

Cautiously, I held my breath, ducked down and stepped into the dingy, tunnel-like structure; this was the place where happiness becomes lifeless. The bitter air nipped at my skin like a harsh wind, the feel of the ice-cold concrete beneath my feet made my bones ache. The building I found myself standing in was a prison cell: isolating, lonely and bleak.

The smell was horrid. The stench of damp, along with manure and stale air, filled the room making my eyes water. As I lowered myself inside, the constant smell of burning and smoke was so strong that I could taste it. Unfortunately, this was a smell I had come to know far too well.

Noise swirled around my brain like a hurricane – sirens, screaming, panicked voices – all becoming increasingly loud and frantic. As the huge, metal door was slammed behind me, all of the sounds I had previously heard were taken over by the thoughts in my own head; I didn't know which was more frightening.

Full of dread and sadness, I looked around the structure which was now dimly lit by a dwindling candle in the corner. Sandbags piled high against the walls and old, scratchy blankets covered the makeshift, timber bunkbed. The searchlights from the enemy planes outside framed the door with a warm, golden glow. A small wooden table sat in the centre, concealed by a bright pink table cloth in an attempt to make the place feel homely. Except that is not what this place was, but I would have to learn to love it.

## Questions

1. What does the word 'bitter' mean in the second sentence?
2. If the structure is 'tunnel-like', how would you describe it?
3. The building is described as a 'prison cell' – which descriptive feature has the author used?
4. Where is this setting located, above or below ground? Explain your answer by using the text.
5. 'Sirens, screaming, panicked voices' – what could be happening? Use the whole text to guide you.
6. How was the door shut if it was 'slammed'?
7. What could the blankets be made of?
8. How does the shelter appear 'homely'?