English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper 7

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

A Single Man of Good Fortune

by Jane Austen

The whole of the first chapter of Pride and Prejudice (1813). Mr. and Mrs. Bennet live in the country with their five unmarried daughters, of whom Jane is the eldest and Elizabeth — Lizzy — the second. Netherfield Park is a large house nearby that has stood empty. To let a house is to rent it out; Michaelmas is the 29th of September, a usual day for moving into a property; a chaise and four is a carriage drawn by four horses; a person's parts are their abilities, and caprice means sudden changes of mood. The old spelling develope is the author's own.

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife, impatiently.

"*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris

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immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh, single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? how can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome? You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?"

"Design? Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go—or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."

"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly *have* had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage for, I assure you."

"But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account; for in general, you know, they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for *us* to visit him, if you do not."

"You are over scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls—though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others: and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he: "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

"Ah, you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."

"Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all."

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. *Her* mind was less difficult to develope. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news.

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. “in want of a wife” (line 2)

What does “in want of” mean here?

A. in need of

B. in search of

C. short of money for

D. afraid of

E. undeserving of

Q2. Who really holds the opinion that the author calls “a truth universally acknowledged”? (lines 1–6)

A. Every single man of good fortune.

B. Mr. Bennet, who repeats it to his wife.

C. The families of the neighbourhood who have daughters to marry.

D. The author herself, who states it as her own belief.

E. The servants and tradesmen of the district.

Q3. “the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters” (lines 5–6)

What does this suggest about the neighbours?

A. They believe a rich newcomer belongs to one of them before they have even met him.

B. They intend to take the newcomer to court over his land.

C. They have been promised a share of the newcomer’s fortune.

D. They are related to the newcomer through their daughters.

E. They think the newcomer has stolen something from the district.

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Q4. "Mr. Bennet replied that he had not." (line 9) and "Mr. Bennet made no answer." (line 12)

What do these two short sentences show?

A. That Mr. Bennet had not been listening to his wife at all.

B. That Mr. Bennet was giving his wife as little encouragement as he could.

C. That Mr. Bennet was too unwell to hold a conversation.

D. That Mr. Bennet already knew everything his wife wanted to tell him.

E. That Mr. Bennet disapproved of gossip about the neighbours.

Q5. "*You* want to tell me" (line 15)

Why is the word "You" printed in italics?

A. To show that Mr. Bennet was shouting at his wife.

B. To show that the word is being quoted from somebody else.

C. To show that Mr. Bennet was addressing all his daughters at once.

D. To show that Mr. Bennet was pretending not to know who his wife meant.

E. To stress that the eagerness is his wife's and not his own.

Q6. "This was invitation enough." (line 16)

What does this sentence tell us about Mrs. Bennet?

A. She would not speak until she had been asked politely.

B. The smallest scrap of encouragement was all she needed to pour it all out.

C. She had been formally invited to visit Netherfield Park.

D. She was waiting for her husband to ask her a direct question.

E. She had decided to say nothing further on the subject.

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Q7. “a chaise and four” (line 19)

Why has the author included this detail?

A. To explain how far Mr. Bingley had to travel.

B. To show that Mr. Bingley was in a great hurry.

C. To show that Mr. Bingley travelled in a style only a rich man could afford.

D. To suggest that Mr. Bingley had brought his whole family with him.

E. To hint that Mr. Bingley did not know the roads of the district.

Q8. “How so? how can it affect them?” (line 29)

What is Mr. Bennet doing here?

A. Asking a question he genuinely cannot answer.

B. Warning his wife that the girls must not be told.

C. Objecting that his daughters are still far too young.

D. Pretending not to follow his wife’s meaning, in order to tease her.

E. Showing that he has no interest in his daughters’ futures.

Q9. “design” (line 32)

What is the best meaning of this word here?

