

Miss Esta Maude's Secret

by W. T. Cummings

Esta Maude Hay lived in a tall, thin, old-fashioned house. It sat on a hill by the edge of a small country town. She lived alone except for two cats, a goldfish, and a parrot. She had no neighbors.

Esta Maude was tall and thin and old-fashioned too. She always dressed in black and always wore her white hair piled high upon her head.

Every school morning for twenty years, rain, snow, or shine, Esta Maude got up at 7:30. She ate one soft-boiled egg and one piece of buttered toast and drank a steaming cup of tea. Then she fed her cats, her goldfish, and her parrot and left for school at 8:15.

Esta Maude drove a little black car. Everyone in town called it "Miss Esta Maude's Machine." She never drove over fifteen miles an hour, and she obeyed every traffic rule. "What a dull life Miss Esta Maude must have!" everyone said. If Esta Maude heard them she just smiled—because Esta Maude had a secret.

Out of school, she kept to herself. "Poor Esta Maude," everyone said. "She doesn't have much fun." In the evening after dinner, anyone who passed her house could see her sitting at a desk, correcting homework papers and making plans for the next day's lesson. At nine o'clock she turned out the lights, and everyone said, "Miss Esta Maude has gone to bed." But she hadn't.

Esta Maude was busy with her secret. Although no one knew it, she owned two cars—the little black car that everybody called "Miss Esta Maude's Machine" and another one, which she kept hidden in the barn behind her house.

It was a bright red racing car. This was Esta Maude's secret. Esta Maude Hay liked to drive fast. VERY fast.

For years she had saved to buy a fast car. When she had enough money, Esta Maude went to the city all alone and bought the fastest car she could find—the red racing car. She drove it back late at night and hid it. She didn't want anyone to know about it.

Every night at nine she went to the barn and tinkered with the engine. Esta Maude had all kinds of tools and a whole shelf full of books on how to repair engines. She had taught herself to be a good mechanic. Each night before going back to her house, she polished the already gleaming fenders and the long red hood that sparkled in the light. Esta Maude loved this car more than anything else in the world—even more than her cats and goldfish and parrot.

On Friday nights at midnight, Esta Maude would quietly open the big barn door. She would strap on her goggles and racing helmet and climb into the low car. She would press the starter. BAHROOM-BAHREEM. The whole barn shook as the powerful car moved into the night. Then she would drive slowly through the sleeping town, obeying the speed laws even though no one could see her.

But once she was on the open highway, where speed limits were much higher, Esta Maude stepped hard on the gas pedal. Like a wet puppy, the racing car paused and shook for an instant. Then, with a tremendous roar, the car charged forward. Faster and faster, down the long straight highway Esta Maude went. BAHROOM-BAHREEM. She was happy.

Every Friday night Esta Maude Hay took a wonderful drive. Sometimes she had an adventure.

1. What is the purpose of this selection?
- A to describe an unusual setting
 - B to tell about an interesting person
 - C to create a mysterious mood

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2. Which *best* describes Esta Maude?
- A loud and mean
 - B nosy and modern
 - C dependable and adventurous

3. Which **best** describes Esta Maude's behavior between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. every weekday?
- A friendly
 - B bold
 - C usual
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4. Why does Esta Maude buy a red racing car?
- A She wants to impress her students.
 - B She loves to drive fast.
 - C She needs a new car.

5. How did Esta Maude get the money to buy her racing car?
- A She saved for years.
 - B She worked at night.
 - C She sold her furniture.
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6. Why are the words “BAHROOM-BAHREEM” printed in capital letters in the story?
- A to show how loud the racing car is when it goes fast
 - B to show that Esta Maude is shouting these words
 - C to show that this is the name of the red racing car

7. Which idea is **best** shown in this story?
- A An old dog cannot be taught new tricks.
 - B A book cannot be judged by its cover.
 - C The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.



End of Set

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“Miss Esta Maude’s Secret” by W. T. Cummings; published 1961 by McGraw-Hill.

NCEXTEND2 EOG Reading Grade 4 Sample Items

Selection Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	1	B	Evaluating	2.04
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	2	C	Analyzing	3.01
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	3	C	Analyzing	3.02
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	4	B	Analyzing	3.01
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	5	A	Knowledge	2.04
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	6	A	Analyzing	2.04
Miss Esta Maude's Secret	7	B	Evaluating	2.04