

Afterwards she would wake alone and disorientated on her hard pallet bed in the attic of the Camden Workhouse and, with a pencil, mark the date next to all the others on the crumbling plaster. Then she would huddle beneath her rough blanket and think of all the things she missed before getting up.

Breakfast was leftovers from the meagre food that had been sent up to her the day before. She fed the stale scraps from her tin plate to the brave birds who came to perch on her window sill, pushing her hands through the bars to offer them crumbs.

When they'd finished she would watch them wing their way across the rooftops, wishing she could soar as high. But she could no more fly than she could set foot outside this room. She'd been imprisoned for so long she'd forgotten how the weather tasted.

The only person she ever clapped eyes on was the kitchen boy. Each afternoon he would saunter across the yard and haul on the creaking pulley to raise her basket of food; sometimes he would send a message too. When it came time to return the plate, she liked to add a present for him and a note in reply.

In spring she sent down empty eggshells from the nesting house sparrows; in summer, feathers from moulting pigeons; in autumn, conkers gouged from the green spiked shells that dropped on the roof slates. In winter it was bones picked white by scavenger crows.

She enjoyed his look of surprise when he received these gifts. His tiny eyes sparkling beneath his dark fringe of hair and the amused grin that lit up his tanned face. His was the sole smile she ever saw.

Until the day the visitor came.

Skycircus by Peter Bunzl



1. Define the word "meagre" (V – 1 mark)
2. Find an antonym for "fresh" (V – 1 mark)
3. List two gifts the girl gives the kitchen boy (R – 2 marks)
4. How does the girl keep track of the days? (E – 1 mark)
5. Do you think the girl is treated well? (APE – 3 marks)

Yes I do think she is treated well. This is because "..." and this implies that... OR

No I do not think she is treated well. This is because "..." and this implies that...

6. What does the word "sole" mean in the sentence? (V – 1 mark)