



The Key

Samir looked at the key resting in the palm of his hands. It had been a gift, delivered the night before in well-worn and reused brown paper. He had no idea who it was a gift from - it had arrived while he was asleep. He'd woken up to find it balanced precariously on the edge of his bedside table.

At first, Samir hadn't known what to do with the present. The only other person in the house was his grandma, and she wasn't the type to buy him presents for no reason. On the other hand, if it wasn't from her, then somebody else had been into his room. He'd sat and stared at the package for a few minutes, before finally plucking up the courage to open it.

The key hadn't been the only thing. It had been wrapped in a stained piece of lined paper. Samir had carefully unrolled it and read the spidery handwriting.

The gate at the edge of Forever.

Samir knew exactly which gate the letter referred to. At the bottom of his grandma's vast garden, there was a gate that led to Forever Cemetery. It had long ago been swallowed by creeping ivy and rusted shut: Samir doubted that unlocking it would make much of a difference. But he had to know for sure.

He stood in front of the gate, daring himself to take the next step forward. Ever since he'd arrived at the house, orphaned and alone, his grandma had told him that he wasn't to enter the cemetery. She'd never said why, but he'd been left in no doubt that the consequences would be dire.

On either side of the gate, drystone walls rose above his head and curved away. They bordered the cemetery in a broad circle. What Samir had never been able to understand was that this gate, this rusted, overgrown gate, seemed to be the only way in. He'd spent hours walking the circumference of the wall and hadn't found another entrance.

In his hand, the key felt light and weak, whereas the gate looked heavy and strong. He couldn't see any way that the key would budge it, but he had to try. He stepped forward and slowly presented the key to the lock, as though he were delivering a present of his own. The key slipped in easily and before he'd even had the chance to turn it, the lock clicked open. The gate creaked as it sagged on its ancient hinges but swung open easily. Ivy broke free and hung like snakes from the archway.

Neat rows of gravestones rolled out in front of Samir as he peered through the window of the brick archway. Here and there, an ancient and leafless oak tree spread its boughs like a mother's arms protecting their children. This autumn's leaves formed a brown blanket on the otherwise pristine lawn that covered the undulating hills. Samir stepped forward and through the gateway.

In an instant, the world seemed to blur and change. Around him, Samir watched the leaves whipped into a frenzy by an unfelt wind. The headstones tilted and chipped and aged before him. The trees, just seconds ago welcoming and warm, shifted and took on the skeletal form of long, bleached bones.

That's when the voices began to whisper.

1

What might Samir be thinking when he discovers the gift?

Tick **one** thought.

Oh, cool! A Present!

Hmm, this is strange.

I wonder what's for breakfast.

I was hoping for a present!

1 mark

2

a) How does Samir know what the letter is referring to?

1 mark

b) How did he feel about using the key to open the gate? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

2 marks

3

What is the place beyond the gate called?

1 mark

4

Look at the paragraph beginning: *On either side of the gate...*

What had Samir done to prove that the gate was the only way in to the cemetery?

1 mark



5

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

	True	False
The key was the only important thing in the package.		
The handwriting on the note was very neat.		
Grandma's garden was very big.		
The gravestones were old and damaged when he entered the graveyard.		

2 marks

6

Look at the paragraph beginning: *In an instant, the world seemed to blur and change...*

Which words would best describe the changes that Samir saw happening in front of him?

Tick **one**.

Expected

Mundane

Unforeseen

Dramatic

2 marks

SATs Practice - Answers

1. Hmm, this is strange.
2. a) He has seen the gate before at the bottom of his grandma's garden (1 mark)
b) **Give 1 mark for a correct impression and another mark for supporting evidence.**
i.e.
He wasn't sure that it would work (1 mark) because it was covered in ivy and rusted shut (1 mark).
Or
He was nervous about what he might find (1 mark). He had to stand in front of it daring himself to take the next step (1 mark).
Or
He wasn't sure that he wanted to enter (1 mark). His grandmother had always told him not to go in and he knew the consequences would be dire (1 mark).
3. Forever Cemetery
4. He'd walked all around the wall to see if there was another way in.
5. **Give 1 mark for two correct answers. Give 2 marks for three or more correct answers.**
False
False
True
False
6. Unforeseen
Dramatic