

A Read the extract.

Aparte de ir al teatro, al cine y a visitar a Lucía, también salíamos a tomar un aperitivo en algún local que habían abierto nuevo, al Museo del Prado, de compras a los grandes almacenes, a recorrer el Jueves Santo las estaciones donde se *exponía* el Santísimo Sacramento entre un *alarde* de *velas* encendidas, a la Plaza Mayor a comprar *musgo* para el *belén*, cuando era Navidad o a *devolver* alguna de aquellas visitas familiares. Yo, muchas veces, me quedaba atrás mirando el *rótulo* de alguna calle que parecía llevar a otro sitio.

Source: *El Cuarto de Atrás*, Carmen Martín Gaité, Ediciones Destino SA 1978

aperitivo – appetiser/aperitif

el Santísimo Sacramento – the Blessed Sacrament

quedaba – stayed



There will also be words that you do not understand in the extract that you will need to look up in a dictionary. You may need to look up the words in *italics* to help you answer the questions.

Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000) was a Spanish writer from Salamanca, who wrote novels, short stories, poetry, translations, critical essays and children's books. She graduated in romance philology from Salamanca University when very few women were able to do so. She won various literary prizes and lived most of her life under the rule of Franco, an era in which independent women were not regarded positively.

El Cuarto de Atrás tells the story of a woman, Carmen, who is also the author. In her dreams, a man dressed in black appears to her and they talk about past-memories. In this extract, she is remembering her childhood in Madrid.



Always read the extract at least twice before you try to answer the questions. Ask yourself what it is about and what the main points are. At this stage, you don't need to understand every word. Focus on the words you do know and some of the unknown words will become obvious.

B Answer the questions in English.

1 Name two places that she used to go to when she was in Madrid.

2 Where did she go shopping?

3 What would she do on Maundy Thursday?

4 What would she buy around Christmas?

5 Why would she stay behind?

6 Find the following phrases in the extract.

- a apart from _____
- b which had opened _____
- c where they showed _____
- d lit candles _____
- e nativity _____
- f to lead to _____

C Complete the following sentences using *al, a la, a los, a las, del, de la, de los, de las*.

- 1 Anoche fui _____ teatro.
- 2 Mañana vamos a ir _____ cine con unos chicos.
- 3 _____ tres de la tarde vamos a visitar el museo.
- 4 La carta _____ mujer fue larga.
- 5 La conversación _____ hombres fue muy interesante.

★ *a + el = al but a + la = a la: al teatro, a los grandes almacenes...
de + el = del but de + la = de la: del día, de la mano...*

D Underline all of the uses of the imperfect tense in the extract. What is the infinitive and the meaning of each verb?

★ The imperfect tense describes what used to happen.
Example: *salíamos a tomar un aperitivo* – we used to go out to have a drink

E Read the extract again and answer the questions.

- 1 Do you think Carmen was a religious person? Why?

- 2 What sort of activities did she used to do in this description of her childhood? Is this similar to your own childhood?

Extension

Imagine what you used to do when you were younger for a special holiday. Describe it using the imperfect tense. You could include who you were with, where you used to go, what you used to do and whether you liked it or not.

Answers

B

- 1 any two from: theatre, cinema, to visit friends, museum
- 2 in the department stores
- 3 visit the Blessed Sacrament
- 4 moss for the nativity scene
- 5 she would look at the street signs (which seemed to lead to another place)

6

- a *aparte de*
- b *que habían abierto*
- c *donde se exponía*
- d *velas encendidas*
- e *el belén*
- f *llevar*



Did you get all the questions right? Answers to questions will appear in order, so the answer to the first question will be towards the beginning of the extract, and the answer to the last question will be towards the end.

C

- 1 *al*
- 2 *al*
- 3 *A las*
- 4 *de la*
- 5 *de los*

D

- salíamos* – *salir* – to go out
habían abierto – *haber abierto* – to have opened
se exponía – *exponer* – to exhibit, display
era – *ser* – to be
me quedaba – *quedarse* – to stay
parecía – *parecer* – to seem

E

- 1 Yes – she mentions *el Jueves Santo* (Maundy Thursday) and Christmas.
 - 2 go to the theatre, go to the cinema, go shopping, visit the Prado museum, visit family...
- Student's own answers