Đề thi thật 1: The New Zealand writer Margaret Mahy

In a career spanning some fifty years, Margaret Mahy has come to occupy a unique place in New Zealand writing with innovative fiction and original characterisation. In our solidly realist tradition, the linguistic fireworks of Mahy's children's fiction and the explorations of human behaviour at the heart of her supernatural teenage fiction stand gloriously alone. Mahy's clearest heir, I have always thought, is Elizabeth Knox—and maybe the true inheritance there is sheer singularity. Just as there is no one else like Knox in New Zealand writing, Mahy, too, has ventured into imaginative territory unknown to other local writers. So it was with great pleasure that I visited Mahy recently at her Governor's Bay home to talk about her new book. As with all journalists, she is generous to a fault with her time and attention; and, as always—despite her careful consideration of questions and thoughtful answers—I'm reminded she isn't truly comfortable making herself or her life the heart of any conversation.

Certainly, any consideration of the style of Mahy's novels and picture books throws up some irresistible theories. As a writer committed to supporting herself through her art, she has seldom had the time for formal research. Rather, it has been a matter of going out and finding inspiration from her immediate environment: the writing on the side of a bus; a spelling mistake in a note to herself, the similarity between a cat and a fur hat. But despite these sometimes mundane origins, the settings for her stories are delightfully varied, as these books celebrate the dramatic plot twists and unpredictability of adventures on the high seas or in Antarctica, and also in quite unassuming places like the library or even down the back of a chair at home.

Mahy has a lifelong affection for characters who are agents of upheaval and disturbance. Her junior and picture books are peppered with pirates, robbers and lions, though they appear alongside librarians, mothers and children, working against comfortable stereotype. Her fictions often have at their heart a young adult burdened with special powers, such as the ability to cast spells in order to transform their world in supernatural and fantastical ways. Another common feature is that, while the conclusions of her tales are usually predictable, they leave the reader feeling absolutely complete, the moral questions resulting from our hero's powers having been resolved.

Questions 36-40

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

Write the correct letter in boxes 36-40 on your answer sheet.

36 What does the writer say about The Magician of Hoad?

A. It is partly based on true history.

B. It was restructured in the writing process.

C. It is quite different from conventional fantasy.

D. It does not reflect the usual themes in Mahy's work.

37 According to the writer, Bubble Trouble

A. was first illustrated in 1991.

B. is written in plain language.

C. is an old favourite for many families.

D. has not been read aloud by Mahy.

38 The writer's purpose in the fifth paragraph is to

A. show how Mahy's style has changed.

B. criticise Mahy's children's stories.

C. describe how new media have changed reading.

D. illustrate Mahy's popularity with different generations.

39 According to the sixth paragraph, which of the following is true?

A. Readers sometimes do not finish Mahy's books.

B. Mahy actively encourages feedback from readers.

C. Readers are necessary in order to complete a book.

D. Mahy does not realise how important readers are.

40 What is the writer doing in the final paragraph?

A. comparing Mahy's writing to David Hill's

B. giving an example of Mahy's influence

C. explaining why Mahy's language is humorous

D. criticising the way Mahy plays with words

Many of these themes can be found in her new novel, The Magician of Hoad. The book was begun more than 15 years ago and envisioned as an 'entire' fantasy—one set in a fully imagined world with detailed history and complex tribal inter-relationships, a classical hero quest at its heart. The story ballooned at one point to 800 pages and has been through at least two substantial rewrites. Now half its original size, it is a fascinating read—an adventure, a romance, and a gold mine of Mahy literary preoccupations.

The other splendid Mahy publication this year is a re-issue of Bubble Trouble in a newly illustrated edition. This tongue-twister tale first appeared in 1991, was included in 100 New Zealand Poems (1993) and has been recited by Mahy at countless private and public functions. Perhaps more than any other work, Bubble Trouble is the Mahy that New Zealand children and their parents know so well, the rollicking story of a clown who serves up a joyous torrent of word play and unexpected rhyme.

