



Name: _____

Date: _____

Total marks: _____/14

The Text: The Two Grannies by Laurie Lee 

Read the extract below carefully before answering the questions.

Our house was seventeenth-century Cotswold, and was handsome as they go. It was built of stone, had hand-carved windows, golden surfaces, moss-flaked tiles, and walls so thick they kept a damp chill inside them whatever the season or the weather. Its attics and passages were full of walled-up doors which our fingers longed to open, doors that led to certain echoing chambers now sealed off from us forever.

The place had once been a small country manor, and later a public house, but it had decayed even further by the time we got to it, and it was now three poor cottages in one. The house was shaped like a T, and we lived in the down-stroke. The top-stroke was divided separately among two old ladies, one's portion lying above the other's.

Granny Trill and Granny Wallon were rival ancients and lived on each other's nerves, and their perpetual enmity was like mice in the walls and absorbed much of my early days. With their sickle-bent bodies, pale pink eyes, and wild wisps of hedgerow hair, they were also much alike. In all their time as such close neighbours they never exchanged a word. They communicated instead by means of boots and brooms, jumping on floors and knocking on ceilings. They referred to each other as 'Er-Down-Under' and 'Er-Up-Atop', the Varmint, for each to the other was an airy nothing, a local habitation not fit to be named.

'Er-Down-Under', who lived on our level, was perhaps the smaller of the two, a tiny white shrew who came nibbling through her garden, who clawed squeaking with gossip at our kitchen window, or sat sucking bread in the sun; always mysterious and self-contained, and feather-soft in her movements. She had two names, which she changed at will according to the mood of her day. Granny Wallon was her best and stemmed, we were told, from some distinguished alliance of the past. Behind this crisp and trotting body were



certainly rumours of noble blood. But she never spoke of them herself. She was known to have raised a score of children. And she was known to be very poor. She lived on cabbage, bread and potatoes. Whatever the small indulgences with which Granny Wallon warmed up her old life, her neighbour, Granny Trill, had none of them.

For 'Er-Up-Atop' was as frugal as a sparrow and as simple in her ways as a grub. She could sit in her chair for hours without moving, a veil of blackness over her eyes, a suspension like frost on her brittle limbs, with little to show that she lived at all save the gentle motion of her jaws. One of the first things I noticed about old Granny Trill was that she always seemed to be chewing, sliding her folded gums together in a daylong ruminative cud... In fact she never ate bread at all, or butter, or meat, or vegetables; she lived entirely on tea and biscuits, and on porridge sent up by the Squire.

Granny Trill had an original sense of time which seemed to obey some vestigial pattern. She breakfasted, for instance, at four in the morning, had dinner at ten, took tea at two-thirty, and was back in her bed at five. This regime never varied, either winter or summer, and belonged very likely to her childhood days when she lived in the woods with her father.

...Suddenly the old lady skipped out of her seat and began to leap up and down on the floor. "'Er down there! I got more than 'er! 'Er's bald as a tater root! Wicked old lump! I'll see 'er gone! 'Er's failing, you mark my words!"

Visualizing the Setting 🏠 (3 marks)

The narrator describes the house vividly in the first two paragraphs. It is important to visualize the setting to understand the physical relationship between the narrator and the two grannies.

Key Details:

- Seventeenth-century Cotswold stone
- Shaped like a 'T'
- Divided into three cottages
- The narrator lives in the 'down-stroke'
- The grannies live in the 'top-stroke' (one above the other)





Word bank: manor, public, T, thick, damp

1. The walls of the house were so _____ they kept a _____ chill inside.
2. Before becoming three cottages, the building had been a country _____ and later a _____ house.
3. The house was shaped like a letter _____.

Vocabulary Retrieval 🔍 (5 marks)

Match the words from the text to their correct definitions. This will help you answer the analysis questions later.

Word bank: Enmity, Indulgences, Frugal, Ruminative, Ancients

Definition	Word
1. The state of being actively opposed or hostile to someone.	
2. Simple, plain, and costing very little; careful with money/food.	
3. Very old people.	
4. Things that are allowed as a special treat or pleasure.	
5. Deeply or seriously thoughtful (or chewing cud like a cow).	



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Character Analysis: Wallon vs. Trill 🧓 (6 marks)



The two grannies are described as "rival ancients" who are similar yet different. Use the table below to sort the details about each character found in the text.

Feature	Granny Wallon (Er-Down-Under)	Granny Trill (Er-Up-Atop)
Description of movement/behaviour		
Diet (What they eat)		
Relationship to the narrator/neighbours		