

**Weekly Read week 12B: this is the opening from the novel 'I Capture the Castle', written by Dodie Smith in 1948. In the story, set in England in the 1930s, the Mortmains are an impoverished family struggling to live in a crumbling castle. The narrator is 17-year-old Cassandra Mortmain who tells the story through her journal.**

I write this sitting in the kitchen sink. That is, my feet are in it; the rest of me is on the draining board, which I have padded with our dog's blanket and the tea cosy. I can't say that I am really comfortable, and there is a depressing smell of carbolic soap, but this is the only part of the kitchen where there is any daylight left. And I have found that sitting in a place where you have never sat before can be inspiring I wrote my very best poem while sitting on the hen house. Though even that isn't a very good poem. I have decided my poetry is so bad that I mustn't write any more of it.

Drips from the roof are plopping into the water butt by the back door. The view through the windows above the sink is excessively drear. Beyond the dank garden in the courtyard are the ruined walls on the edge of the moat. Beyond the moat, the boggy ploughed fields stretch to the leaden sky. I tell myself that all the rain we have had lately is good for nature, and that at any moment spring will surge on us. I try to see leaves on the trees and the courtyard filled with sunlight. Unfortunately, the more my mind's eye sees green and gold, the more drained of all colour does the twilight seem.

It is comforting to look away from the windows and towards the kitchen fire, near which my sister Rose is ironing though she obviously can't see properly, and it will be a pity if she scorches her only nightgown. (I have two, but one is minus its behind.) Rose looks particularly fetching by firelight because she is a pinkish person; her skin has a pink glow and her hair is pinkish gold, very light and feathery. Although I am rather used to her I know she is a beauty. She is nearly twenty one and very bitter with life. I am seventeen, look younger, feel older. I am no beauty but have a neatish face.

I have just remarked to Rose that our situation is really rather romantic - two girls in this strange and lonely house. She replied that she saw nothing romantic about being shut up in a crumbling ruin surrounded by a sea of mud. I must admit that our home is an unreasonable place to live in. Yet I love it. The house itself was built in the time of Charles II, but it was grafted on to a fourteenth century castle that had been damaged by Cromwell. The whole of our east wall was part of the castle; there are two round towers in it. The gatehouse is intact and a stretch of the old walls at their full height joins it to the house. And Belmotte Tower, all that remains of an even older castle, still stands on its mound close by. But I won't attempt to describe our peculiar home fully until I can see more time ahead of me than I do now.

- Read paragraph 1. List **4 things** you learn about the narrator.
- In paragraph 2, beginning 'Drips from the roof', how does the writer use **language** to convey mood and atmosphere? Comment on three examples and explain **what** techniques the writer uses, and **why** they are effective in conveying a particular mood or atmosphere.
- Which details from paragraph 4 ('I have just remarked...') suggest that the family do not have money to spend on improving the castle?
- What are the differences between the way the narrator and her sister view their life? Choose **at least two quotations** to support your answer.
- Label the following statements **true or false**:

The view through the window above the sink is dull and bleak.

The leaves on the trees are green and gold.

Rose is bitter with life.

The castle was built a hundred years ago.