



Prologue

Lightning Mary by Anthea Simmons

Tisn't everybody gets struck by lightning and lives to tell the tale.

But I did. Not that I recall. I was only a baby. My father wasn't there when it happened but he would have told you the story if you'd asked him and would have recounted how he found me wrapped in a cloth, quite gone from my mind. Like dead. But not.

It was the night the circus came to Lyme Regis. Jugglers and fools. Bearded ladies. Performing monkeys. Dashing riders on powerful steeds, performing amazing acts, so folks said. More like showing off on a pony, if you ask me. A neighbour of ours, Elizabeth Haskings, took me to see the spectacle, perhaps as a kindness to my mother who had just given birth to another stillborn, or so she could use me as a reason to get up close enough to see the riders' handsome faces.

There was an almighty storm. Rain lashing down like something out of the Bible . . . Noah's flood, maybe. The lightning lit up the sky over and over again and the thunder was like ten thousand rocks bouncing down from the cliff face and into the sea. Elizabeth held me tight in her arms as we sheltered under a huge tree with two others. All screaming, no doubt. Except me. I am not, nor ever have been, a screamer.

A bolt of lightning struck that tree, a mighty elm, and split it in two. But it didn't stop there. It struck Elizabeth and the other folk and frizzled them up like fat in a pan. Elizabeth dropped me like a stone when it struck her.

My father heard word that I was dead with the rest of them and he threw his chisel aside and ran up from his workshop fast as he could, with terror in his heart and tears in his eyes. Some folk had carried me back home and put me in a basin of hot water to try to bring me back, but I reckon it was only when I heard my father calling: 'Mary! My Mary! Come back! Come back to me!' that I drew breath again. I think it would have broken his heart to lose two Marys.

It is strange that I should have so nearly been burned. There was another Mary before me. My big sister, she would have been. She burned away in a trice in a terrible fire. Mother never spoke of it, but I know what happened. Left for a moment in a room full of Father's wood shavings, she tipped over the lamp and whoosh, she was gone!

And then I came. They do say I was a dull, sickly child before the Lord smote me with his lightning and that I burned brighter after; but I don't know about that. All I know is, something lit a fire in my being and it wasn't the lightning . . .

Questions 1- are about 'Prologue' from Lightning Mary

- 1 Which word closely matches the meaning of the word recounted?
Tick one.

described ☐
counted ☐
numbered ☐

1 mark

- 2 Write down three acts which could be seen at the circus.

1 mark

- 3 What type of tree did the lightning strike?

1 mark

- 4 Look at the paragraph beginning, '*It was the night the circus came to Lyme Regis..*'
How can you tell that Mary was not impressed by the performers?

1 mark

- 5 Read the paragraph beginning, '*It is strange I should have so nearly been burned*'. Why was this such a coincidence?

1 mark

6

How did Mary’s father feel when he received the news of the lightning strike. Give evidence from the text to support your answer.

2 marks

7

Which of the following would be the best headline for a news report about the events? Circle **one** answer.

The circus visit.

Lightning Strikes!

Forlorn Father.

1 mark

8

What impressions do you get of Elizabeth Haskings from the extract? Give **two** impressions using evidence to support your answer.

Impression	Evidence

3 marks