



**In this adapted extract from 'I'm the King of the Castle', a young boy named Charles has decided to go exploring the fields and forest, called Hang Wood, which are behind his new home.**

At the back of the house, a winding path led through the rugged field and beyond this were only more fields, containing the forest, sloping this way and that, overlapping like so many pillows.

Charles began to walk. They had been here for over a week and he was tired of hanging about the house. The fields sloped upwards at first. It was very hot. He went through an assembly of smaller yew trees and hesitated by the entrance to the forest. Great black shadows guarded the entrance and he could not see for more than a few yards inside. Stinging nettles and thistles grew up as high as his chest, obscuring the path.

Charles carefully backed away from the entrance and decided to skirt the edge of the forest. The grass was thick with dense clots of dock leaves and a tractor had made giant ruts in the earth making it uncomfortable and difficult to walk. Thorns from wild bushes pricked his feet through his thin sandals.

Before long, Charles came to a fence beyond which was a field full of ripe corn. He noticed a narrow track and followed it, the corn coming up to his waist.

The cornfield was high up. He stood in the very middle of it and the sun came glaring down. He could feel the sweat running over his back and in the creases of his thighs. His face was burning and his throat was fast becoming dry and prickly. He sat down and looked over at the dark line of trees on the edge of Hang Wood. The fields around him were absolutely still.

When he first saw the crow, he took no notice. There had been several crows. This one glided down into the corn on its enormous, ragged black wings. He began to be aware of it when it rose up suddenly, circled overhead and then dived to land not very far away from him. Charles could see the feathers on its head, shining black in between the butter-coloured cornstalks. Then it rose,

and circled, and came down again, this time not quite landing but flapping about his head, beating its wings and making a sound like flat leather pieces being slapped together. It was the largest crow he had ever seen. As it came for the third time, he looked up and noticed its beak, opening in a  
25 screech. The inside of its mouth was scarlet and it had small, glinting eyes.

Charles got up and flapped his arms; the bird retreated a little way off. Feeling isolated, he began to walk rather quickly back through the path in the corn. For a moment, he could only hear the soft thudding of his own footsteps and the silky sound of the corn, brushing against him. Then, there was a rush of air as the great crow came beating down and wheeled about his head. Charles  
30 began to run; he thought that the corn might be the crow's food store in which he was seen as an invader.

His progress was slow as the thick stalks bunched together and got in his way and he had to shove them back with his arms. But the crow kept coming. It dived again and Charles felt the tip of its black wing, beating against his face. Charles keeled over, landing with his face in the corn, panting  
35 and sobbing in turns with the sound of his own blood pumping through his ears. He raised his head and wiped two fingers across his face – a streak of blood came off from where a thistle had scratched him. He could not see the crow.

But when Charles began to scramble wildly forwards again, it rose up from a little way off and began to circle and swoop. Then, there was a single screech and the terrible beating of wings;  
40 the crow lunged down and landed in the middle of his back. Charles froze and closed his eyes; he felt the claws of the bird digging into his skin and the crow's beak begin to peck at his thin shirt. After a moment or two, Charles began to scream in a gasping, strangled sort of way. Eventually, the bird released its vice like grip and swooped into the thick foliage of the forest.

# Susan Hill's 'I'm The King Of The Castle'

## Section A: Reading Comprehension

1. Write the **TWO** adjectives used in line one. (2)

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2. Write the **ONE WORD** that the fields are compared to in the opening paragraph. (1)

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3. What does the word 'assembly' mean in line 4? (2)

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4. On line 5, Hill describes the shadows as guarding the entrance to the forest. What technique does she use in this description? **Circle ONE** of the following: (1)

personification      onomatopoeia      metaphor      alliteration

5. Explain in your **OWN WORDS two** reasons why Charles backed away from the entrance to the forest. (2)

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6. Write **TWO** reasons Charles is struggling to walk. (2)

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7. Suggest **ONE** possible reason why the writer has the thorns prick Charles's feet. (1)

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8. What sort of word is 'glaring' (line 14)? **Circle ONE** of the following: (1)

adjective                  noun                  verb                  adverb

9. Looking at paragraph 5, write **TWO** ways the writer shows Charles might be in a difficult situation. (2)

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10. From lines 18-20, **list two** things we learn about the crow. (2)

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11. Why did Charles ignore the crow at first? (1)

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12. Why is the crow easy to see in the cornfield? (1)

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13. **Copy out** the simile that describes the sound of the crow's beating wings. (1)

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14. From paragraph 6, circle the **TWO** word classes to describe the word 'largest'. (2)

adjective                  comparative                  adverb                  superlative

15. Explain in your **OWN WORDS**, what the writer is trying to imply about the bird with the phrase 'small, glinting eyes'? (2)

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16. What **TWO** things does Charles do to escape the crow in lines 26-31? (2)

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17. **What technique** is the writer using with the words 'silky sound' (line 28)? (1)

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18. Look again at lines 32-37. Name **ONE** thing other than the crow that also seems to want to hurt Charles. (1)

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19. Find **TWO VERBS** which describe Charles's emotions in lines 33-35. (2)

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20. Find **the adverb** in line 38 that describes Charles's panic. (1)

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21. In the last paragraph, how exactly does the crow finally punish Charles for invading the cornfield? (1)

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22. Write **TWO** ways in which Charles responds to the crow's actions in the last paragraph. (2)

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23. Looking again at lines 39-43, in your **OWN WORDS**, give two reasons that show the crow is more powerful than Charles. (2)

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24. For each of the words printed in bold in the **left-hand column** of the table below, **circle** the **one word** in the **other column** that could be best used to replace it in the passage. (5)

<b>clots</b>	mud	sludge	smooth	lumps
<b>obscuring</b>	hiding	shouting	clearing	whispering
<b>invader</b>	victim	attacker	hostage	prey
<b>keeled</b>	bounced	ran	tipped	jumped
<b>foliage</b>	insects	vegetation	feathers	clouds

**End of SECTION A**