

Defining a horse

'Girl number twenty,' said Mr Gradgrind, squarely pointing with his square forefinger. 'I don't know that girl. Who is that girl?'

'Sissy Jupe, sir,' explained number twenty, blushing, standing up and curtsying.

'Sissy is not a name,' said Mr Gradgrind. 'Don't call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia.'

'It's father as calls me Sissy, sir,' returned the young girl in a trembling voice, and with another curtsy.

'Then he has no business to do it,' said Mr Gradgrind. 'What is your father?'

'He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, sir.'

Mr Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

'He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and horsebreaker. Give me your definition of a horse.'

(Sissy Jupe was thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

'Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!' said Mr Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. 'Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals! Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours.'

The square finger, moving here and there, lighted suddenly on Bitzer, perhaps because he chanced to sit in the same ray of sunlight which, darting in at one of the bare windows of the intensely white-washed room, irradiated Sissy. For the boys and girls sat on the face of the inclined plane in two compact bodies, divided up the centre by a narrow interval; and Sissy, being at the corner of a row

on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end. But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge that he looked as though if he were cut, he would bleed white.

'Bitzer,' said Thomas Gradgrind. 'Your definition of a horse.'

'Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.' Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

'Now, girl number twenty,' said Mr Gradgrind. 'You know what a horse is.'

She curtsied again, and would have blushed deeper, if she could have blushed deeper than she had blushed all this time. Bitzer, after rapidly blinking at Thomas Gradgrind with both eyes at once, and so catching the light upon his quivering ends of lashes that they looked like the antennae of busy insects, put his knuckles to his freckled forehead, and sat down again.

47. Sissy's conversation with Mr Gradgrind portrays her as being
- (A) timid and polite.
 - (B) scared but outspoken.
 - (C) curious but restrained.
 - (D) naive and uninhibited.
48. 'Mr Gradgrind frowned, and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.'
What was 'the objectionable calling'?
- (A) Sissy's unusual nickname
 - (B) Sissy's father's occupation
 - (C) other students seeking his attention
 - (D) the names given to people who work with horses
49. The phrase 'for the general behoof of all the little pitchers' means that Mr Gradgrind said what he said in order to
- (A) clarify what the other students knew about horses.
 - (B) prepare Sissy for the kind of education all students would receive.
 - (C) ensure the other students helped Sissy to learn more about horses.
 - (D) encourage the other students to sneer at Sissy's lack of knowledge.
50. What effect does the use of colour in the description of Bitzer and Sissy have on readers?
- (A) It highlights the setting to exaggerate the unpleasant character of Mr Gradgrind.
 - (B) It focuses attention on the poor health of children at this time.
 - (C) It makes the physical setting of the story more emphatic.
 - (D) It emphasises the contrast between the two characters.
51. The word 'incisive' describes teeth that are used for
- (A) cutting.
 - (B) grinding.
 - (C) crushing.
 - (D) polishing.
52. What is the overall mood of the text?
- (A) frightening
 - (B) strained
 - (C) suspenseful
 - (D) sentimental