Those connections are four or five deep now. I read The Lion in the Meadow in the School Journal in the late 1960s; my stepdaughter listened to The Boy Who Was Followed Home over and over in the 1970s; my own children sat very still mouthing The Great White Man-Eating Shark in the 80s and 90s; now in the 21st century, my grandchildren have heard Down the Dragon's Tongue, A Summery Saturday Morning and Dashing Dog many times.

Of course, readers are important to any working writer, but Mahy's espousal of the act of reading goes beyond that: a book is not properly finished, she has often said, until it has been read, because a reader brings something important to the book. So, doubtless out of need to build a market—she's not ignorant of her popularity—but also out of genuine care for that other dynamic part of the author-reader relationship, Mahy has, until recently, kept up a punishing schedule of public appearances.

Private conversation with Mahy has always been a wild ride—marvellous, in the true sense of the word, the product of a hungry head and an infinite capacity to be astonished. She races away at one stage to consult an encyclopaedia for L.M. Montgomery's date of death, and speculates about the 'real' Montgomery, creator of the ever-popular Anne of Green Gables. Although I'd come to talk about her new book, I couldn't help but be captivated by her infectious curiosity.

A few years ago, the writer David Hill told a funny story. Though his writing was, he often conceded, very different from Mahy's, he had been affected by her peculiarly alert way of looking at the world, particularly the mad, slippery life of language. Once, Hill said, in a motel room, a sign on a door caught his eye: "This door is alarmed." Mahy would like that, thought Hill. She would enjoy the comedy just below the surface of the formal warning; she would leap immediately to the possibilities for story and language play: "Yes, and this window is concerned, this light fitting is intimidated." His story was a wonderful comment on Mahy's vision.

Đề thi thật 2: The Rise and Fall of the British Textile Industry

Textile production in Britain can be said to have its roots as an industry at the beginning of the 18th century, when Thomas Crotchet and George Sorocold established what is thought to be the first factory built in Britain. It was a textile mill with a waterwheel as its source of power, the latest machinery, and even accommodation for the workers. As well as possibly being the first sweatshop in the modern sense, it was the beginning of the end for traditional textile production.

For hundreds of years the spinning and weaving of cloth had been done manually by men, women and children in their own homes.The yarn would be combed and spun using a spindle, then woven on a hand loom, and what they produced would be mainly for local consumption. Technology far more sophisticated than the spindle and hand-loom would change all that.

The demand for cotton textiles had been growing since the Middle Ages, fostered by the importation of high quality cotton fabrics from the Middle East and India. So how were local producers to fight off the com petition? The imported fabrics were of course expensive, so textile makers (not just in Britain but throughout Europe) produced mixed fabrics and cotton substitutes. They also had foreign textiles banned. But the key to the increased productivity needed to meet the demand, was machine production. It would be faster, cheaper and the finished products would be consistent in quality. Not least of the advantages was that it would allow manufacturers to market their goods on a large, if not yet global, scale.

The story of the growth of the British textile industry from about 1733 and for the next two hundred years is one of constant technological innovation and expansion. In 1733 John Kay invented the fly-shuttle, which made the hand-loom more efficient, and in 1764 James Hargreaves came up with the spinning jenny, which among other things had the effect of raising productivity eightfold. The next great innovator was Richard Arkwright, who in 1768 employed John Kay (of the fly-shuttle) to help him build more efficient machinery. He was a man with a vision – to mechanise textile production – and by 1782 he had a network of mills across Britain. As the water-powered machinery, though not yet fully mechanised, became more complex, Kay began to use steam engines for power. The first power-loom, however, which was invented in 1785 by Dr Edmund Cartwright, really did mechanise the weaving stage of textile manufacture.

The pace of growth quickened with the expansion of Britain's influence in the world and the acquisition of colonies from which cheap raw materials could be imported. For example, in a single decade, from 1781 to 1791, imports of cotton into Britain quadrupled, going on to reach 100 million pounds in weight in 1815 and 263 million in 1830. The increase in exports is equally impressive; in 1751 £46,000 worth of cloth was exported and by the end of the century this had risen to £5.4 million. By the end of the 19th century the figure had soared to close on £50 million. Britain was now supplying cheaper and better quality clothing to a global market. Yet during the course of the 20th century Britain lost its position as a major textile manufacturer.

Questions 1-6

Complete the notes below. Write NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS for each answer.

