

English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper

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

The Man in the Churchyard

by Charles Dickens

From the opening of Great Expectations (1861). The story is told by Pip, looking back at his own childhood. He is an orphan of about seven, brought up on the lonely marshes of north Kent by his elder sister and her husband Joe Gargery, the village blacksmith. On a raw winter afternoon he has walked out to the churchyard to look at his parents' graves. This extract has been shortened in places.

1 My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

5 I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister, —Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were
10 unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly.

15 Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the
20 churchyard; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers
25 growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A
30 man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied
round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in
mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles,
and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and
growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by
35 the chin.

"Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do
it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

40 "Show us where you live," said the man. "Pint out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the
alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down,
and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of
45 bread. When the church came to itself,—for he was so sudden and
strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw the
steeple under my feet,—when the church came to itself, I say, I was
seated on a high tombstone, trembling while he ate the bread
ravenously.

50 "Now lookee here!" said the man. "Where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" said I.

He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his
shoulder.

"There, sir!" I timidly explained. "Also Georgiana. That's my
55 mother."

"Ha!" he muttered then, considering. "Who d'ye live with,—supposin'
you're kindly let to live, which I han't made up my mind about?"

"My sister, sir,—Mrs. Joe Gargery,—wife of Joe Gargery, the
blacksmith, sir."

60 "Blacksmith, eh?" said he. And looked down at his leg.

After darkly looking at his leg and me several times, he came closer to my tombstone, took me by both arms, and tilted me back as far as he could hold me; so that his eyes looked most powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his.

65 "You get me a file." He tilted me again. "And you get me wittles."
He tilted me again. "You bring 'em both to me." He tilted me again.
"Or I'll have your heart and liver out." He tilted me again.

"You bring me, to-morrow morning early, that file and them wittles.
You bring the lot to me, at that old Battery over yonder."

70 I said that I would get him the file, and I would get him what
broken bits of food I could, and I would come to him at the Battery,
early in the morning.

He hugged his shuddering body in both his arms,—clasping himself, as
if to hold himself together,—and limped towards the low church wall.

75 As I saw him go, picking his way among the nettles, and among the
brambles that bound the green mounds, he looked in my young eyes as
if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up
cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and
pull him in.

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. How did the narrator come to be called Pip? (lines 1-3)

- A. It was the name carved on his father's tombstone
- B. As a baby he could not manage his full name, and shortened it himself
- C. His sister gave him the name when he came to live with her
- D. The blacksmith gave him the name when he was very small
- E. His father had been known as Pip before him

Q2. "nothing longer or more explicit than Pip" (lines 2-3)

What does "explicit" mean here?

- A. unusual or striking
- B. clearly and fully stated
- C. easy to spell
- D. politely worded
- E. spoken loudly

Q3. Where did the young Pip get his ideas of what his parents had looked like? (lines 7-12)

- A. From the shape and style of the letters carved on their tombstones
- B. From his own dim memories of them
- C. From photographs that his sister had kept
- D. From a painted likeness that hung in the blacksmith's house
- E. From what Mrs Joe Gargery had told him about them

Q4. "unreasonably derived from their tombstones" (line 10)

What is the narrator admitting by using the word "unreasonably"?

- A. That his sister had refused to answer his questions
- B. That he was angry with his parents for having died so early
- C. That the words on the tombstones had been carved carelessly
- D. That the stones were too old and worn to be read
- E. That there was no sensible reason why the lettering should tell him anything about his parents

Q5. "a childish conclusion" (lines 13-14)

Why does the narrator describe it in this way?

- A. He wants us to believe that his mother really was freckled and sickly
- B. He is looking back as an adult and gently mocking the boy he once was
- C. He means that the other children in the village believed it too
- D. He is annoyed with his sister for never correcting him
- E. He is admitting that he was too young to read the inscription

Q6. How far was Pip's home from the sea? (lines 15-16)

- A. Twenty miles in a straight line across the marshes
- B. A mile or more, out on the flat in-shore
- C. It stood on the shore of the sea itself
- D. Twenty miles, following the winding of the river
- E. Just beyond the wall of the churchyard

Q7. What type of word is "memorable" in "a memorable raw afternoon towards evening" (line 18)?

