

# THE LANDLADY

You are going to read an adapted version of a short story by Roald Dahl. Then do the two tasks.



**Task one.** Match the vocabulary terms with the definitions.

1. landlady _____	a. someone who works at a train station carrying bags.
2. porter _____	b. a person who rents out rooms or apartments in their home
3. bed and breakfast _____	c. an animal preserved and filled with material after it dies.
4. stuffed animal _____	d. a place where you can stay the night and have breakfast in the morning.
5. guest book _____	e. a book where visitors write their names and dates of stay

**Task Two.** Read the story and do the multiple-choice questions.

It was a cold evening when Billy Weaver arrived in Bath. He was seventeen, dressed smartly, and full of confidence. His boss had sent him from London to start a new job, and Billy wanted to make a good impression. At the station, he asked a porter to recommend a cheap hotel. "Try The Bell and Dragon," the man said. Billy thanked him and walked off through the empty streets.

The air was freezing and the wind cut his face. Then he noticed a small house with a bright sign in the window: BED AND BREAKFAST. There was something welcoming about it, so he stopped. The curtains were drawn, a fire glowed inside, and a little dachshund lay on the carpet. It looked far more comfortable than the dark street. Before he knew it, his finger pressed the doorbell.

Almost at once, a woman opened the door. She was about forty-five, with a round, pink face and gentle blue eyes. "Do come in," she said warmly. Billy hesitated. He had expected to look at the rooms first or ask about the price, but she had already taken his coat and was leading him toward the sitting room.

"It's so nice to have someone," she said. "There haven't been any visitors for nearly three years."

"That's strange," Billy said. He noticed the air smelled faintly of pickled walnuts and something else — a smell he couldn't identify.

The sitting room was pleasant: flowers, photographs, and the small dog sleeping by the fire. "You'll take the top floor," the woman said. "It's only five and sixpence a night, including breakfast." That sounded perfect. Billy signed the guest book while she fetched the tea. Two names caught his eye: Christopher Mulholland and Gregory Temple. Both sounded familiar. Where had he heard them before? He tried to remember, but the landlady's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"They were charming boys, just like you," she said. "Mr. Temple loved his tea. Mr. Mulholland was a great one for cricket." She smiled dreamily. "They're still here with me. You'll meet them later, perhaps."

Billy looked up quickly. "Still here? Do you mean they left their luggage?"

"Oh no, dear. They never left." She gave a soft laugh and poured more tea. Billy sat back, studying her. Her hands were pale and delicate. The tea tasted slightly bitter, but he didn't want to be rude. He asked about the little dog, now sitting stiffly by the fire. "Is he very old?"

"Very," she said. "And so well-behaved. I stuffed him myself when he died." She said **it** calmly, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world.

Billy nearly choked on his tea. "You — you did?"

"Oh yes. I stuff all my little pets when they pass away. Would you like some more sugar?"

He shook his head. His eyes moved to a parrot in a glass case on the other side of the room. Its feathers looked real — too real. The landlady smiled again, her blue eyes watching him closely. "Such pretty boys," she said softly. "I do like to keep them here." Billy felt suddenly sleepy. The fire was warm, and his cup was half empty. The landlady patted his arm gently. "You're such a nice young man," she whispered. "I knew the moment I saw you that you were exactly right."

"Haven't there been any other guests in all this time?" Billy said, finding it difficult to speak.

Outside, the wind blew down the quiet street, but inside the house everything was still.

"No, dear." said the landlady. Her smile seemed wicked. "Only you."

Choose the correct answer.

1. Why did Billy go to Bath?

- A. To visit friends.
- B. To start a new job.
- C. To study at the university.
- D. To go on holiday.

2. What made Billy decide to stop at the bed and breakfast?

- A. The porter told him it was a good place.
- B. He saw other guests going inside.
- C. The house looked warm and inviting.
- D. The woman called him from the door.

3. When Billy arrived, the landlady seemed —

- A. nervous and unfriendly.
- B. tired and quiet.
- C. polite but distracted.
- D. cheerful and welcoming.

4. What does "They never left" (paragraph 10) suggest?

- A. The guests decided to live there.
- B. The landlady doesn't allow guests to leave.
- C. The guests died in the house.
- D. The landlady lost their luggage.



5. What does the word "it" in the sentence on page 2 in bold and in red.

- A. The dog.
- B. The action of stuffing the dog.
- C. The question Billy asked.
- D. The tea.

6. What is implied about the two names in the guest book?

- A. They were famous men Billy once met.
- B. They were old guests who disappeared.
- C. They were relatives of the landlady.
- D. They were the owners of the house.

7. The word "faintly" in the sentence "He noticed the air smelled faintly of pickled walnuts..." means —

- A. strongly.
- B. clearly.
- C. slightly.
- D. badly.

8. At the end of the story, Billy probably —

- A. fell asleep because of the tea.
- B. decided to leave the house.
- C. realized he was safe.
- D. called his boss in London.

