



Happy Land

The old amusement park at the end of Heachom Drive has laid dormant for nearly half a century. I've seen photographs of it from back in its heyday, and it looks wonderful. Bright flashing letters spell out its name above the entrance gate: Happy Land. Thousands of delighted faces crowd around carousels and Ferris wheels and stuff their faces with fluffy candy floss. Everywhere you look in the pictures, you see people enjoying themselves. Somewhere down the line, the people started to drift away until, eventually, the doors slammed shut for the last time.

For as long as I can remember, there have been rumours that a curse was cast on the park towards the end. Allegedly, a strange man came into town from the hills but was turned away for reasons unknown. In a fit of anger, he pulled a staff from under his cloak and muttered foul words under his breath. From that moment on, things began to go wrong.

At first, the rides failed and rusted quicker than they could be fixed. Then, people gave up and left. In the end, the owner disappeared and was never seen again. At least, that's what people at school said. Until now, nobody knew for sure what had happened. Me and my friend Alice were determined to find out.

Ahead of us, the tall gates creaked and twisted in the wind. Most of the framework had rusted through, and some of the letters lay on the floor. Heachom Drive itself was deserted, the homeowners had sold up as soon as the park started to fail: nobody wanted to live near to the wreckage.

Alice insisted on heading through the gate first. I followed closely, not wanting to lose sight of her. Inside the high walls, the park looked oddly normal. The rides looked well-maintained and even exciting. The paths were clean and the patches of lawn well-mowed. Somebody was caring for the park in the absence of any guests.

I led the way along the path. We wandered past an old runaway mine train that was built to resemble the Old West. As we walked past, one of the carts barrelled around the track, startling us. I grabbed hold of Alice to check she was alright, though I needn't have bothered. She's a lot tougher than I am. There were a couple of young children in it, shouting and whooping. Alice and I looked at each other. There was definitely something odd afoot.

Past the bumper cars and the arcades, we finally found our answers. There was a unit of three or four huts that had once served food and drink. They'd been patched up to form one big house. Sat on the front porch, for want of a better word, was a surprised looking man. I reckon he was probably no older than 40, but he looked older with snow-white hair and a face as wrinkled as a walnut.

"Who're you?" he asked us when we approached. We introduced ourselves and said that we'd come to see what happened to the park after it closed. The man thought for a second, before continuing, "We don't want any trouble. Or any interference."

"Are you ghosts?" Alice asked. She'd always had a much more vivid imagination than I had. It was one of the many things I liked about her.

The man laughed at the suggestion and smiled warmly. "No, young lady, we aren't ghosts. When the park closed and people started to sell their houses, we had nowhere to go. I used to work here maintaining the rides. I couldn't just let it fall apart. I loved this place like my own home. When nobody bought the land, I took it upon myself to make sure it was always here and ready for when somebody did."

"What about the curse?" I asked. Perhaps I was as fanciful as Alice, sometimes.

"There's no curse, of course. Don't be daft. The old man who owned the place ran out of money and didn't want to waste any more fixing the rides. Once it started to fall apart, it was only a matter of time before the people went away. Terribly sad."



“Is there anything we can do to help?” Alice asked.

“Leave us alone, unless you want to buy the park,” he said. “I don’t exactly own it myself, so I’d appreciate it if you didn’t let people know we’re here. They might come and kick us out, then it really will go to scrap.”

We nodded and agreed to keep it quiet. When we left the park that day, Alice and I made a pact that we would save up our money and, one day, re-open Happy Land. Who knows, maybe you will be able to visit one day?

1

Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
The amusement park has always been rundown.		
The main character in the story visited the park alone.		
Lots of people live near the park.		
When they entered the park, it looked like it was cared for.		

_____ 2 marks

2

Look at the paragraph beginning: *Ahead of us, the tall gates creaked...*

Find and **copy** a phrase that tells you there was nothing in the area leading up to the park.

_____ 1 mark

3

a) Who is the character’s friend?

_____ 1 mark

b) How does the character feel about their friend? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

_____ 2 marks



4

When we left the park that day, Alice and I made a pact that we would save up our money...

What does **pact** mean in this sentence?

1 mark

5

Read the text through.

Complete the table below with **one** piece of evidence from the text to support each statement.

	Evidence
The man cares for the park.	
The man doesn't want people to visit the park.	

2 marks

6

Where in the park were the man and his family living?

1 mark

SATs Practice - Answers

1. **Give 1 mark for two correct answers. Give 2 marks for three or more correct answers.**

False

False

False

True

2. Heachom drive itself was deserted

3. a) Alice

b) **Give 1 mark for suggesting that the character cares about Alice or wants to protect her.**

Give an additional mark for one of the following pieces of evidence:

They followed her closely, not wanting to lose sight of her.

They liked the fact that she had a vivid imagination.

The character grabs hold of her when they are startled.

4. A promise

5. a) He moved in when the park closed and continued to look after the rides.

or

He says that he loves the park like his own home.

b) He asks to be left alone unless they want to buy the park.

or

He asks them not to tell people because he doesn't want to be kicked out.

6. In the old food and drink huts.