

5e ENTRANCE TEST

Danger at Sea - by Helen Dunmore

5 *Two girls, Katie and Zillah, have gone out in Zillah's boat, the Wayfarer.*

When the first wave splashed over *Wayfarer's* side, I wasn't frightened. The water landed with an icy smack on my knees, and poured into the bottom of the boat. We were quite a way out from land, now. When I looked over my shoulder I could see the top of the cliffs. The water chopped and danced, and *Wayfarer* danced too, 10 tossing on top of the waves. I clutched her wooden sides.

But it was still all right, until Zillah stopped rowing. She'd been rowing hard, and I think she just wanted a rest. I think she was as surprised as I was when *Wayfarer* spun sideways, as soon as she brought the oars up out of the water. All at once the waves were smacking us really hard, side-on, making us rock harder and 15 harder with each buffet of water. A big wave flopped over the side and suddenly my trainers were full of water. *Wayfarer* bucked and shuddered all over. I held on tight to her sides, and wondered if this was normal, or if I should be frightened. Zillah grabbed the oars again, dug into the sea with her right oar, and faced *Wayfarer* into the wind. Then it was all right. Rough, but all right.

20 "Don't you think we should go back, Zillah?" I said. "We're a long way out."

"What's the matter? Are you scared?"

"No," I said, and it was true. I wasn't scared, I was angry. Angry with Zillah, and the games she was playing. 25 She lived here. She was supposed to know all about boats, and the sea. *We'll take the boat out for a bit*, she'd told me. But she knew she was going to row straight out to sea. She'd planned it. She *wanted* me to be scared, begging to go back.

I wasn't going to. I was as good a swimmer as Zillah, I was sure. Probably better. I measured the distance to 30 the cliffs and wondered if I could swim it, but I knew I couldn't, not in this cold, wild November water. It wasn't a storm, but it was rough, and if *Wayfarer* didn't like it, I wouldn't be able to swim through it.

Ahead of us a bigger wave rose. I saw the inside of it, green, packed with bubbles, rearing up. Zillah couldn't see it, because she was rowing with her back to it. My mouth opened to warn her, but the wave got there first. 35 It broke on Zillah's back, then hurled its weight of water into *Wayfarer*. I shut my eyes.

"Bail, Katie, while I turn her," yelled Zillah. "*Bail!*"

I opened my eyes. Zillah was soaked, and there were centimetres of water in the bottom of the boat. 40

"Bail?"

"Plastic can under the seat." She was fighting to stop the sea from taking her oars. "Quick, Katie!"

45 There was the red plastic can. Scoop up the water and throw it over. I can do that. I scooped and threw, scooped and threw, scooped and threw. Another wave heaved a bucket-load back over the side, but I threw it back. I was going to win. I had something to do now. It was much better than clinging to the side of the boat while Zillah took me wherever she wanted. I was part of it, helping *Wayfarer*.

50 Zillah got *Wayfarer* round and started to row as hard as she could, back to shore. The wind whipped her hair over her face, and behind her the cliffs rose up, with waves pounding at their base. I hoped she knew the way back. I hoped it wouldn't be too hard to steer *Wayfarer* into that narrow entrance to the cove. But Zillah must have done it loads of times before, I told myself. It couldn't be as dangerous as it looked. Could it?

55 I kept on bailing. Every few minutes Zillah glanced behind her. We'd come quite a way down the coast, as well as out to sea. I couldn't even see the cove any more. *Zillah must know where it is*, I thought. But she was glancing behind her more and more often now, and pulling harder on the oars. Suddenly she stared straight at me, not smiling, not angry, not hiding anything. Almost like a friend.

60 "We've got into the current," she said.

"What?"

65 "There's a current here, a strong one. It'll take us south-west unless we can get out of it. I'm rowing as hard as I can," she said, "but I can't bring us in. I'm going to change direction, try to cut across the current on the diagonal. I can't do it going straight across. The current's too strong."

70 I didn't really understand. I couldn't feel the muscle of the current pulling against her oars, as she could. But I understood that we were slipping farther and farther from where we should be. We were out in deep water all right.

