

HIGHGATE

11+ test for entry – Exemplar 1

ENGLISH

Time allowed: 45 minutes

Make sure that you check your work thoroughly to ensure accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Name	
Current school	

Laurie Lee was a British writer who, in 1959, wrote an account of his childhood in a country village.

In this extract, he is only three years old. He is arriving with his family at the village for the first time. At the start of this extract he has accidentally fallen from the cart in which they are travelling into a field of high grass.

I was set down from the cart at the age of three, and there with a sense of bewilderment and terror my life in the village began.

5 The June grass, amongst which I stood, was taller than I was, and I wept. I had never been so close to grass before. It towered above me and all around me, each blade tattooed with tiger-skins of sunlight. It was knife-edged, dark, and a wicked green, thick as a forest and alive with grasshoppers that chirped and chattered and leapt through the air like monkeys.

10 I was lost and didn't know where to move. A tropic heat oozed up from the ground, rank with sharp odours of roots and nettles. Snow-clouds of elder-blossom banked in the sky, showering upon me the fumes and flakes of their sweet and giddy suffocation. High overhead ran frenzied larks, screaming, as though the sky were tearing apart.

15 For the first time in my life, I was out of the sight of humans. For the first time in my life I was alone in a world whose behaviour I could neither predict nor fathom: a world of birds that squealed, of plants that stank, of insects that sprang about without warning. I was lost and did not expect to be found again. I put back my head and howled, and the sun hit me smartly on the face, like a bully.

20 From this daylight nightmare I was awakened, as from many another, by the appearance of my sisters. They came scrambling and calling up the steep rough bank, and parting the long grass found me. Faces of rose, familiar, living; huge shining faces hung up like shields between me and the sky; faces with grins and white teeth, bashing off terror with their broad scoldings and affection. They leaned over me – one, two, three – their mouths smeared with red currants and their hands dripping with juice.

“There, there, it's all right, don't you wail any more. Come down 'ome and we'll stuff you with currants.”

25 And Marjorie, the eldest, lifted me into her long brown hair and ran me jogging down the path and through the steep rose-filled garden, and set me down on the cottage doorstep, which was our home, though I couldn't believe it.

That was the day we came to the village, in the summer of the last year of the First World War. To a cottage that stood in a half-acre of garden on a steep bank above a lake; a cottage with three floors and a cellar and a treasure in the walls, with a pump and apple trees,

30 raspberries and strawberries, rooks in the chimneys, frogs in the cellar, mushrooms on the ceiling and all for three and sixpence a week.

I don't know where I lived before then. My life began on the cart which brought me up the long slow hills to the village, and dumped me in the high grass, and lost me. I had ridden wrapped up in a Union Jack to protect me from the sun, and when I rolled out of it, and
35 stood piping loud among the buzzing jungle of that summer bank, then, I feel, was I born.

And to all the rest of us, the whole family of eight, it was the beginning of a life.

Cider with Rosie, Laurie Lee.

1. **Re-read the opening three paragraphs (lines 1-10).** At the start of the extract, how does he feel when he is set down in the grass?
(1 mark)

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2. **Re-read lines 1-10.** Give two details from his description of the grass that make it seem strange.
(2 marks)

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3. **Re-read lines 16-21.** In the fifth paragraph, find a word or short phrase that shows the happiness his sisters bring and quote it. Describe how your word or phrase shows this by writing about its meaning and associations.

(5 marks)

Word or phrase:

Associations and what these show:

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4. **Re-read the final four paragraphs (lines 24-37).** How does Laurie Lee show his feelings about his arrival and his new life in the village?

- a. Describe the mood and atmosphere of these paragraphs and how this makes you feel, using words and phrases from the extract.
- b. Explore the meanings and associations of these words to show how they create an effect.

(7 marks)

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