

## C1 Mark Scheme - *The Old Ladies' Resistance Club*

### Read Lines 1-9

0.1 List five things you learn about Madame Ruth [5]

Award **one mark** for each point and/or inference identified by the candidate, **to a maximum of five**:

- Madame Ruth is the 'baker's wife'
- She is 'pretty voiced'
- She usually or 'mostly' smells of yeast
- She sometimes smells of other things – 'face powder' or 'sliced apples'
- She has a husband
- She takes his car
- She has a friend called Madame Gillian
- She and Madame Gillian rearrange the town's road signs
- She finds this funny
- She is drunk
- She's a member of the Old Ladies' Resistance Club.

No mark should be awarded for unabridged quotation of whole sentences.

### Read lines 10-24

0.2 What impression do you get of the ladies of The Saint Malo Old Ladies' Resistance Club? [5]

Some points that candidates may explore:

- They are in some cases 'forced' to work for the Germans – e.g. Madame Florence
- They spy and/or pass on useful information about the Germans, e.g. the allergy to roses
- They commit acts of sabotage on the German occupiers, e.g. Madame Celeste sending roses in the guise of a gift – acting together
- The writer lists these acts of sabotage: the shipment of cotton redirected, the train timetable misprinted, important letters burned, dog muck left on steps – disrupting the German soldiers' lives in ways that might be inconsequential or more damaging
- The women are 'gleeful' about the impact of their actions as they gather in the baker's kitchen
- They celebrate their success with sherry, cider and wine – there's a sense of camaraderie, achievement and fun
- They are nonetheless careful – a 'sentry' is posted when they meet
- Madame Florence is proud of her achievements and 'boasts' of them
- Madame Gillian ropes in children and dogs – involving more of the community (innocents who might be blamed? Could be perceived as irresponsible)
- They 'cackle, thrilled' suggesting delight in their mischief, with possible connotations of witchcraft
- Elderly Madame Blanche wishes to join in – they are enthusiastic to be part of the mission to sabotage
- The group is physically varied (stooped, small Mme Florence, strapping and dowdy Mme Gillian and Ancient Mme Blanche) but are joined in aim – the writer creates a sense of group ethos and support

**Read lines 25-48**

0.3 How does the writer present the character of Madame Blanche in these lines? [10]

Some points that candidates may explore:

- She is keen to do 'something, anything' – she wants to contribute to the resistance movement
- She's lived her whole life in St Malo and has seen the town 'destroyed' in two wars
- She's faced 'terrible losses' of 'a husband and tall, healthy, smiling sons' in these wars
- These losses have 'eaten away at her' health and she is now stooped and frail – suggesting the physical pain and long-term damage of grief
- Though her heart is kind, her eyes 'rarely crinkle into laughter', emphasising the heart-breaking impact on a likeable character of living with such loss/grief
- She is known for watching the horizon (for the return of her husband or sons with a wave, raised hand of smile) and hopes to contradict the 'missing in action' verdict – possibly suggests denial or hopefulness
- Her heart is 'bruised' and she secretly longs for their return – a pitiful character who incites sympathy
- The other women, also bearing their own bruises, cannot 'bear to disillusion her' suggesting they feel she needs protection from the truth, or possibly that the conversation might be too much for her to bear
- The other women feel her suffering means that she has 'earned the right' to contribute to the resistance movement
- She is given a physically easy but vitally important and clever role in spreading anti-German sentiments
- The other women flatter her 'beautiful handwriting' suggesting they want her to feel valued and respect her
- She is grateful to be able to contribute, as shown in her physical response to the task - she squeezes Madame Ruth's hand, wheezes and blinks glossy eyes – perhaps she is overwhelmed, but this also reinforces the impression of a frail and elderly woman of limited physical strength.

