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ENGLISH

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Paper 2

For Examination from 2012

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1 hour 10 minutes

This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.



Read this extract from 'The Dark is Rising' by Susan Cooper.

'Too many!' James shouted, and slammed the door behind him.

'What?' said Will.

'Too many kids in this family, that's what. Just *too many*.' James stood fuming on the landing like a small angry locomotive, then stumped across to the window-seat and stared out at the garden. Will put aside his book and pulled up his legs to make room. 'I could hear you all yelling,' he said, chin on knees. 5

'Wasn't anything,' James said. 'Just stupid Barbara again. Bossing. Pick up this, don't touch that. And Mary joining in, twitter twitter twitter. You'd think this house was big enough, but there's always *people*.'

They both looked out the window. The snow lay thin and apologetic over the world. That wide grey sweep was the lawn, with the straggling trees of the orchard still dark beyond; the white squares were the roofs of the garage, the old barn, the rabbit hutches, the chicken coops. Further back there were only the flat fields of Dawson's Farm, dimly white-striped. All the broad sky was grey, full of snow that refused to fall. There was no colour anywhere. 10

'Four days to Christmas,' Will said. 'I wish it would snow properly.' 15

'And your birthday tomorrow.'

'Mmm.' He had been going to say that too, but it would have been too much like a reminder. And the gift he most wished for on his birthday was something nobody could give him: it was snow, beautiful, deep, blanketing snow, and it never came. At least this year there was the grey sprinkle, better than nothing. 20

He said, remembering a duty: 'I haven't fed the rabbits yet. Want to come?'

Booted and muffled, they clumped out through the sprawling kitchen. A full symphony orchestra was swelling out of the radio; their eldest sister Gwen was slicing onions and singing; their mother was bent broad-beamed and red faced over an oven. 'Rabbits!' she shouted, when she caught sight of them. 'And some more hay from the farm!' 25

'We're going!' Will shouted back. The radio let out a sudden hideous crackle of static as he passed the table. He jumped. Mrs Stanton shrieked, 'Turn that thing DOWN.'

Outdoors, it was suddenly very quiet. Will dipped out a pail of pellets from the bin in the farm-smelling barn, which was not really a barn at all, but a long low building with a tiled roof, once a stable. They tramped through the thin snow to the row of heavy wooden hutches, leaving dark footmarks on the hard frozen ground. 30

Opening doors to fill the feed boxes, Will passed, frowning. Normally the rabbits would be huddled sleepily in corners, only the greedy ones coming twitch-nosed forward to eat. Today they seemed restless and uneasy, rustling to and fro, banging against their wooden walls; one or two even leapt back in alarm when he opened their doors. He came to his favourite rabbit, named Chelsea, and reached in as usual to rub him affectionately behind the ears, but the animal scuffled back away from him and cringed into the corner, the pink-rimmed eyes staring up blank and terrified. 35

'Hey!' Will said, disturbed. 'Hey James, look at that. What's the matter with him? And all of them?' 40

'They seem alright to me.'

'Well, they don't to me. They're all jumpy. Even Chelsea. Hey, come on, boy.' But it was no good.

'Funny,' James said with mild interest, watching. 'I dare say your hands smell wrong. You must have touched something they don't like. Same as dogs and aniseed, but the other way round.'

45

'I haven't touched anything. Matter of fact, I'd just washed my hands when I saw you.'

'There you are then,' James said promptly. 'That's the trouble. They've never smelt you clean before. Probably die of shock.'

'Ha very ha.' Will attacked him, and they scuffled together, grinning, while the empty pail toppled rattling on the hard ground. But when he glanced back as they left, the animals were still moving distractedly, not eating yet, staring after him with those strange frightened wide eyes.

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Now answer the questions in the answer booklet.

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Reading Passage

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