English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper 6 Answers

Q#	Answer	Explanation
1	E	A commotion is a great deal of noise and disorder. Everything that follows shows what the narrator means by it: seven people running in different directions, shouting, grovelling on the floor for a nail, and a house turned upside down over one picture.
2	B	He waves the whole family away before he has so much as taken his coat off. The joke of the passage is that within a minute he has set every one of them running errands, so his confidence turns out to be worth nothing at all.
3	D	Sloping print is how a writer shows which word a speaker leaned on. Uncle Podger is stressing that *he* will do it and nobody else – the same stress falls on "me" in the sentence before, and on "like" near the end of the passage.
4	A	"Would" used in this way describes a habit. The narrator is not telling us about one particular evening; he is telling us what always happened, which is much funnier – the whole family knew the disaster by heart and it came round again anyway.
5	C	It tells somebody to do something, and it begins with the plain form of the verb, "go and get" – that is what makes it a command, or imperative. Uncle Podger fires off a string of them without a "please" among the lot.
6	B	Jim is sent round with his father's kind regards, a polite word about Mr. Goggles's bad leg, and the real business – the loan of a spirit-level. Will is sent for the hammer, the girl for the nails, Maria is told to stay and hold the light, and Tom is to hand up the picture.
7	E	The author lays the chain of causes out one after another: he cut himself, so he wanted the handkerchief; the handkerchief was in the coat; he had lost the coat; so the whole house stopped looking for the tools and started looking for the coat. Each new muddle grows straight out of the last one.

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8	C	The line before it is his loudest outburst yet – "Six of you!—and you can't find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago!" The author lets him rage and then, in one short sentence, shows the coat was underneath him. The bigger the fuss, the smaller the cause: that is the joke the whole passage is built on.
9	D	He has just discovered that he was sitting on the coat, and his answer is to insult the people who were hunting for it. He never once admits a mistake in the whole passage – he calls them all fools over the mark on the wall, and blames "you women" for making a fuss after he has smashed his own thumb.
10	C	Two hold the chair, a third helps him up and holds him there, a fourth hands him a nail and a fifth passes up the hammer – five in all. And after all that help, the first thing he does is drop the nail.
11	D	The word can mean physically hurt, and Uncle Podger has cut his finger, which makes that the tempting answer. But a *tone* cannot be cut: this is the other meaning, wounded in one's feelings. He has dropped the nail himself and manages to sound like the victim of it – "now the nail's gone", as though it had wandered off on its own.
12	B	The order runs: the glass is broken and he cuts himself, the coat is found underneath him, the nail and then the hammer go missing, the mark on the wall is lost, the string slips and he lands on the piano, and only then – "At last … with the first blow" – does he smash his thumb.
13	E	He overreaches, the string slips and he falls flat on the piano. The joke is in the language: the author describes the crash in the polite words of a concert notice – "a really fine musical effect" – when what he means is a fat man landing on every key at once.
14	A	She says the opposite of what she means, politely and without raising her voice, which is what makes it sting. A week away with her mother is her measure of how bad one nail in one wall is; the author calls it "mildly" observing, which sharpens it further.

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15	C	The hammer goes clean through the plaster and there is nothing left to stop him, so he is thrown at the wall hard enough, the author says, nearly to flatten his nose. Such a long, grand word for so undignified a moment is part of the joke.
16	B	A rake has iron teeth, so anything "smoothed down" with one is left in furrows. That is the picture: not a wall smoothed, but a wall raked – the mark of every hole, slip and blow. The comparison says the opposite of what its words seem to promise.
17	B	The two words after the dash turn the whole sentence round. The family have been kept up until midnight, insulted, trodden on and worn out, and the man who caused it all steps down off the chair thoroughly pleased with himself – which is exactly what he told them at the start: "Why, I *like* doing a little job of this sort."
18	E	The author has just told us what there is to see: a crooked, insecure picture and a wall raked to pieces. "Evident" means the pride was plain on his face, and his closing boast – that some people would have paid a man to do it – shows he has not noticed anything wrong at all.
19	A	The story is framed at both ends. It opens "He always reminds me of my poor Uncle Podger", and it closes "Harris will be just that sort of man when he grows up." Harris has just taken charge of the packing and handed all the work to everybody else, and the whole anecdote is the narrator's way of saying what he thinks of that.
20	A	An empty pot rings loudest when it is struck, and the saying is about people who make the most fuss and have the least in them. Uncle Podger shouts at seven people for a whole evening and produces one crooked picture and a ruined wall. "Many hands make light work" is the tempting answer – there are plenty of hands here – but the work is anything but light, which is the very joke the author is making.

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