thought suddenly. Christopher Mulholland. It rings a bell. Now where on earth had he heard that rather unusual name before?

Was he a boy at school? No. Was it one of his sister's numerous young men, perhaps, or a friend of his father's? No, no, it wasn't any of those. He glanced down again at the book. Christopher Mulholland, 231 Cathedral Road, Cardiff. Gregory W. Temple, 27 Sycamore Drive, Bristol. As a matter of fact, now he came to think of it, he wasn't at all sure that the second name didn't have almost as much of a familiar ring about it as the first.

"Gregory Temple?" he said aloud, searching his memory. "Christopher Mulholland?..."

"Such charming boys," a voice behind him answered, and he turned and saw his landlady sailing into the room with a large silver tea-tray in her hands. She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky<sup>23</sup> horse.

- [55] "They sound somehow familiar," he said.

"They do? How interesting."

"I'm almost positive I've heard those names before somewhere. Isn't that queer? Maybe it was in the newspapers. They weren't famous in any way, were they? I mean famous cricketers or footballers or something like that?"

22. a phrase that means insane

23. **Frisky** (*adjective*): playful and full of energy

"Famous," she said, setting the tea-tray down on the low table in front of the sofa. "Oh no, I don't think they were famous. But they were extraordinarily handsome, both of them, I can promise you that. They were tall and young and handsome, my dear, just exactly like you."

Once more, Billy glanced down at the book.

[60] "Look here," he said, noticing the dates. "This last entry is over two years old."

"It is?"

"Yes, indeed. And Christopher Mulholland's is nearly a year before that — more than three years ago."

"Dear me," she said, shaking her head and heaving a dainty<sup>24</sup> little sigh. "I would never have thought it. How time does fly away from us all, doesn't it, Mr Wilkins?"

"It's Weaver," Billy said. "W-e-a-v-e-r."

[65] "Oh, of course it is!" she cried, sitting down on the sofa. "How silly of me. I do apologise. In one ear and out the other, that's me, Mr Weaver."

"You know something?" Billy said. "Something that's really quite extraordinary about all this?"

"No, dear, I don't."

"Well, you see — both of these names, Mulholland and Temple, I not only seem to remember each one of them separately, so to speak, but somehow or other, in some peculiar way, they both appear to be sort of connected together as well. As though they were both famous for the same sort of thing, if you see what I mean — like ... like Dempsey and Tunney, for example, or Churchill and Roosevelt."

"How amusing," she said. "But come over here now, dear, and sit down beside me on the sofa and I'll give you a nice cup of tea and a ginger biscuit before you go to bed."

[70] "You really shouldn't bother," Billy said. "I didn't mean you to do anything like that." He stood by the piano, watching her as she fussed about with the cups and saucers. He noticed that she had small, white, quickly moving hands, and red finger-nails.

"I'm almost positive it was in the newspapers I saw them," Billy said. "I'll think of it in a second. I'm sure I will."

There is nothing more tantalising<sup>25</sup> than a thing like this which lingers just outside the borders of one's memory. He hated to give up.

"Now wait a minute," he said. "Wait just a minute. Mulholland... Christopher Mulholland... wasn't that the name of the Eton schoolboy who was on a walking-tour through the West Country, and then all of a sudden..."

24. **Dainty** (*adjective*): delicately small

25. **Tantalize** (*verb*): to torment or tease someone with something that is unobtainable

"Milk?" she said. "And sugar?"

[75] "Yes, please. And then all of a sudden..."

"Eton schoolboy?" she said. "Oh no, my dear, that can't possibly be right because my Mr Mulholland was certainly not an Eton schoolboy when he came to me. He was a Cambridge undergraduate. Come over here now and sit next to me and warm yourself in front of this lovely fire. Come on. Your tea's all ready for you." She patted the empty place beside her on the sofa, and she sat there smiling at Billy and waiting for him to come over. He crossed the room slowly, and sat down on the edge of the sofa. She placed his teacup on the table in front of him.

"There we are," she said. "How nice and cosy this is, isn't it?"

Billy started sipping his tea. She did the same. For half a minute or so, neither of them spoke. But Billy knew that she was looking at him. Her body was half-turned towards him, and he could feel her eyes resting on his face, watching him over the rim of her teacup. Now and again, he caught a whiff of a peculiar smell that seemed to emanate<sup>26</sup> directly from her person. It was not in the least unpleasant, and it reminded him — well, he wasn't quite sure what it reminded him of. Pickled walnuts? New leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital?

"Mr Mulholland was a great one for his tea," she said at length. "Never in my life have I seen anyone drink as much tea as dear, sweet Mr Mulholland."

[80] "I suppose he left fairly recently," Billy said. He was still puzzling his head about the two names.

He was positive now that he had seen them in the newspapers — in the headlines.

"Left?" she said, arching her brows. "But my dear boy, he never left. He's still here. Mr Temple is also here. They're on the third floor, both of them together."

Billy set down his cup slowly on the table, and stared at his landlady. She smiled back at him, and then she put out one of her white hands and patted him comfortingly on the knee. "How old are you, my dear?" she asked.

"Seventeen."

[85] "Seventeen!" she cried. "Oh, it's the perfect age! Mr Mulholland was also seventeen. But I think he was a trifle<sup>27</sup> shorter than you are, in fact I'm sure he was, and his teeth weren't quite so white. You have the most beautiful teeth, Mr Weaver, did you know that?"

"They're not as good as they look," Billy said.

"They've got simply masses of fillings<sup>28</sup> in them at the back."

26. **Emanate** (*verb*): to issue or spread out from a source

27. to some small degree

28. something used to fill a cavity

"Mr Temple, of course, was a little older," she said, ignoring his remark. "He was actually twenty eight. And yet I never would have guessed it if he hadn't told me, never in my whole life. There wasn't a blemish on his body."