**Read lines 49 - 66**

0.4 What are the writer's thoughts and feelings about the impact of the German Occupation on the people of Saint Malo? [10]

Some points that candidates may explore:

- The section begins with some of the difficulties posed by the German Occupation – the town's 'light and heat' stolen when the Germans reroute a power cable
- The reaction of the citizens (in the Old Ladies' Resistance Club) is that they scheme, gabble and are keen to disrupt the lives of the German occupiers
- The citizens consider ways of disrupting – e.g. swapping the Germans' 'succulent beef' for the 'rancid scraps' that the people of St Malo are left with – the contrast suggests the occupiers take the best for themselves
- 'poor women' are 'forced' to work for the Germans – the repetition of the emotive verb suggests they are victims/helpless
- The jobs are listed and in some cases demeaning, e.g. scrubbing clean the thermal underwear of the occupiers, creating sympathy for the workers
- The members of the Resistance Club expect that these degradations will induce these workers to be 'sympathetic' to their cause

- The frustration and anger at 'restrictions' seems to fuel the atmosphere amongst the ladies, which is 'buzzing with the possibility'
- The description of the citizens' previously 'peaceful, productive lives' is contrasted with 'wintery months' of 'oppression, hardship and loss...forced smiles and bitter resentment' to show how their lives have changed under the occupation
- Seasonal/weather imagery is used in 'wintery' and 'thaw', along with the repetition of 'possibility' to suggest a renewed hopefulness and determination in the ladies that they can disrupt the occupation
- The writer lists further losses: they are 'forced to endure... curfews, monitoring, the sacrifice of time, freedom, health and happiness'
- This affects the citizens by making them 'grit their teeth' suggesting determination to make the occupier's lives difficult
- The section ends with the contrasting description of 'smiling, healthy German boys' to reinforce how little the occupiers seem to be suffering in comparison with the French inhabitants of St Malo
- Possible irony that these occupiers are described as 'boys' and yet the innocence of childhood seems horribly absent in their treatment of locals

### Consider the whole passage

0.5 'In this extract the writer encourages the reader to admire the members of The Saint Malo Old Ladies' Resistance Club.' How far do you agree with this viewpoint? [10]

Some points that candidates may explore:

- **At the beginning of the passage** the resistance club members are introduced as 'normal' and motherly -Madame Ruth
- They seem friendly, brave and share a common cause Madame Gillian and Madame Ruth are spirited and comical in their attempts at sabotage – their actions would mostly cause frustration and inconvenience rather than loss of life
- The women work together to collude in acts of resistance, e.g. Madame Florence and Madame Celeste/roses
- They are emphatic and determined – 'great fistfuls' of roses end up at the garrison
- They take risks and are sneaky (or clever!)– the post mistress sliding important letters into her underwear and destroying them at home
- They are friendly and supportive of each other, reporting back gleefully and celebrating their achievements together, involving each member by using their individual talents, e.g. Mme Blanche
- **In the middle of the passage**, they are more supportive of the suffering endured by their members – the description is primarily focused on Madame Blanche and her immense 'terrible' losses are portrayed sympathetically, yet she is keen to contribute – could this be a coping mechanism or act of revenge? Or a need to take action to assuage her own suffering? Readers likely to empathise with her and feel supportive of the women's actions
- It is clear the other women have suffered too – they carry their own losses 'numbly' in hearts bruised by war, suggesting they have suffered in ways similar to Madame Blanche and empathise with her, making them seem kind and willing to sacrifice their own needs to support a vulnerable member
- **At the end of the passage**, the writer reiterates the deprivations and suffering endured by the citizens of St Malo and shows how the members of The Old Ladies' Resistance Club are motivated and invigorated by these deprivations to take more action against the German Occupiers – various examples given which might cause readers to admire their ingenuity, the scope of their investigations and their influence (e.g. the delivery boy, the women forced to work at the chateau) and their determination to sabotage the occupiers
- Madame Blanche's response at the very end suggests a tough, resilient spirit that has been 'bruised' but not beaten by the occupation

- The fact that the narrator ponders whether she speaks 'to herself? To her lost boys?' reminds us of her ongoing suffering and deepens our sympathy for her, and possibly our admiration of her fortitude.