Textile Manufacture

Early history

Begins as a cottage industry

Products hand-woven and made for 1 .....

Local producers face 2 ..... from overseas

Ways found to deal with situation

Imported fabrics 3 ..... , mixed cottons produced

Early technology

Machine production needed to 4 ..... for cotton fabrics

Improved technology (such as the fly-shuttle) more 5 ..... and productive

Machinery begins to be powered by 6 .....

So what happened? There are a number of views on this question, not all of them conflicting, and where there is disagreement it is usually about when the decline began. Whether it began before the First World War (1914-18), or during the inter-war years (1919—1939), or after 1945, most economists would give roughly the same reasons. To start with, there was competition from abroad, especially from developing countries in the Far East, notably Japan. It was thought by manufacturers that the best way to combat this increased competition was to modernise. However, management and the labour unions were unable to agree on how to handle this situation.

Modernisation would mean people losing their jobs and possibly a change in labour practices. Such changes as were made served only to slow down the industry's decline rather than help regain its predominant position. Economically less developed countries, on the other hand, had the advantage of being able to provide low wage competition, without the problem of powerful labour unions.

There are, of course, many other reasons for the textile industry's decline, two of which became particularly noticeable in the late twentieth century and are related. The first is outsourcing, when manufacturers establish factories in countries where there is cheap labour. This obviously leads to less demand for locally-produced goods. Related to this, the textile and clothing industries have acquired a bad reputation for exploiting workers, often illegal immigrants, in sweatshops where they are forced to work long hours and are paid far less than the minimum wage.

We seem to be back with Crotchet and Sorocold and their first live-in factory. The globalising trend of out-sourcing, however, was a rational response to the growing competition from overseas, which, it goes without saying, does not excuse the exploitation of workers. The British industry itself, while no longer holding a key place in the global textile market has adapted itself and now concentrates more on the world of fashion and design, where it seems to be doing quite well.

Questions 7-9

Choose the correct letter, A, B, C or D.

7. Which of the following innovations increased productivity by 800%?

A. the power-loom

B. the steam engine

C. the spinning jenny

D. the fly-shuttle

8. During which period was the British textile industry at its peak?

A. 1733-1785

B. 1781-1791

C. 1791-1830

D. 1830-1900

9. Which of the following was a major cause of the British textile industry's decline?

A. the expansion of foreign textile industries

B. the loss of overseas markets

C. there being no demand for products

D. labour becoming too expensive

Questions 10-13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage? In boxes 10-13 on your answer sheet write:

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

10. Foreign textiles were banned because of their inferior quality.

11. Richard Arkwright built the first fully-mechanised textile mill.

12. In less developed countries, the industry could rely on cheap labour.

13. Out-sourcing was one method used to compete with foreign manufacturers.

Đề thi thật 3: GAMMA GARDENING

A type of gardening craze that was popular in the mid-20th century

A

Visitors to garden shows across the US and in the UK in the 1960s could see science at work. Never before had such giant peanuts been on display or so many huge tomatoes which kept on growing from a single plant. In addition, there were multi-coloured flowers on a single bush, and seeds that promised to grow a rare blue rose. Genetic abnormalities were plentiful in bunches of flowers which were displayed in arrangements in order to advertise a new wave of gardening techniques. These were known to all as gamma gardens.

B

In 1959 in the UK, a woman named Muriel Howorth founded a society to promote gamma gardening and published a book a year later about how to grow a gamma garden in a backyard. Members of Howorth's society received irradiated seeds which they planted in their gardens and were then requested to send reports back to Howorth detailing which plants grew well and which ones failed. Howorth herself made national news after growing a giant peanut plant from an irradiated nut. Howorth even organised gatherings and film screenings on gamma gardening.

C

While scientists were the original gamma gardening pioneers, with labs in the US, UK, Japan, India, Costa Rica, and the ex-Soviet Union, gardening enthusiasts soon heard about the possibilities new plant varieties posed. A Boston Globe story from 1961 asked:

"Would you like to grow rose plants that might produce blossoms of several colours on the same bush? Or would you prefer ten-foot marigolds or perhaps tomato plants that yield as many as 120 fruits per plant?"

