

**A Read the extract.**

Mi padre se llamaba Esteban Duarte Diniz, y era portugués, cuarentón cuando yo nací, y alto y gordo como un monte. Tenía el color tostado y un estupendo bigote negro.

Mi madre, al revés que mi padre, no era gorda, aunque tenía muy buena estatura; era larga y no tenía aspecto de buena salud: tenía la piel oscura y las mejillas profundas. Siempre vestía de luto.

Se llevaban mal mis padres. Mi madre no sabía leer ni escribir; mi padre sí, y estaba tan orgulloso de ello que solía llamarla ignorante, insulto muy grave para mi madre, que se ponía como un basilisco.

*Source: Camilo José Cela, 'La familia de Pascual Duarte', Ediciones Destino S.A, 44<sup>th</sup>*

**Camilo José Cela** was a Spanish writer associated with the Generation of '36 movement, a group of artists writing during the time of the Spanish Civil War. In 1989 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature. The extract below is from his novel 'La familia de Pascual Duarte', which was written in 1942. In this extract, Pascual, the main character, is awaiting execution after committing various crimes, including killing his mother.



When facing an unknown text, read the questions first. They will help you to get an idea of what the text is about before you even start. Look at the questions in activity B. What do you think the extract is about?

**B Read the extract and answer the questions below in English.**

- 1 What is the main tense used? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What is Pascual, the main character, doing? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Are there any clues telling you what Pascual's relationship was like with his parents?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 How old was Pascual's father when Pascual was born? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 What did he look like? Give three details. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 How does he describe his mother's shape? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 What did she always wear? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 What could his mother not do? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Did his parents get on? Give an example of their behaviour towards each other.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Did you get all the questions right? When you come across vocabulary that you don't know, make a note of it and look it up in a dictionary. Use a note book or pages in a folder to write down any new language that you come across so as to enhance your vocabulary.

**C Find and underline all the verbs in the imperfect tense in the extract. Translate them into English.**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**D What do the following expressions mean in the context of the extract?**

1 *como un monte* \_\_\_\_\_

2 *al revés* \_\_\_\_\_

3 *no tenía aspecto de buena salud* \_\_\_\_\_

4 *se ponía como un basilisco* \_\_\_\_\_



Idiomatic phrases are expressions which you cannot understand by translating them literally. Examples:

*echar agua al mar* (literally 'to throw water into the sea') – to be pointless

*ser pan comido* (literally 'to be eaten bread') – to be as easy as a piece of cake

### Extension

Describe what someone in your family used to look like. In your writing use some of the phrases that the author uses to improve the level of your work.

You could include:

- where they are from
- describe what they look like
- use colours or other adjectives.

## Answers

**B**

1 the imperfect tense

2 He is describing his mother and his father.

3 He could be described as in awe of his father as he describes him with the words '*como un monte*' and describes the moustache as '*estupendo*'. The mother's description is more negative, described as wearing black: '*de luto*.'

4 in his forties

5 any three from: tall, fat, dark skinned, had a moustache.

6 not fat, but tall

7 She wore black/mourning clothes.

8 She couldn't read or write.

9 No – the father used to call the mother ignorant.

**C**

*se llamaba* – was called

*era* – was

*Tenía* – had

*vestía* – wore

*Se llevaban mal* – they didn't get on

*no sabía* – she didn't know

*estaba* – was

*solía llamarla* – used to call her

*se ponía* – she used to get/become

**D**

1 *como un monte* – (fat) like a hill

2 *al revés* – as opposed to

3 *no tenía aspecto de buena salud* – she didn't look healthy

4 *se ponía como un basilisco* – she used to get very angry (idiomatic phrases)

**Extension**

Pupils write their own description in the imperfect tense of a family member. It is suggested that they include where they are from, what they used to look like and to enhance their work with adjectives including colours, as the original author has done.