KATH AND MOUSE

by ________________________________ (insert author's name here)

Instructions: read “Kath and Mouse” (Crossroads pg. 62 or handout online under ENG1D Uploads)
Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Vocabulary: conservatory, awful

2. From what point of view is this story written in? Remember, point of view (POV) is a literary device that refers to: first person, third person omniscient, third person limited, third person narration. Which one does this story use?


4. In what way does Kath play a "cat and mouse" game with Helen? What literary device is the title employing (using)?

5. Describe Kevin. List three character traits and give a specific example from the story to support each trait. Beside each trait identify whether these traits were explicitly stated (directly revealed), or implicitly revealed (indirect revelations).

6. Why did the author bring Christine into the story? Consider what she does to the conflict, to the plot, and to bring out characteristics in other people.

7. Reflect on the various types of conflict such as: person vs. person/self/nature/society, etc/ What types of conflict are in this story? Provide evidence for each conflict identified. Why is conflict important to the story?

8. Static characters do not experience basic character changes during the course of the story. Dynamic characters experience changes throughout the plot of a story. Although the change may be sudden, it is expected based on the story’s events. So, if a static character is one that does not change throughout the story, whereas a dynamic character changes, is Kath a static or dynamic character? Why?

9. In a well-developed paragraph, explain whether or not Kath has learned anything significant in this story. Support your answer with examples. Remember to use the hamburger format for a paragraph.
   - When you reference a short story, place the title in quotation marks to indicate that it is a short story, not a book.
   - Hand in your typed paragraph, follow all the rules you've been taught, include quotes as supports.
   - Due: __________________________

Rubric will be available online.
**Kath and Mouse**  
By ________________________

Her name was Helen, but Kath called her Mouse from her very first day at our school. "What is that Mouse doing at our table?" Kath said loudly, so Helen would know she had already broken one of the most important rules. No one sat at Kath's table without an invitation. I expected her to skitter away, like anyone else would, but instead she looked up and smiled. She did look like a mouse, with mouse-brown hair and small, sharp features but that smile said, maybe you could like me. So I ignored Kath, slid past the others, and sat down.

"Hi," I said, "My name's Kevin."

Then everyone else sat down, even Kath. I didn't look at her, but I could feel the anger steaming off her. That winter, I seemed to be the only one who knew how to do things Kath didn't want. I had a secret weapon though, I'm her twin brother. And that winter, it seemed to be my job to prove you didn't get vaporized or turned into a frog if you did something that made Kath angry.

Ready for the big concert? Asked Renee across from me. I was trying to make things normal. Renee rolled her eyes and the conversation took off. She played percussion in the school band and I played trumpet, but I wasn't serious about it. Piano is really my instrument. Kath played oboe. It's a hard instrument and even I had to admit she was starting to get good. It wasn't just natural talent either. She really worked at it, forty-five minutes every day. Not that anyone else knew. If anyone phoned while she was practising, we were supposed to say she was out.

Renee and I talked about the concert until things seemed pretty normal. I was just beginning to relax when Kath spoke.

"So, Helen, do you play an instrument? She put such a sneer in her voice that everyone at the table fell silent, waiting to see how this new kid would react.

When Helen spoke, her voice was very quiet. "No", she said, “No instrument. I just sing."

Kath snorted. "sing! No choir in this school. Guess you're out of luck." Kath stood up then, to signal that the eating part of lunch was over. Everyone else at the table picked up their trays to following her like robots. Everyone except me and Helen, who now reminded me of a mouse I'd had to take away from our cat once, wounded.

"You could probably play in band if you wanted," I said, "Even this late. Mrs. Cromwell is really nice."

Helen shook her head. "No.I talked it over with Mom after Dad; voice is good for someone who moves a lot. I guess we won't move much now that we're in Torbay. The voice instrument is free and it isn't hard to move."

She smiled, as if this were an old joke. Then she lifted her chin. "Besides, I'm a very good singer." The pride in her voice made her sound completely different. I was so surprised, I just nodded.

I hoped Kath would leave Helen alone, but I was dreaming. She started on Helen's backpack in the school bus on the way home. It was pretty odd looking, made of heavy, faded cloth, like denim, only pink. A name, "Robin" was written on the flap in ballpoint pen. Kath leaned over the seat to stare at it. Kath leaned over the seat to stare at it. I was sitting across the aisle from Helen.

"Who's Robyn, Mouse?" Kath asked.

Helen ducked her head like she'd been hit. "I don't know."

"Where'd you get the backpack then?"

Helen kept her head down. "At a garage sale," she said. "I like it," she added.

"Right," Kath said, "It's so...unique." Everyone laughed.

By the time we got off the bus, I was so mad I could hardly see straight. "Who made you the queen of the world?" I yelled at Kath in the driveway. She didn't even bother to get angry.

She just gave me a look that made me feel cold all over and said, "It doesn't matter, does it? I just am, so you better get used to it" and walked away.
I knew something was up in gym the next day the way Kath and her friends came out of the change room, giggling. Then Amanda asked Ms. Saro to help her find some goal gloves in the storage room. As soon as they disappeared Kath shot a soccer ball at Helen, hard. Helen dodged as Jen opened the gym door behind her. The ball flew out. "oops," Jen said. "I think I’ll help look for those goal gloves.

Helen stood near the open door.

"Go get the ball, you klutz," Kath ordered. "It’s getting cold in here." I was standing across the gym, by the boys' change room. Helen hesitated, then did what Kath said. As soon as she stepped outside, another of Kath’s friends closed the door. It was about ten below zero. Everyone else saw what happened. Nobody did anything. It only took half a minute for me to jog across the gym and open the door, but Helen was already shivering.

