

English Comprehension: Easy Practice Paper

Read this passage carefully, then answer the questions that follow.

The Lamp on Sorrow Point

Nell lives with her grandfather, who keeps the lighthouse on a lonely headland called Sorrow Point. Every night of her life the great lamp at the top of the tower has been lit. In this passage, an October storm puts that to the test.

1 Nell had lived on the headland for as long as she could remember, and in all that time the lighthouse had never once failed. Every evening her grandfather climbed the ninety-eight steps, trimmed the wick and set the great lamp burning; every morning he came down
5 again, grey with tiredness but content. The light was a promise, he told her, and a promise must be kept.

On the last Thursday of October the sky turned the colour of wet slate. The gulls that had wheeled all summer above the cliffs went inland, and the sea, which Nell had known in every mood, began to
10 heave against the rocks with a slow, deliberate anger. Grandfather stood at the window a long while, saying nothing. Then he took his coat from the hook, told her to bolt the door behind him, and set off down the track to fetch the doctor for old Mrs Pym.

He did not come back. By six o'clock the rain was flung at the
15 windows in handfuls and the track had become a brown river. Nell watched the daylight drain out of the sky and understood, quite calmly, that nobody was coming. The lamp would not light itself. She fetched the matches, wound her scarf twice round her neck, and opened the door into the din.

20 The stairs were colder than she had expected. Wind came through the narrow windows in thin whistles, and her candle went out on the fortieth step, so she climbed the rest in darkness with one hand on the rail and one hand on the wall. She counted as she went, because counting was easier than thinking. At ninety-eight
25 she stopped. The lamp room smelled of oil and salt, and beyond the glass the sea was a black field ploughed with white.

The wick was damp. Three matches spluttered and died before the fourth caught, and for a moment the flame crouched so low that Nell hardly dared to breathe on it. Then it steadied, spread and
30 climbed; the mirrors behind it woke one after another, and the

light went out across the water in a long, steady arm.

She stayed all night. Twice she trimmed the wick as she had seen her grandfather do a thousand times, and twice the lamp answered her. Towards dawn the wind dropped as suddenly as a stone, and in
35 the grey light she saw a fishing boat, the Marigold, come round the point with her sails in ribbons and every man aboard alive.

Her grandfather returned at eight, soaked to the skin, having spent the night in the village with the river across his path. He looked up at the tower, and then at Nell, and said only, 'The
40 promise was kept, then.' It was, Nell thought, the finest thing anyone had ever said to her.

Please answer these questions. (Look at the passage again if you need to.) You should choose the best answer and mark its letter on your answer sheet.

Q1. Where does the passage take place?

- A. on board a fishing boat
- B. in a village high above a river
- C. on a farm at the edge of the cliffs
- D. at a lighthouse on a headland
- E. in a harbour town beside the sea

Q2. 'grey with tiredness but content' (line 5)

What does this tell us about the grandfather?

- A. He was worn out by the climb but pleased with the work he had done.
- B. He resented having to climb the tower every single night.
- C. He was too old to manage the stairs any longer.
- D. He was ill and was keeping it from Nell.
- E. He found the nightly routine dull and repetitive.

Q3. 'The light was a promise, he told her, and a promise must be kept.' (lines 5-6)

What did the grandfather mean?

- A. He had promised Nell a lamp of her own one day.
- B. The lighthouse had been promised to the village.
- C. He had promised to teach Nell how to climb the tower.
- D. A lit lamp promised that the weather would stay fair.
- E. Sailors relied on the lamp being lit every night without fail.

Q4. Why has the author mentioned that the gulls went inland? (lines 8-9)

- A. to explain why the cliffs had been empty all summer
- B. to show that the gulls could not find any food
- C. to warn the reader that a storm was on its way
- D. to suggest that Nell was frightened of birds
- E. to show how long the summer had lasted

Q5. 'with a slow, deliberate anger' (line 10)

What is another way of saying 'deliberate'?

- A. hurried
- B. purposeful
- C. unsteady
- D. accidental
- E. cheerful

Q6. Why did the grandfather leave the lighthouse?

- A. to warn the village that a storm was coming
- B. to buy more oil for the lamp
- C. to bring the fishing boats safely into the harbour
- D. to look for the doctor, who had gone missing
- E. to fetch the doctor for Mrs Pym

Q7. 'the rain was flung at the windows in handfuls' (lines 14-15)

What does this suggest about the rain?

- A. It was falling lightly and steadily.
- B. It had almost stopped falling.
- C. It was warm rather than cold.
- D. It came in sudden, violent bursts.
- E. It was mixed with hail and stones.

Q8. What type of word is 'calmly' (line 17)?

- A. a noun
- B. an adjective
- C. an adverb
- D. a verb
- E. a preposition

Q9. 'opened the door into the din' (line 19)

What is a 'din'?

- A. a loud noise
- B. a thick fog
- C. a deep darkness
- D. a crowd of people
- E. a sudden silence

Q10. How many adjectives are there in the phrase 'Wind came through the narrow windows in thin whistles'? (lines 20-21)

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Q11. Why did Nell count the steps as she climbed? (lines 23-24)

- A. to check that there really were ninety-eight of them
- B. because her grandfather had told her to
- C. to work out how long the climb was taking her
- D. to keep her mind away from how frightened she was
- E. because she could not see anything in the dark

Q12. What type of words are the following? climbed (line 3), fetched (line 18), stopped (line 25), spluttered (line 27), trimmed (line 32)

- A. nouns
- B. verbs
- C. adjectives
- D. adverbs
- E. prepositions

Q13. 'the sea was a black field ploughed with white' (line 26)

This is an example of...

- A. a simile
- B. alliteration
- C. onomatopoeia
- D. a rhetorical question
- E. a metaphor

Q14. Which match finally lit the wick? (lines 27-28)

- A. the first
- B. the second
- C. the third
- D. the fourth
- E. the fifth

Q15. 'the flame crouched so low' (line 28)

Why has the author described the flame in this way?

- A. to show that the flame was small and might go out at any moment
- B. to show that the lamp room was crowded with equipment
- C. to suggest that the flame was dangerous to Nell
- D. to explain that Nell was kneeling beside the lamp
- E. to show that the flame was hidden from the sea

Q16. 'the mirrors behind it woke one after another' (line 30)

This is an example of...

- A. a simile
- B. exaggeration
- C. personification
- D. alliteration
- E. a metaphor

Q17. 'with her sails in ribbons' (line 36)

What does this tell us about the Marigold?

- A. Her sails had been brightly decorated for the voyage.
- B. Her sails had been torn into strips by the storm.
- C. Her sails had been taken down and stowed away.
- D. Her sails were brand new and had never been used.
- E. Her crew were celebrating a safe return.

Q18. Why is the arrival of the Marigold important to the story?

- A. It proves that the storm had blown itself out.
- B. It brings Nell's grandfather safely home.
- C. It shows that the villagers had been worried about Nell.
- D. It explains why the doctor had been sent for.
- E. It shows that Nell's light had done its work.

Q19. 'The promise was kept, then.' (lines 39-40)

What do these words tell us about the grandfather?

- A. He says very little, but he is deeply proud of Nell.
- B. He is angry that Nell climbed the tower on her own.
- C. He had not yet noticed that the lamp was lit.
- D. He is disappointed that so many matches were wasted.
- E. He believes Nell was lucky rather than brave.

Q20. Which of these would make the best alternative title for the passage?

- A. A Night in the Village
- B. The Promise Kept
- C. The Gulls Fly Inland
- D. Grandfather's Lighthouse
- E. The Wreck of the Marigold