

Read carefully the passage printed below and answer the questions that follow, using your own words as far as possible and writing in complete sentences. Notice how many marks are available for each question.

The passage is taken from Birds, Beasts and Relatives, an autobiographical book by Gerald Durrell, in which he writes about the time in his childhood when his family lived on the Greek island of Corfu. From an early age Durrell was very interested in nature and would often take home animals to study and look after.

“They seem awfully hungry,” she said as she lifted each writhing, squeaking baby out of the box and pushed the end of the teat into its groping, eager mouth.

I said they were always like that. One should take no notice of it. They were just naturally greedy.

5 “Poor little things,” said Margo.

I should have been warned.

I spent an exhilarating week-end. I got myself badly sunburnt, for the fragile spring sun was deceptive, but came back triumphant, with eight heart urchins, four shells new to my collection and a baby sparrow that had fallen out of its nest. At the villa, after I had suffered the barks and licks and nibbles of greeting that the dogs always bestowed upon you if you had been away for more than two hours, I asked Margo eagerly how my baby hedgehogs were.

10 “They’re doing all right now,” she said. “But really, Gerry, I do think you ill-treat your pets. You were starving those poor little things to death. They were so hungry. You’ve no idea.”

15 With a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, I listened to my sister.

“Ravenous, poor little dears. Do you know, they’ve been taking two bottles each at every feed?”

20 Horrified, I rushed up to my bedroom and pulled the cardboard box out from under my bed. In it lay my four hedgehogs, bloated beyond belief. Their stomachs were so large that they could only paw feebly with their legs without making any progress. They had degenerated into pink sacks full of milk, frosted with spines. They all died that night and Margo wept copiously over their balloon-like corpses. But her grief did not give me any pleasure, for never would my hedgehogs trot obediently at my heels through the olive groves. As a punishment to my over-indulgent sister, I dug four little graves and erected four little crosses in the garden as a permanent reminder, and for four days I did not speak to her.

Now answer these questions. Remember to use your own words, unless asked specifically to use words from the passage. Do not repeat the question.

The narrator = the person telling the story (“I” in the passage)

1. In your own words describe the behaviour of the baby hedgehogs in the first paragraph. **2 marks**
2. What does the narrator’s sister feel is the reason for this behaviour? **2 marks**

(questions continue overleaf)

3. What reason does the narrator give for their behaviour at this point? **2 marks**
4. What does the narrator suggest when he says, “I should have been warned”? **3 marks**
5. Why do you think the narrator enjoyed his week-end so much? **2 marks**
6. What do you understand by the phrase “With a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach’(line 16)? **1 mark**
7. What was it that Margo did that was so awful? **1 mark**
8. How did she feel afterwards? **2 marks**
9. How did the narrator punish his sister? **2 marks**
10. Give one piece of information in the passage that indicates that Durrell and his family are living abroad and not in England. **2 marks**
11. Give the meaning of each of these words as used in the passage:
- (a) *ravenous* (line 17) **1 mark**
 - (b) *copiously* (line 23) **1 mark**
 - (c) *erected* (line 26) **1 mark**
12. Choose one of the images that help you to imagine the appearance of the over-fed hedgehogs and explain why it is effective. **3 marks**

Total 25 marks