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

Q8. "this bleak place overgrown with nettles" (line 19)

What does "bleak" tell us about the churchyard?

- A. It was rich and fertile
- B. It was bare, cold and cheerless
- C. It was sheltered and peaceful
- D. It was steep and rocky
- E. It was crowded with visitors

Q9. "the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea" (lines 23-24)

What impression of the sea do these words give?

- A. That sailors keep their boats hidden away there
- B. That the wind has died away over the water
- C. That it is calm and grey on that particular afternoon
- D. That it is like the den of a wild beast, dangerous and untamed
- E. That it is too far away for Pip ever to have seen it

Q10. "the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip" (lines 24-25)

Why does the narrator describe himself in this way?

- A. Because he was so small and frightened that he seemed less a boy than a shaking little heap
- B. Because he had wrapped himself in a blanket against the wind
- C. Because he was carrying a bundle of clothes to keep himself warm
- D. Because he wants us to know that he was ill that afternoon
- E. Because he had found a bundle lying among the graves

Q11. What do the details of the man's appearance most strongly suggest about him? (lines 29-35)

- A. He was a beggar who had walked out from the village
- B. He was a farm worker who had been caught out in bad weather
- C. He was a prisoner who had escaped and had been out on the marshes
- D. He had been fighting with another man among the graves
- E. He was a sailor who had been shipwrecked on the coast

Q12. "A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head." (lines 29-31)

Why does the author begin three sentences one after another in this way?

- A. To suggest that there was more than one man among the graves
- B. To show that the man was speaking in short bursts
- C. To show that Pip did not recognise who the man was
- D. To make the description easier for a frightened boy to remember
- E. To pile detail on detail, so that the man grows more terrible as we read

Q13. "who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled" (lines 33-34)

How many verbs are there in this part of the sentence?

- A. two
- B. three
- C. four
- D. five
- E. six

Q14. "When the church came to itself" (line 45)

What had really happened?

- A. The church door had swung shut behind them
- B. Pip had fainted and was only now waking up
- C. The bells of the church had begun to ring again
- D. Pip had been turned upside down, so the church had seemed to turn over
- E. The man had knocked Pip against the church wall

Q15. "trembling while he ate the bread ravenously" (lines 48-49)

What does "ravenously" mean here?

- A. slowly and thoughtfully
- B. secretly, so as not to be seen
- C. noisily and rudely
- D. angrily
- E. very hungrily and greedily

Q16. "He started, made a short run, and stopped and looked over his shoulder." (lines 52-53)

Why did the man do this?

- A. His leg iron had caught on one of the graves
- B. He was pretending to run away in order to frighten Pip
- C. He thought Pip's mother was standing near them and might see him
- D. He wanted to see whether the village was really a mile off
- E. He had heard someone coming along the road from the village

Q17. "Blacksmith, eh?" (line 60)

Why is the man so interested in this answer, and why does he then look down at his leg?

- A. A blacksmith's house would hold a file, and he needs one to get the iron off his leg
- B. He had once worked for Joe Gargery himself
- C. He was afraid that a blacksmith would be strong enough to catch him
- D. He wanted Pip to fetch the blacksmith to the churchyard
- E. He hoped that the blacksmith would give him food and a bed

Q18. "He tilted me again." (lines 65-67)

Why does the author repeat these words after each demand?

- A. To show that the man was losing his balance
- B. To show how long the two of them talked for
- C. To suggest that the man had forgotten what he had already said
- D. To drive each demand home and keep Pip helpless and giddy
- E. To show that the man found the whole thing funny

Q19. "eluding the hands of the dead people" (line 77)

What does this tell us about Pip?

- A. He believed that the dead had truly risen from their graves that evening
- B. He thought the man was hiding behind the gravestones so as not to be followed
- C. He was afraid that the man was going to fall into an open grave
- D. He could see that the man was searching the graves for something buried there
- E. His frightened imagination turned the brambles catching at the man into the hands of the dead

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

- A. The Man Who Climbed the Church Wall
- B. The Blacksmith and His Wife
- C. A History of the Pirrip Family
- D. A Frightening Meeting in the Churchyard
- E. Life in the Marsh Country