

Read carefully the passage below. Then answer **all** the questions which follow it.

This passage is about Megan, a young woman from a remote area of Canada who comes to London for the first time in the 1960s to visit a friend called Cora.

- 1 It was raining when Megan landed at Gatwick Airport, but she'd been expecting that. Everyone knew it rained all the time in England. Inside the terminal there were trolleys for luggage, which was handy because she could hardly lift her suitcase, and there was a train directly from the airport to Victoria station in the centre of London.
- 5 Megan bought a ticket and got on. She had some difficulty getting the suitcase up the steps into the carriage, but a guard saw her struggling and heaved it up behind her. "What've you got in there, then?" he asked, disapprovingly. "Everything I own," Megan said cheerfully. As she said it, the truth of the statement hit her. Apart from this suitcase, she had nothing to hold her down. No responsibilities.
- 10 No plans. For the first time in her life she didn't know what tomorrow would bring – it was the most amazing, wonderful, exciting thought she had ever had. She found a seat and the train moved off. She watched the countryside passing by. So this was England. 'The old country' people at home had called it. The country of Shakespeare and Dickens. Well, she thought, now you're seeing the real thing. In
- 15 terms of landscape, the real thing was disappointing. She expected beauty – rolling hills and tranquil valleys – and instead it was flat and wet and a tedious shade of grey. As they approached London it got dramatically worse. They passed mile after mile of ugly blackened buildings, all jammed up against each other like rotten teeth and so close to the railway tracks she felt she could have reached out and touched them. At
- 20 first she assumed they were warehouses but then she noticed strips of curtain hanging in some of the windows and in one she saw a woman holding a baby. Megan was shocked. She hadn't known that places like this existed but how would she know? She had never been in a city before. The train had been largely empty when they had left Gatwick but every few minutes it
- 25 would stop at a grimy station to collect more passengers. By the time it reached Victoria station it was like a cattle car. People wedged themselves into seats or stood hard up against each other, holding on to the luggage racks, rocking back and forth with the movement of the train. Nobody spoke. A fat man in a wet coat squeezed himself into the seat beside her, his legs sticking out sideways into the aisle. The train
- 30 slowed to a crawl and people began to collect their belongings. The instant it stopped people surged towards a door. Megan stepped down onto the platform and was swallowed instantly by a churning mass of people. She had never seen so many people, never even imagined such numbers. It took her breath away. But worse, much worse, was the noise. It was like an assault. She could feel trains groaning to a
- 35 halt, other trains rumbling out, doors slamming, whistles shrieking, announcements booming out of loudspeakers. The station was colossal. It was like a vast, echoing cavern. Megan stood, stunned and breathless, and then someone bumped into her, hard, and gave her an exasperated look. There were signs pointing to various exits and people pouring in and out of all of them.
- 40 How was she to know which one to take? When she saw a sign for TAXIS, her breath came out in a rush of relief. She would take a taxi to Cora's. It was a terrible extravagance but she would do it just this once. There was a line of people waiting and, when her turn came, she showed the driver the address. He nodded, waited while she heaved the suitcase into the cab, and
- 45 drove off. The traffic was astounding: swarms of taxis, hundreds of cars and big red buses all competing for the same space. Megan leaned forward and shouted, "Is it always like this?" "Rush hour," the driver shouted back. "You from the United States?" "Canada."
- 50 He shrugged and lost interest, swerved round a cyclist, rolled down the window and yelled abuse.

The taxi went over an elegant bridge and crossed what must have been the Thames. Megan began to worry about the cost of the ride. She hadn't known the city would be so big, that the drive would take so long. And then, suddenly, the taxi pulled up.

55 Mean little houses lined both sides of the road.
"I don't think this can be it," she said.
"31 Lansdown Terrace," he said into the mirror.
"Yes, but..." She'd thought the address sounded pretty, imagined it overlooking a park.
"This is it," the driver said.

60 "OK," Megan said. She handed over a ten pound note and was relieved when he passed back some change.
"You want me to wait until you're inside?" said the driver.
"Oh no," Megan said. "I'll be fine thanks."
The driver nodded and drove off.

65 Megan dragged her suitcase up the steps. There were three doorbells which surprised her as the house didn't look big enough to be divided up. However, she rang the top bell and waited, smiling in anticipation of seeing her friend Cora. There was no reply from the top bell so she tried the other two. No response. She lifted the doormat, wondering if Cora might have left her a key, but there was nothing.

70 Megan saw she'd made a very foolish mistake in not waiting until she'd heard from Cora before setting off for England. Megan had written to her but there were only two weeks between her decision to go and her departure. There was scarcely time for her letter to reach England, far less for a reply to get back. There was no reason why she couldn't have delayed her flight for a few weeks, but the truth was, having told

75 everyone she was leaving, she was desperate to go before Fate stepped in and stopped her.
She sat on her suitcase and thought. She wondered how she had failed to realise that it was a weekday and everyone would be at work. It was still raining and it was cold. The problem, of course, was the suitcase. It was too heavy to carry any distance but

80 if she left it on the doorstep it might get stolen. She cast about in her mind for a solution. None presented itself. You can freeze to death or risk losing the suitcase, she told herself. She stood up and hauled the suitcase up against the front door. She tucked her purse under her arm and set off to look for a café. It was a quarter of an hour before she found what she was looking for and, when she went in, the warmth

85 and the sweet smell engulfed her. She saw a table at the rear of the shop so she made for it, undoing her coat as she went.
The waitress came over and said, "Coffee?"
"Yes. Thank you." Megan replied. She stared out of the window, wondering if her suitcase had been stolen yet. No one will steal it, she told herself. It's too heavy.

90 When the coffee arrived, it tasted nothing like coffee but at least it was hot. After a while the waitress came over. "More coffee?" she asked. "Yes, thank you. I've been locked out of my house. Is it OK if I sit here?"
The waitress said she didn't see why not.
It was rainy and dark when she finally left but she saw from some distance away that

95 the lights were on in 31 Lansdown Terrace. Relief rushed through her. The doorstep was empty but surely that meant someone had taken her suitcase in. As she got closer she heard music thudding out from the house, very loud.
She knocked and the door was opened by a girl with white lipstick and huge eyelashes.

100 "Is Cora here?" Megan asked, loudly, to be heard over the music.
"Who?" the girl said.
"Cora Manning. She lives here."
"She left a couple of weeks ago."
Megan felt sick.

Mary Lawson: Road Ends

Read lines 1-11.

A1. List five things that Megan thinks or feels about being in England. [5]

Read lines 12-23.

A2. What are Megan's impressions of England in these lines? [5]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

Read lines 24-38.

A3. Megan does not enjoy the train journey into London. How does the writer show this? [10]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

Read lines 39-64.

A4. Megan finds London strange and scary. How does the writer show these feelings? [10]

You must refer to the language used in the text to support your answer, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

Read lines 65 -104.

A5. 'In the last section of this passage the reader feels only sympathy for Megan.' How far do you agree with this view? [10]

You should write about:

- your own thoughts and feelings about how Megan is presented here and in the passage as a whole
- how the writer has created these thoughts and feelings

You must refer to the text to support your answer.