"It's a bad current," said Zillah. "It'll take us on to the Gurnard Rocks."

75 She didn't say it as if she wanted to scare me. I don't think she *did* want to scare me any more. She wanted my help.

"She'll take in a lot of water when I turn her. You ready to bail hard?"

80 I nodded. "Is there another can?"

"Use your trainer"

I tugged off my left trainer. Trainer in one hand, plastic can in the other. I was ready.

85 "Ready?" said Zillah. "Hold tight. It'll get rough."

It did get rough. As *Wayfarer* battled round to cross the current on the diagonal, the sea hit us again, sideways, drenching, freezing, shovelling heaps of water into the bottom of the boat. I bailed the trainer to

90 the left, the can to the right. Trainer, can. Trainer, can. Trainer, can. I was going to beat that sea. I wasn't
going to let it get me. The sea thought it was going to win but it wasn't. Zillah and I were winning. Zillah was
grunting with effort like a tennis player on TV, and *Wayfarer* was struggling forward, crossing the current. I
could feel it now, the fight between Zillah and the current which wanted to sweep us down the coast and on to
95 of the sea. *Don't think you're going to win, because you're not.* Trainer, can, trainer, can, trainer...

"It's OK," said Zillah. "You can stop now."

100 I looked down at my feet. There was hardly any water in the boat. I looked up. The cliffs were closer. Zillah
was leaning back, resting on her oars. She was shaking with the effort.

"We're out of the current," Zillah said. "I'm going to bring her in a bit more, and then we can start making our
way up the coast."

105 I patted *Wayfarer's* side. She'd done her best for us. She hadn't let the sea turn her over, or swamp her. She'd
fought her way out of the current. She hadn't let the sea get us.

"She's a good old boat," said Zillah, and she dug the oars into the water again, and began to row us home.

Questions

1. Look at the first two paragraphs. **Find and copy:**

a) **Two verbs** that show the movement of the **waves**.

- _____
- _____

b) **Two verbs** that show the movement of the **boat**.

- _____
- _____

2. *The water landed with an icy smack on my knees*

Why is *smack* a good way of describing the sensation of the wave?

3. Look at the second paragraph.

How do you know that Katie was not used to boats?

4. *I was angry. Angry with Zillah, and the games she was playing.* (line 24).

Why was Katie angry? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

5. *She lived here. She was supposed to know all about boats ...* (line 25)

What is this section of the text? Tick **one**.

Katie's thoughts

Zillah's thoughts

Katie speaking

Zillah speaking

6. Look at page 2. How do Katie's feelings change when she starts to bail?

7. *But Zillah must have done it loads of times before, I told myself. It couldn't be as dangerous as it looked. Could it?* (lines 53, 54). Explain what this tells you about Katie's feelings.

8. *the muscle of the current* (line 69). Explain why this is an effective phrase.

9. Look at the paragraph beginning: *It did get rough.* (line 88)

In what ways does the author make the sea seem human? Give **two** ways.

13. In *Danger at Sea* the writer uses italics to emphasise certain parts of the story. Draw lines to match each word or phrase with the reason italics is used.

<i>Wayfarer</i> •
<i>We'll take the boat out for a bit</i> •
<i>Bail</i> •
<i>Zillah must know where it is</i> •

• to indicate shouting
• to indicate a name
• to indicate what someone has said
• to indicate inner thoughts

Longer writing task:

Support the Lifeboats

You should spend about 45 minutes on this task.

The lifeboats in the UK, which go to sea to rescue people in danger, are run by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). Here are some facts about the RNLI.

- The RNLI is a charity and gets all its money from voluntary donations.
- There are over 4,600 lifeboat crew members, and all of them are volunteers who do not get paid for their work.
- There are 331 lifeboats at lifeboat stations around the coast.
- In a single year, lifeboats rescued 7,897 people at sea.
- A new lifeboat costs between £6,000 and £1.3 million.

Imagine that your class is going to support a charity. This means that you will take a special interest in the work of the charity and hold a series of events to collect money for it.

Your task:

Write a letter to persuade your headteacher to let you support the RNLI as the selected charity.

