By John Meade Falkner

Moonfleet

This text features two separate extracts from the novel Moonfleet, an adventure story about a group of smugglers, set in the eighteenth century on the south coast of England.

The village of Moonfleet lies half a mile from the sea on the right or west bank of the Fleet stream. This rivulet, which is so narrow as it passes the houses that I have known a good jumper clear it without a pole, broadens out into salt marshes below the village, and loses itself at last in a lake of brackish water. The lake is good for nothing except sea-fowl, herons, and oysters, and forms such a place as they call in the Indies a lagoon; being shut off from the open Channel by a monstrous great beach or dike of pebbles, of which I shall speak more hereafter. When I was a child I thought that this place was called Moonfleet, because on a still night, whether in summer, or in winter frosts, the Moon shone very brightly on the lagoon; but learned afterwards that 'twas but short for 'Mohune-fleet', from the Mohunes, a great family who were once lords of all these parts.

My name is John Trenchard, and I was fifteen years of age when this story begins. My father and mother had both been dead for years, and I boarded with my aunt, Miss Arnold, who was kind to me in her own fashion, but too strict and precise ever to make me love her.

'The Why Not?' was not the real name of the inn; it was properly the Mohune Arms. The Mohunes had once owned, as I have said, the whole of the village; but their fortunes fell, and with them fell the fortunes of Moonfleet. The ruins of their mansion showed grey on the hillside above the village; their almshouses stood half-way down the street, with the quadrangle deserted and overgrown; the Mohune image and superscription was on everything from the church to the inn, and everything that bore it was stamped also with the superscription of decay. And here it is necessary that I say a few words as to this family badge; for, as you will see, I was to bear it all my life, and shall carry its impress with me to the grave. The Mohune shield was plain white or silver, and bore nothing upon it except a great black 'Y. I call it a 'Y', though the Reverend Mr. Glennie once explained to me that it was not a 'Y' at all, but what heralds call a *cross-pall.*

Cross-pall or no *cross-pall*, it looked for all the world like a black 'Y', with a broad arm ending in each of the top corners of the shield, and the tail coming down into the bottom. You might see that cognizance carved on the manor, and on the stonework and woodwork of the church, and on a score of houses in the village, and it hung on the signboard over the door of the inn. Everyone knew the Mohune 'Y' for miles around, and a former landlord having called the inn the *'Why Not?'* in jest, the name had stuck to it ever since.

More than once on winter evenings, when men were drinking in the *'Why Not?'*, I had stood outside, and listened to them singing 'Ducky-stones', or 'Kegs bobbing One, Two, Three', or some of the other tunes that sailors sing in the west. Such songs had neither beginning nor ending, and very little sense to catch hold of in the middle. One man would crone the air, and the others would crone a solemn chorus, but there was little hard drinking, for Elzevir Block never got drunk himself, and did not like his guests to get drunk either. On singing nights the room grew hot, and the steam stood so thick on the glass inside that one could not see in; but at other times, when there was no company, I have peeped through the red curtains and watched Elzevir Block and Ratsey playing backgammon at the trestle-table by the fire. It was on the trestle-table that Block had afterwards laid out his son's dead body, and some said they had looked through the window at night and seen the father trying to wash the blood-matting out of the boy's yellow hair, and heard him groaning and talking to the lifeless clay as if it could understand. Anyhow, there had been little drinking in the inn since that time, for Block grew more and more silent and morose. He had never courted customers, and now he scowled on any that came, so that men looked on the *'Why Not?'* as a blighted spot, and went to drink at the Three Choughs at Ringstave.

My heart was in my mouth when Ratsey lifted the latch and led me into the inn parlour. It was a low sanded room with no light except a fire of seawood on the hearth, burning clear and lambent with blue salt flames. There were tables at each end of the room, and wooden-seated chairs round the walls, and at the trestle table by the chimney sat Elzevir Block smoking a long pipe and looking at the fire. He was a man of fifty, with a shock of grizzled hair, a broad but not unkindly face of regular features, bushy eyebrows, and the finest forehead that I ever saw. His frame was thick-set, and still immensely strong; indeed, the countryside was full of tales of his strange prowess or endurance. Blocks had been landlords at the *'Why Not?'* father and son for years, but Elzevir's mother came from the Low Countries, and that was how he got his outland name and could speak Dutch. Few men knew much of him, and folks often wondered how it was he kept the *'Why Not?'* on so little custom as went that way. Yet he never seemed to lack for money; and if people loved to tell stories of his strength, they would speak also of widows helped, and sick comforted with unknown gifts, and hint that some of them came from Elzevir Block for all he was so grim and silent.

