

**Answer ALL Questions**

**SECTION A: Reading**

**You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.**

**Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.**

*Christy Brown was born with cerebral palsy and was severely disabled. Here he describes the first time he was able to communicate with his family.*

**My Left Foot**

I was now five, and still I showed no real sign of intelligence. I showed no apparent interest in things except with my toes – especially those of my left foot. I used to lie on my back all the time in the kitchen or, on bright warm days, out in the garden, surrounded by a family that loved me and hoped for me and that made me part of their own warmth  
5 and humanity. I was lonely, imprisoned in a world of my own, unable to communicate with others, cut off, separated from them as though a glass wall stood between my existence and theirs. I longed to run about and play with the rest, but I was unable to break loose from my bondage.

Then, suddenly, it happened! In a moment everything was changed, my future life moulded  
10 into a definite shape, my mother's faith in me rewarded and her secret fear changed into open triumph.

Inside, all the family were gathered round the big kitchen fire that lit up the little room with a warm glow and made giant shadows dance on the walls and ceiling.

In a corner Mona and Paddy were sitting huddled together. They were writing down little  
15 sums on to an old chipped slate, using a bright piece of yellow chalk. I was close to them, propped up by a few pillows against the wall, watching.

It was the chalk that attracted me so much. It was a long, slender stick of vivid yellow. I had never seen anything like it before and I was fascinated by it as much as if it had been a stick of gold.

20 Suddenly I wanted desperately to do what my sister was doing. Then – without thinking or knowing exactly what I was doing, I reached out and took the stick of chalk out of my sister's hand – with my left foot.

I held it tightly between my toes, and, acting on impulse, made a wild sort of scribble with it on the slate. Then I looked up and became aware that everyone had stopped talking and  
25 they were staring at me silently. Nobody stirred. Mona stared at me with great big eyes and open mouth. Across the open hearth, his face lit by flames, sat my father, leaning forwards, hands outspread on his knees, his shoulders tense. I felt the sweat break out on my forehead.

My mother came in from the pantry with a steaming pot in her hand. She stopped midway  
30 between the table and the fire, feeling the tension flowing through the room. She followed their stare and saw me, in the corner. Her eyes looked from my face down to my foot, with the chalk gripped between my toes. She put down the pot.



Then she crossed over to me and knelt down beside me, as she had done so many times before.

35 “I’ll show you what to do with it, Chris,” she said.

Taking another piece of chalk from Mona, she hesitated, then very deliberately drew, on the floor in front of me, the single letter ‘A’.

“Copy that,” she said, looking steadily at me. “Copy it, Christy.”

40 I tried again. I put out my foot and made a wild jerking stab with the chalk which produced a very crooked line and nothing more. Mother held the slate steady for me.

“Try again, Chris,” she whispered in my ear. “Again.”

I did. I stiffened my body and put my left foot out again, for the third time. I drew one side of the letter. I drew half the other side. Then I felt my mother’s hand on my shoulder. I tried once more. Out went my foot. I shook, I sweated and strained every muscle. My  
45 hands were so tightly clenched that my fingernails bit into the flesh. I set my teeth so hard that I nearly pierced my lower lip. But – I drew it – the letter ‘A’. There it was on the floor before me. Shaky, with awkward, wobbly sides and a very uneven centre line. But it was the letter ‘A’. I looked up. I saw my mother’s face for a moment, tears on her cheeks. Then my father stooped down and hoisted me on to his shoulder.

50 I had done it! I had started – the thing that was to give my mind its chance of expressing itself. True, I couldn’t speak with my lips, but now I would speak through something more lasting than spoken words – written words.

That one letter, scrawled on the floor with a broken bit of yellow chalk gripped between my toes, was my road to a new world, my key to mental freedom.