Promotions and contests in US newspapers offered cash prizes of $1,000 for the 'most unusual' plants reported to them.

D

The largest, usually lab-based, gamma gardens of the 1950s could cover as much as five acres, with plants arranged in sections which were laid out in the shape of a circle. The way a gamma garden worked was simple: radiation came from a radioactive metal pole which was stuck in the garden's centre and exposed the plants around it to its silent rays. Radiation slowly affected the plants' DNA and changed how their genes were expressed.

The plants nearest to the radioactive source died, and the next farthest grew unusual growths. But in the next group, the mutant action began to show. The radiation could cause a desirable trait, primarily associated with size, like fatter tomatoes or larger rosebuds. Alternatively, even plants that were resistant to cold could sometimes be produced. Once beneficial mutations appeared, the seeds were bred to form more super-plants or were exposed to radiation—in other words, irradiated—again to further change the DNA.

In home gardens, people normally used pre-irradiated seeds and bred their plants for mutated traits, but some enthusiastic gamma gardeners obtained a licence from the government to use cobalt-60, a solid radiation source, to irradiate plants and seeds.

Questions 21 and 22

Choose TWO letters, A-E.

Write the correct letters in boxes 21 and 22 on your answer sheet.

Which TWO of the following statements are true of Muriel Howorth?

A. She was a well-regarded writer of scientific articles.

B. She hoped to get information from the people about their gardening results.

C. She received public recognition for one particular plant she grew.

D. She featured in a documentary about gamma gardening.

E. She was criticised by the scientific community regarding her work.

E

While new and exciting plants were a focus of gamma gardening, the trend started with scientists who aimed to build a new relationship between nuclear energy and the world. For the next few decades from the 1950s onwards, scientists were interested in using radiation for good. They believed there must be a way for our power over the atom to produce some positivity in the world.

Their idea? Mutant plants. Gamma gardening could speed up evolution, and it seemed like a solid answer to the problem of food shortages and plant disease. The idea caught on. A *New York Times* article published in 1955 had the sub-headline, *"Irradiated Seed Will Make the Desert Bloom!"* In it, the possible benefits of the new science were outlined, highlighting scientists in Geneva and the US who were pioneering some of the research. The *implications for a food-short world were said to be "enormous"*, the article claimed.

F

Humans have been selectively altering plants for millennia. Long ago, staple foods such as potatoes and tomatoes were poisonous, but farmers bred them so they became edible. Farmers and scientists throughout the ages continued to modify plants using selective breeding to enhance a characteristic over a few plant generations, or through chemically induced mutations.

Then, by the late 1950s, any average gardener could see the process of genetic variance at home. While the results could be unpredictable, many gardeners enjoyed the experience of observing the changes to plants that occurred in their own gardens. By 1962, agricultural fairs began featuring atomic-energised tomatoes, and the new radiation-bred seeds and vegetables soon made their way to the supermarket.

G

However, while the initial excitement surrounding irradiated plants was strong, it didn't last, and soon gamma gardening ceased to be done. This was because during the 1970s, scientists grew frustrated with the randomness of the genetic mutations the radiation produced.

There was no way to control which genes would pop up in a gamma garden or what their effects could be. The public had also become uneasy about the relationship between radiation and disease and began worrying about the radioactive tools they used to produce their plants and the impact these had on the safety of fruit and vegetables in particular.

As a result, scientists turned to the more accurate method of plant-gene splicing. It removes or replaces a few very specific genes to produce, for example, disease-resistant plants, and is a method used in genetic modification today.

Questions 23-26

Complete the summary below.

Choose ONE WORD ONLY from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes 23-26 on your answer sheet.

The gamma gardens of the 1950s

Gamma gardens covered large areas to form a 23. _____.

In the middle of the garden there was a 24. _____ made from metal which emitted radiation.

The plants that were furthest away from the centre sometimes developed desirable traits like a difference in the size of produce. Another characteristic that gardeners were looking for was a plant's ability to survive 25. _____ better.

Home gardeners could either purchase seeds that had already undergone irradiation, or they could apply to the 26. _____ for a special licence that allowed them to use a radiation source in their own gardens.