He turned round and got up as we came in, and my fears led me to think that his face darkened when he saw me.

Questions 24 to 35 are about '*Moonfleet*'

Look at the first extract.

24. **Find** and **copy** a word which means a shallow stretch of water, shut off from the sea.

_____

25. Explain why the village was really named Moonfleet and why the character thought it had been given the name, when he was a child.

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. What had happened to John Trenchard's mother and father?

_____

27. Who did John live with?

_____

Look at the second extract.

28. What was the actual name of the pub and the name it was more commonly known by in the story? Explain each, giving evidence from the text to support your answer.

29. What evidence is there to suggest that the Mohune family were at one time very wealthy and well-regarded in the village? Include evidence from both extracts to support your answer.

Look at the paragraph beginning *'My heart was in my mouth…'*

30. How do you think the character felt when using the phrase, *'My heart was in my mouth…'*?

31. How old was Elzevir Block?

_____

32. Which of these languages does the extract say Elzevir could speak? Tick **one**.

German	☐	**Mohune**	☐
Dutch	☐	**French**	☐

Look at the lines *'…if people loved to tell stories of his strength, they would speak also of widows helped, and sick comforted with unknown gifts, and hint that some of them came from Elzevir Block'*

33. Identify two types of people helped with acts of kindness by Elzevir Block?

_____

34. In the second extract, the pub is described as having very few customers.
Find and **copy** evidence from more than one different paragraph to support this.

1. _____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

35. At the end of the extract, John Trenchard and Ratsey have just entered the pub. Do you think Elzevir Block would be pleased to see them? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Yes ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes and No** ☐

Throwing a Tree

The two executioners stalk along over the knolls,
Bearing two axes with heavy heads shining and wide,
And a long limp two-handled saw toothed for cutting great boles,
And so they approach the proud tree that bears the death-mark on its side.

Jackets doffed they swing axes and chop away just above ground,
And the chips fly about and lie white on the moss and fallen leaves;
Till a broad deep gash in the bark is hewn all the way round,
And one of them tries to hook upward a rope, which at last he achieves.

The saw then begins, till the top of the tall giant shivers:
The shivers are seen to grow greater with each cut than before:
They edge out the saw, tug the rope; but the tree only quivers,
And kneeling and sawing again, they step back to try pulling once more.

Then, lastly, the living mast sways, further sways: with a shout
Job and Ike rush aside. Readied the end of its long staying powers
The tree crashes downward: it shakes all its neighbours throughout,
And two hundred years' steady growth has been ended in less than two hours.

-Thomas Hardy

Questions 13 to 25 are about '*Throwing a Tree*'

13. What does the word 'stalk' mean and what does it suggest about the tree fellers?

14. Circle the word that is closest in meaning to 'doffed'.

chopped **tied** **removed** **swing**

15. What evidence is there in the poem that chopping the tree is a difficult task?

16. Order these events from the poem. The first one has been done for you.

An axe is used to chop a broad gash all around the trunk.	
The saw is used along with the rope until the tree comes down.	
The tree is marked in advance ready for cutting.	**1**
A rope is hooked upward.	

17. Write the correct tools to match the descriptions in this table.

Tool	Description
	Heavy head shining and wide
	Long limp two-handled

18. How long had the tree been growing for?

19. How does the poet try to make the reader feel sorry for the tree? Refer to the text to support your answer.

20. What are the names given to the tree fellers?

21. Which of these sentences best summarises the poet's feelings about the tree being chopped down? Tick **one**.

The poet is celebrating and happy about the event.	☐
The poet is glad the tree was chopped down because it was too old.	☐
The poet seems sorrowful and disappointed that it has happened.	☐
The poet doesn't really mind whether the tree is cut down or not.	☐

22. Which of these words or phrases are used to describe the tree? Tick **three**.

Living mast	☐	**Heavy head**	☐
Long and limp	☐	**Proud**	☐
Broad and deep	☐	**Tall giant**	☐

23. What is meant by the phrase 'it shakes all its neighbours'?

24. How long did the whole process take to chop down the tree?

Look at the line: 'And so they approach the proud tree that bears the death-mark'.

25. Explain the meaning of the words 'bears' and 'death-mark' in this sentence.

Word	Meaning
bears	
death-mark	