A. a drawing or plan of a building

B. a purpose or intention

C. a pattern of decoration

D. a piece of good luck

E. a signature on an agreement

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Q10. “you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party” (lines 38–39)

Why does Mr. Bennet say this?

A. He seriously believes his wife should marry Mr. Bingley.

B. He wants to comfort his wife, who is unhappy about growing older.

C. He is teasing her with a compliment too absurd to be meant.

D. He is warning her not to make herself ridiculous in front of a stranger.

E. He hopes she will refuse to go so that the matter will be dropped.

Q11. “My dear, you flatter me.” (line 40)

What does Mrs. Bennet’s reply reveal?

A. That she has seen through the joke and is playing along with it.

B. That she is offended by her husband’s rudeness.

C. That she has taken the compliment seriously and is pleased by it.

D. That she has decided not to visit Mr. Bingley after all.

E. That she thinks her daughters are more handsome than she is.

Q12. “In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.” (line 44)

What is Mr. Bennet really saying?

A. That mothers of large families are usually admired for their beauty.

B. That his wife is right to stop thinking about her looks, because little is left of them.

C. That beauty matters less than good sense in a wife.

D. That his daughters have inherited their mother’s beauty.

E. That a woman with five daughters has no time to spare for anything.

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Q13. "establishment" (line 48)

What does Mrs. Bennet mean by this word?

A. a shop or business of her daughter's own

B. a school where the girls might be taught

C. a settled home and position in life through marriage

D. a sum of money paid to a bride's family

E. a formal introduction to the neighbourhood

Q14. "it will be impossible for *us* to visit him, if you do not" (lines 51–52)

What does this tell the reader about the manners of the time?

A. A family could not call on a new neighbour until the father had called first.

B. Women were not allowed to leave the house without a servant.

C. Only families who had been invited in writing could pay a call.

D. A newcomer had to visit every family in the district himself.

E. Sir William and Lady Lucas had to give their permission first.

Q15. "my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls" (lines 55–56)

Why does Mr. Bennet offer to write such a letter?

A. He has decided to help his wife's plan after all.

B. He is carrying his wife's scheme to a ridiculous extreme to mock it.

C. He wishes to save himself the trouble of a visit later on.

D. He is worried that another family will reach Mr. Bingley first.

E. He has met Mr. Bingley before and thinks well of him.

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Q16. What does the argument about Lizzy show about the difference between her parents? (lines 57–63)

A. Mr. Bennet cares for his daughters while his wife does not care at all.

B. Both parents secretly agree that Lizzy is the cleverest of the five.

C. Mrs. Bennet judges her daughters by looks and temper, while her husband values a quick mind.

D. Mrs. Bennet prefers Lizzy but is unwilling to say so aloud.

E. Mr. Bennet thinks all five daughters are equally promising.

Q17. "They are my old friends." (line 68)

Which technique is the author using here?

A. a simile

B. alliteration

C. onomatopoeia

D. personification

E. a rhetorical question

Q18. "odd" (line 77), "sarcastic" (line 77) and "uncertain" (line 81)

What type of word are these three?

A. adverbs

B. adjectives

C. abstract nouns

D. verbs

E. prepositions

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Q19. "The business of her life was to get her daughters married: its solace was visiting and news." (lines 82–84)

What does this closing sentence tell us about Mrs. Bennet?

A. That she worked hard to support her family financially.

B. That she had given up hope of her daughters ever marrying.

C. That she found little comfort in the company of her neighbours.

D. That she had one aim in life and two small comforts, and nothing else besides.

E. That she spent her days reading the newspapers for news of eligible men.

Q20. Which of these best describes the way the author presents the Bennets' marriage?

A. As a warm partnership in which husband and wife understand one another.

B. As a marriage ruined by poverty and constant worry about money.

C. As a comic mismatch, in which he amuses himself at the expense of a wife who never notices.

D. As a quarrel so bitter that the couple can barely speak to each other.

E. As a happy arrangement in which the wife makes all the decisions.

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