Extract from Evil Star

There was something wrong about the house in Eastfield Terrace. Something unpleasant. All the houses in the street were more or less identical: redbrick, Victorian, with two bedrooms on the first floor and a bay window on either the left or the right of the front door.

Some had satellite dishes. Some had window boxes filled with brightly coloured flowers. But looking down from the top of the hill at the terrace curving round St Patrick’s church on its way to the Esso garage and All-Nite store, one house stood out immediately. Number twenty-seven no longer belonged there. It was as if it had caught some sort of disease and needed to be taken away.

The front garden was full of junk, and as usual the wheelie bin beside the gate was overflowing, surrounded by black garbage bags that the owners had been unable to stuff inside. This wasn’t uncommon in Eastfield Terrace. Nor was it particularly strange that the curtains were permanently drawn across the front windows and, as far as anyone could tell, the lights were never turned on. But the house smelled. For weeks now there had been a rotten, sewagey smell that had seemed at first to be coming from a blocked pipe but that had rapidly got worse until people had begun to cross the street to avoid it. And whatever was causing it seemed to be affecting the entire place. The grass on the front lawn was beginning to die. The flowers had wilted and then been choked up by weeds. The colour seemed to be draining out of the very bricks.

The neighbours had tried to complain. They had knocked on the front door, but nobody had come. They had telephoned, but nobody had answered. Finally, they had called the borough council at the Ipswich Civic Centre but of course it would be weeks before any action was taken. The house wasn’t empty. That much they knew. They had occasionally seen the owner, Gwenda Davis, pacing back and forth behind the net curtains. Once – more than a week ago – she had been seen scurrying home from the shops. And there was one other piece of evidence that there was still life at number twenty-seven: every evening the television was turned on. Gwenda Davis was well known in the street.

Highlight the following words in the passage above:

Lawn telephoned rotten curtains

Satellite disease occasionally rapidly

Now answer the questions below:

Literal questions

1. What was the name of the street in the story?

1 mark

1. Who owns the dilapidated house?

1 mark

1. Why did people start to cross the street to avoid number twenty-seven?

1 mark

Inferential questions

1. Do you think the houses on the street are generally well looked after? Why do you think this?

2 marks

1. What do you think the author means when it says ‘it was as if it had caught some sort of disease’?

2 marks

Evaluative questions

1. What do you think the neighbours thought of the owner of the house? Why do you think that?

3 marks

1. Do you think the borough council are effective in sorting out problems? Why do you think this?

3 marks