

1. Look at the opening paragraph where the setting is described, are there any clues in the language that is used as to what will happen to Billy?

*The initial paragraph evokes a feeling of discomfort through its portrayal of cold, darkness, and wind. These atmospheric elements hint at unease and isolation, indicating that Billy is entering a situation that may not be as secure as it seems. His brisk movements contrast sharply with the unsettling surroundings, hinting at the presence of something malevolent ahead, although he remains oblivious to this.*

2. Look at this quote, “There was a baby-grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs; and in one corner he spotted a large parrot in a cage. Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself” (Dahl 1). Billy thinks the animals in the window are a good sign, what is ironic about this?

*Billy thinks the animals, like the parrot and the dog, mean the place is friendly and safe. The irony is that these animals are not alive; they are stuffed. What he sees as a good sign is actually a warning that something is wrong. The stuffed animals show that the landlady might not be as nice as she seems.*

3. Billy recognizes the two schoolboys' names from the newspaper. What do you think the newspaper article was about?

*Billy recalls a newspaper article likely detailing the mysterious disappearances of Christopher Mulholland and Gregory Temple, two former guests whose names he recognizes. Considering the unsettling hints in the narrative, the article probably addressed their strange vanishing, implying that they, much like Billy, stayed at the landlady's bed-and-breakfast and were never seen again.*

4. Look at this quote, “He stood by the piano, watching her as she fussed about with the cups and saucers. He noticed that she had small, white, quickly moving hands, and red fingernails” (Dahl 4). How is this a clue about what the landlady does?

*The portrayal of the landlady's “small, white, quickly moving hands” paired with “red fingernails” suggests her dark undertakings. Her swift, precise movements imply proficiency in meticulous tasks like taxidermy, while the red fingernails evoke connotations of blood or peril. These details foreshadow her practice of preserving not only animals but also her human visitors.*

5. Why does the landlady smell like pickled walnuts, new leather and a hospital corridor?

*The landlady's scent, characterized by pickled walnuts, new leather, and a hospital corridor, establishes a disquieting atmosphere. The pickled walnuts imply preservation, the new leather hints at skin handling, and the hospital smell evokes notions of sterility, illness, and mortality. These odors subtly forewarn of her grim habit of preserving her guests, alluding to the unnatural aspects of her work and persona*