"A what?" Billy said.

[90] "His skin was just like a baby's."

There was a pause. Billy picked up his teacup and took another sip of his tea, then he set it down again gently in its saucer. He waited for her to say something else, but she seemed to have lapsed<sup>29</sup> into another of her silences. He sat there staring straight ahead of him into the far corner of the room, biting his lower lip.

"That parrot," he said at last. "You know something? It had me completely fooled when I first saw it through the window from the street. I could have sworn it was alive."

"Alas,<sup>30</sup> no longer."

"It's most terribly clever the way it's been done," he said. "It doesn't look in the least bit dead. Who did it?"

[95] "I did."

"You did?"

"Of course," she said. "And have you met my little Basil as well?" She nodded towards the dachshund curled up so comfortably in front of the fire. Billy looked at it. And suddenly, he realised that this animal had all the time been just as silent and motionless as the parrot. He put out a hand and touched it gently on the top of its back. The back was hard and cold, and when he pushed the hair to one side with his fingers, he could see the skin underneath, greyish-black and dry and perfectly preserved.

"Good gracious me," he said. "How absolutely fascinating." He turned away from the dog and stared with deep admiration at the little woman beside him on the sofa. "It must be most awfully difficult to do a thing like that."

"Not in the least," she said. "I stuff all my little pets myself when they pass away. Will you have another cup of tea?"

[100] "No, thank you," Billy said. The tea tasted faintly of bitter almonds,<sup>31</sup> and he didn't much care for it.

"You did sign the book, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes."

29. **Lapse** (*verb*): to revert to a previous state or behavior

30. an expression of grief or pity

31. The taste or smell of bitter almonds is an indication that something contains a deadly poison called cyanide.

"That's good. Because later on, if I happen to forget what you were called, then I can always come down here and look it up. I still do that almost every day with Mr Mulholland and Mr... Mr..."

"Temple," Billy said. "Gregory Temple. Excuse my asking, but haven't there been any other guests here except them in the last two or three years?"

[105] Holding her teacup high in one hand, inclining her head slightly to the left, she looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes and gave him another gentle little smile.

"No, my dear," she said. "Only you."

*"The Landlady" from The Best of Roald Dahl by Roald Dahl. Copyright © 1959 by David Hingham Associates Limited. Used by permission of Vintage. All rights reserved.*

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following statements best identifies a theme of the text? [RL.2]
  - A. People should get to know each other first before resorting to judgment.
  - B. Strangers can be more dangerous than they initially appear.
  - C. Loneliness can drive people to behave strangely towards others.
  - D. Kindness and hospitality are difficult to find among strangers.
  
2. PART A: What does the word "compelling" mean as used in paragraph 12? [RL.4]
  - A. to urge someone to do something
  - B. to think deeply about something
  - C. to become slightly interested in something
  - D. to scare someone into doing something
  
3. PART B: Which quote from paragraph 12 best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
  - A. "After dithering about like this in the cold for two or three minutes"
  - B. "when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar manner"
  - C. "Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass"
  - D. "forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house"
  
4. PART A: What can the reader infer about the landlady from her conversation with Billy in the sitting room? [RL.3]
  - A. She was a doctor or likely had some medical training, as evidenced by her ability to stuff her pets.
  - B. She is a lonely old woman who lost her son in the war and tries to replace him with her particular tenants.
  - C. She may have witnessed something terrible and suffers memory problems because she cannot recall Billy's name correctly.
  - D. She may be more threatening than she appears because her words suggest she was involved in the two men's disappearances.
  
5. PART B: Which of the following details from the text best support the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
  - A. "He guessed that she had probably lost a son in the war, or something like that, and had never got over it." (Paragraph 49)
  - B. "'Left?' she said, arching her brows. 'But my dear boy, he never left. He's still here. Mr Temple is also here.'" (Paragraph 82)
  - C. "he caught a whiff of a peculiar smell... he wasn't quite sure what it reminded him of. Pickled walnuts? New leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital?" (Paragraph 78)
  - D. "'if I happen to forget what you were called, then I can always come down here and look it up. I still do that almost every day with Mr Mulholland and Mr... Mr...'" (Paragraph 103)



## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In this text, Roald Dahl never outright states the landlady's dark secret or reveals the fate of Billy and the other boys – what is the effect of this? How does it contribute to the suspense of the story?
2. In the context of the short story, how do people face death? The landlady hints at her sinister intentions throughout the text – do you think Billy should have realized her plans? Was he in denial of his own fate? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. In the context of the short story, what can we learn about fate from tragedy? In your opinion, what does this story teach readers about avoiding tragedy? What could Billy have done differently? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

## Summer Reading Song Assignment

This is your opportunity to show who you are using material you like!



<http://clipart-library.com/cartoon-music-note.html>

⇒ Choose a song that you find meaningful and inspirational.

⇒ Answer the following questions about your song:

1. What is the name of the song?

---

2. Who wrote the song?

---

3. Who is the performing artist? The person who sings the song may not be the writer.

---

4. What is it about the song that you like?

---

---

---

5. How has the song affected you?

---

---

---

6. What is your favorite line (or lines) from the song? Write the line or lines in the space below.

---

---

---

**Reading Log:** record the date, the title of what you read, the form of writing, and the length of time you read in the boxes provided.

Date	Title of book/article/etc.	Book? Newspaper? Poem? Online article? Magazine?	Minutes read





Date	Title of book/article/etc.	Book? Newspaper? Poem? Online article? Magazine?	Minutes read
------	----------------------------	---	--------------



