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Before Reading

1 Think of your house. Imagine you are walking through it, describe the rooms and the feeling you get from each individual room.

 **2** Look at these scenes from the story. Discuss with a partner.



- a) Describe the scenes.
 - b) What is the atmosphere like in each one?
 - c) Who do you think lives there?
- 3** Now write a short description of each one. Imagine you live there. Describe your home.

- 4 What is the best party you have ever been to? What made it so good? What did you do there? Who went to the party?
- 5 Look at the following list of parties. With a partner discuss what you expect to happen at each one. How are they different from each other? What would you wear to each one?
 - a) Your younger brother/sister's birthday party
 - b) Your best friend's birthday party
 - c) A dinner party
 - d) A tea party
 - e) A garden party
 - f) A fancy dress party
 - g) A theme party
- 6 Choose one of the events above. Plan it. Think of times, food, entertainment and dress code.
- 7 Now design an invitation card for the party.



3 The weather was ideal. There could not have been a more perfect day for a garden party. Windless •, warm, the sky without a cloud. And the blue was thinly covered with a haze • of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, cutting the lawns • and sweeping • them, until the grass seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally • hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down • as though they had been visited by angels.

Breakfast was not over before the men came to put up the big tent.

“Where do you want the marquee • put, mother?”

“My dear child, it’s no use asking me. I’m determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest.”

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and sat drinking her coffee with a green towel round her head, and a dark wet curl stuck onto each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, came down in a silk petticoat • and a kimono jacket.

“You’ll have to go, Laura; you’re the artistic one.”

Off Laura went, still holding her piece of bread and butter. It’s so delicious to have an excuse for eating outside and, besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

THINK

Try to imagine the garden.

Think of a place outdoors that you like. Describe it.



Glossary

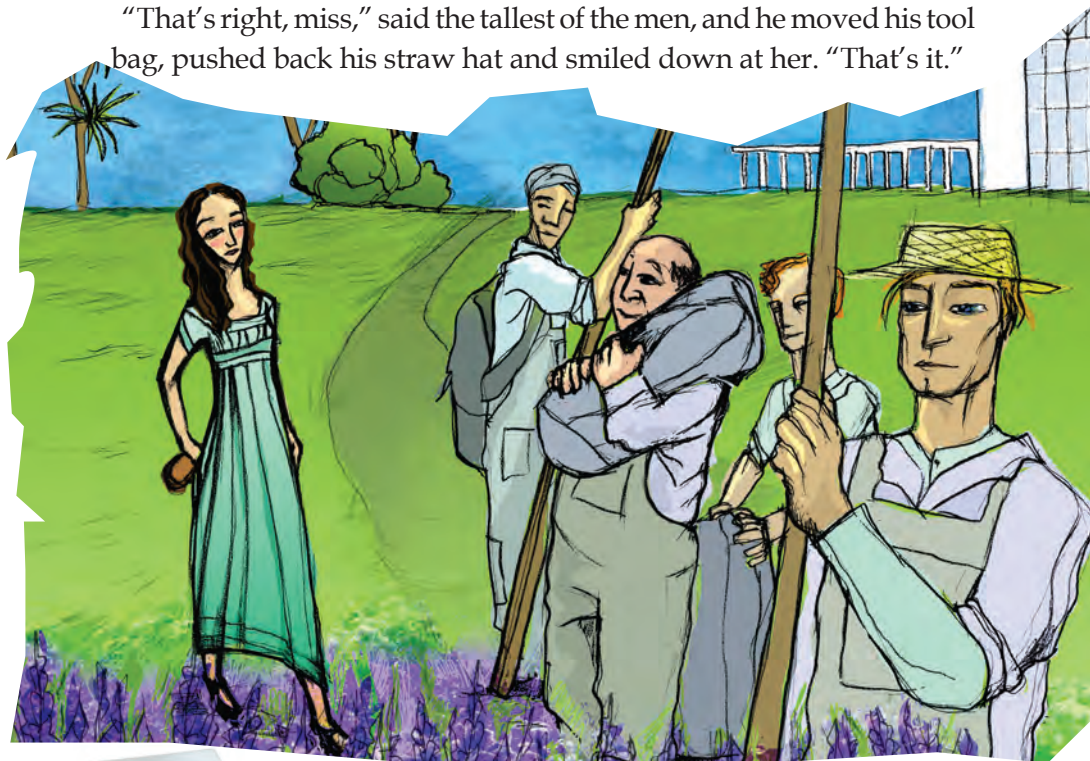
- **bowed down:** bent over
- **haze:** light fog when it is hot
- **lawns:** areas of short grass
- **literally:** really; exactly that
- **marquee:** big tent used for parties, etc.
- **petticoat:** light skirt women wear under a skirt or dress
- **sweeping:** brushing
- **windless:** without any wind

Four men wearing shirts stood grouped together • on the garden path. They carried poles covered with rolls of canvas and they had big tool bags on their backs. They looked impressive •. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread and butter, but there was nowhere to put it and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed • and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted • as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But it sounded so awful that she was ashamed, and hesitated, like a little girl,

"Oh - erm - have you come - is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, and he moved his tool bag, pushed back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's it."



Glossary

- **blushed:** went red from embarrassment
- **grouped together:** standing in a group
- **impressive:** important; that you want to admire
- **short-sighted:** when you cannot see things that are far away

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had – small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. “Cheer up, we won’t bite,” their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn’t mention the morning; she must be business-like.

“Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?”

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn’t hold the bread and butter. They turned and stared • in that direction. A little fat man pushed his lower lip out and the tall one frowned •.

“I don’t like it,” he said. “You wouldn’t notice it. You see, with a thing like a marquee” – and he turned to Laura in his easy way – “you want to put it somewhere where it will hit you in the eye •, if you understand what I mean.”

“A corner of the tennis court,” she suggested. “But the band’s going to be in one corner.”

“H’m, going to have a band, are you?” said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a tired look as his eyes scanned • the tennis court. What was he thinking?

“Only a small band,” said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn’t mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall man interrupted.

“Look here, miss, that’s a fine place. Against those trees. Over there. That’ll do fine.”

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- **frowned:** made a displeased or unhappy expression
 - **it will hit ...eye:** you will notice it

- **scanned:** looked carefully and quickly
- **stared:** looked in a fixed way

Against the karakas • . Then the karaka trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming • leaves, and their clusters • of yellow fruit. They were like the trees you imagined growing on a desert island – proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruit to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a big tent? They must. Already the men had shouldered • their poles and were going there. Only the tall man was left. He bent down and pinched • some lavender leaves, put his thumb and finger to his nose and sniffed • the scent. When Laura saw him do that she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for small things like that – caring for the smell of lavender. How many of the men that she knew would have done such a thing?

Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought.

