Night noises are the worst. They are the ones that come at you out of the darkness and seize you by the throat. They are the ones that slither under the door of your bedroom. 

Stop it. Don’t do that. Jessica rapped her knuckles against her forehead. 

Don’t. You’re too old to be frightened of nothing. Too grown up. Seven years and eight months. Not like Georgie, her younger brother, who was tucked away by her parents in a tiny bedroom at the far end of the corridor. Like something dirty. 

Still the noises came at her. Voices soft and secretive. A whisper cut short. Her mother’s quick and urgent footsteps on the landing. Other sounds that didn’t belong, that crept like thieves in the shadows. Jessica didn’t like the dark, and she could never understand how the air could become so solid at night or why its weight was sometimes so heavy on her chest that she had to pummel her lungs to make them work. She drew her knees up to her chin and wrapped her arms around her shins, hugging her winceyette nightdress – the one with the blue ribbons – tight against her skin. Even under her bedspread she was cold.

Suddenly it came again, the sound that had woken her, a whimpering that made the blonde hairs rise on the back of her neck. She threw off the quilt cover and leapt out of bed. Her heart was juddering against her bony ribs as she pushed her way through the darkness, parting it with her hands like a curtain until she reached her bedroom door. She gripped its brass knob and quickly turned it. Nothing happened. Her fingers tried again. Nothing. It was locked. Jessica’s skin crawled, the way it did when a spider dropped on her arm.

Why would her father lock her in? 
Why would her mother agree? 

Fear, sharp and brittle, poked at her chest. She crouched on the floor and wriggled onto her side on the cold linoleum until her eye was pressed to the ribbon of light between the door and the floor, but she could make out nothing except a blur of carpet on the other side. 

Again the whimper fluttered across the landing, followed by a high-pitched frightened squeal. Rage seized her and she leapt to her feet, pounding her fist on the door, shaking it on its hinges. 

“Georgie!” she screamed. 
Abruptly the light on the landing flicked off. Silence, thick and oily, flooded the house. 

“Georgie!” Jessica shrieked. “Georgie!” 
She banged on the wooden panels of the door. 
“Let me out!” 
Nothing but silence. 

“Mummy!” 
Nothing but darkness. 
She held her breath, listening so hard her ears hurt. Suddenly she heard a distant click. It was the front door closing.
Question 1
Read again lines 1 to 10.

List four things from this part of the text about Jessica. [4 marks]

Question 2
Look in detail at lines 7-19 of the extract.

How does the writer use language here to describe the setting?

You could include the writer’s use of:
- Words and phrases
- Language features and techniques
- Sentence forms [8 marks]

Question 3
You now need to think about the whole of the source.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:
- What the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning and end
- How the writer develops her ideas
- Any other structural features that interest you [8 marks]

Question 4
Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source from lines 20 to the end.

“The writer successfully shows the fear of Jessica and creates tension for the reader.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement?

In your response, you could:
- Examine how the writer creates fear and tension
- Evaluate the extent to which the writer is successful in doing this
- Support your comments with quotations from the text [20 marks]
Question 5
You are going to enter a creative writing competition.

Your entry will be judged by a panel of professional writers.

Either:

Write a story in which someone is in a dangerous situation.

Or:

Write a description suggested by this image:

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)

[40 marks]