I took the ball from her and hurried her inside. I slammed the soccer ball down and kicked it so hard it flew all the way across the gym. "One more trick like that," I yelled at Kath, “And I tell. I mean it.”

"Kevin, you’re such a baby," Kath said. "We’re just having fun.” But, I thought she looked worried.

After that, Kath was more careful. She had classes with Helen that I wasn’t in. She knew she could do what she wanted, and no one would tell me. And it occurred to me that Kath might be mean to Helen just to bother me, so I backed off. I couldn’t spend my life keeping track of Kath. Anyway, I had a piano conservatory exam coming up. It was nice to be able to just sit and play. The music was hard, but it was never mean.

Maybe Kath thought she could be queen of the school forever, but she made a mistake. Kath made fun of a girl named Christine, just once. More specifically, her ears. Christine was a good athlete, and popular. She started having parties. Sleepovers, horror movie parties, even dances. Kath was never invited. Christine wasn’t mean, she just acted like Kath didn’t exist.

Kath tried to pretend it didn’t matter, but it did. I knew when she came to me one Saturday night and said, "Dad will drive us into St. John’s. Do you want to see a movie?"

"Aren’t you afraid someone will see us together?" I teased.

She shrugged. "Everyone else was invited to Christine’s”.

That was truer than she knew. I’d been invited myself. But I didn’t go and I didn’t tell Kath. She was still my sister. "Let’s go", I said, “But I pick the movie.”

The next week, posters went up for a talent show to raise money for new library books. Overnight, our school changed. Suddenly, the halls were full of step dancers, clumsy jugglers, bad magic acts-everyone had a hidden talent, mostly ones they should have kept hidden. I thought about playing something from the conservatory exam, but it wasn’t going to be that sort of night. I was pretty surprised when Helen came to me. I’d almost forgotten about her by then.

"You play piano, right?" she asked.

"Yeah, I do."

"Could you play this?" she showed me sheet music for "My Heart Will Go On," from Titanic. I almost told her nobody wanted to hear an old song like that, but then I thought, sheet music is expensive. So I opened it up instead. It looked medium hard.

"You want to sing at the talent show?" Helen bit her lip, but she nodded.

"Give me a week to practise. Then we’ll try it together, okay?"

Her smile changed her face completely. "Thank you," she said, "That would be great," and she was gone.

I’d never really listened to the song, but the more I played the music, the more I liked it.

"That’s a switch," Kath said when she heard me one night. "I thought that piano only played Bach.”

"Haha," I said. "If you'll excuse me," and I started to play again, loudly, so she couldn't ask questions.
Helen found a church basement where we could practise without anybody knowing. The piano was badly out of tune. Helen’s voice was thin and nervous. We sounded awful.

"It's pretty good," I told her.

Her look told me she knew how bad we were. "Maybe I should sit down," she said. "My knees are knocking."

She sounded better, but the piano was still awful. "We should practise at my place," I told her. She laughed. "Right, and afterwards, your sister could have me for supper. As the main course."

"I don't know why she's like that," I said.

Helen shook her head. "I don't either. I used to think maybe the girls picking on me were secretly miserable or something, but lately, I'm not so sure."

"You don't have to prove yourself, you know," I said.

"But maybe I want to. Let's try one more time."

That night after supper, Kath made an announcement. "I've decided to audition for the talent show," she said.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Kathryn Morris and her magic oboe."

"Funny Kevin, but I'm not playing the oboe. I'm going to sing." She watched me carefully while she said this, so I willed myself not to react.

"Aren't you going to offer to accompany me?" she asked.

"No. I'm not."

"I thought I might try that song you've been playing"

"It's not available!"

"Kevin that's mean." Kath looked like she might cry. She wasn’t used to hearing no, I felt bad, but I couldn’t explain. I was afraid of what Kath might do to Helen.

When she finally realized I was serious, she turned away. “Better that way then. It’s not as if I need you."

At the audition, everyone was edgy. Girls in strange costumes giggled while they worked through bad dance moves, guys with decks of cards walked around muttering to themselves. Helen looked pale "want to give it a run through?" I nodded towards the piano.

She shook her head "I'd rather wait."

I don't know when Kath slipped into the room. She was dressed in hippie clothes and carried our father's battered old acoustic guitar. when she saw me with Helen, she waved me over. “This is why you wouldn't play for me?” I nodded.

"I thought you were just being mean""

"No, Kath," I said. "I wasn't being mean. Truce?"

"Okay, truce"

Then people started disappearing towards the stage. After an act was auditioned, kids could stay in the audience if they were quiet. Three acts waited in the wings ahead of time. Kath was three acts ahead of us, so I got to see her. She sang an old Bob Dylan song. "Blowing in the Wind" and played three-chord guitar. It wasn’t terrible, but when she finished, the applause was limp. A few months before, Kath would have brought the house down with the exact same song.
Two acts later, it was our turn. Helen didn’t look pale anymore. She looked green. As I put the music on the piano, she rushed off stage. For a minute, I thought she’d bolted, but she came back with a stool to sit on. Out in the audience, I saw Kath. When she smiled, she looked like the sister I’d always wanted.

What happened next was magic. With the piano in tune, Helen didn’t have to struggle. Her voice blended and soared with the music, and for the first time, I understood what a terrific singer she was. She did too. Halfway through the song, she stood up, walked to the edge of the stage and sang to the audience like she’d been there every day of her life when the final chords died, there was a deep silence then long applause. “My goodness!” Mrs. Cromwell said. “That was lovely.”

When we came off-stage, Christine came over to slap Helen on the back.

"You’ve got to sing at my party Saturday! Say you’ll come." Helen nodded shyly.

I had a feeling no one would ever call her Mouse again. I looked at Kath, sitting alone: Queen of nothing now. So I went and sat beside her.