# 1.22-2 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 2: 1-hour Pack

GL ASSESSMENT / CSSE 11+ Entrance English (GL Assessment / CSSE style) · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Answer ALL questions.**

## A New Home at Greymoor House

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It was upon a raw afternoon in November that Alice Thorne first beheld the grey, forbidding facade of Greymoor House, and felt her heart sink within her like a stone dropped into a well. The carriage had jolted and creaked along lanes deep with mud for the better part of three hours, and now, as the horses drew up before the iron gates, she perceived that her new home wore an aspect no less bleak than the weather itself.

She was an orphan of twelve years, her father having succumbed but a fortnight since to a fever that had carried off half the parish, and she came to Greymoor House as a poor relation, dependent upon the charity of an uncle she had never before set eyes upon. Mr. Josiah Thorne was a merchant of some consequence in the wool trade, a man whose reputation for severity had reached even the sheltered nursery in which Alice had passed her childhood.

The door was opened, not by any liveried footman, but by a wizened housekeeper of forbidding countenance, who looked upon the child with an expression Alice could not readily interpret, whether it betokened pity or mere indifference she could not tell.

"You will be Miss Alice, I dare say," said the woman, in a voice as dry as autumn leaves. "Mr. Thorne is engaged upon business and will not see you until supper. Follow me, if you please, and do not loiter upon the stair; the master cannot abide idleness in any form."

Alice followed obediently, though her legs trembled with a fatigue she was too proud to confess. The hall through which they passed was vast and ill lit, hung about with portraits of Thornes long departed, whose painted eyes seemed to Alice to follow her with mute and melancholy reproach. She thought of her father's small, sunlit study, with its shelves of well thumbed books, and felt a lump rise in her throat which she resolved, with all the fortitude she could muster, not to permit to become tears.

Her chamber, when at last she reached it, proved to be a narrow room beneath the eaves, furnished with a single iron bedstead, a washstand, and a small window through which she might observe the bare branches of an elm tossing in the wind. It was not a room calculated to raise the spirits of any child, however resilient, yet Alice, setting down her small trunk upon the bare boards, resolved that she would not be daunted by grey walls, nor by an uncle's reputed severity.


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At supper that evening she was summoned to the dining room, a chamber of such chill and formal grandeur that she scarcely dared to seat herself until bidden. Mr. Thorne sat at the head of a table that might comfortably have accommodated twenty persons, though only two places had been laid. He was a spare, upright man of perhaps five and fifty years, with iron grey whiskers and eyes of a pale, penetrating blue that seemed to appraise her as a merchant might appraise a bale of doubtful wool.

"So," said he, when the soup had been set before them and the servant had withdrawn, "you are my brother's daughter. You have his look about the eyes, though I trust you have not inherited his want of prudence in matters of business." He regarded her steadily. "I am not a sentimental man, Alice, and I will not pretend to a grief I do not feel for a brother I saw perhaps twice in twenty years. But you shall have a roof over your head and an education suited to your station, provided you give me no cause for complaint. Idleness, deceit, and extravagance are the three vices I will not countenance under this roof. Do you understand me?"

Alice, though her heart quailed within her at so cold a welcome, found within herself a small, stubborn flame of resolve. "I understand you perfectly, sir," she replied, in a voice that trembled only a very little, "and I shall endeavour to give you no cause for complaint whatsoever."

A silence followed, in which her uncle regarded her with something that might, in a less austere countenance, have been mistaken for the faint beginnings of approval. He said nothing further upon the matter, but addressed himself to his soup, and Alice, watching him covertly beneath lowered lashes, began for the first time since her father's death to entertain a small and cautious hope that Greymoor House, for all its greyness, might yet be endured.

**1** List four separate details the writer gives about Alice's chamber beneath the eaves.

**(4)**

**2** Give two details the text provides about Mr Thorne's physical appearance at supper.

**(2)**


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**3** Explain how the simile comparing Mr Thorne's look to a merchant appraising 'a bale of doubtful wool' reveals his attitude towards Alice as she arrives.

**(4)**

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**4** Explain how the simile 'felt her heart sink within her like a stone dropped into a well', used in the very first sentence of the extract, conveys Alice's feelings as she arrives at Greymoor House.

**(4)**

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**5** The dining room table 'might comfortably have accommodated twenty persons, though only two places had been laid'. Explain what this detail suggests about Greymoor House and Alice's new life there.

**(4)**

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**6** Re-read the paragraph in which Mr Thorne first speaks to Alice, beginning "So,' said he...'. Explain what impression the reader forms of his character from his choice of words in this speech.

**(4)**


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**7** The word 'countenance' appears three times in the extract: as a noun in 'a wizened housekeeper of forbidding countenance' (paragraph 3), as a verb in 'the three vices I will not countenance under this roof' (Mr Thorne's speech), and again as a noun in 'a less austere countenance' (the final paragraph). Explain the meaning of the word in each of its two different uses.

**(a)** Explain what 'countenance' means when it is used as a noun, as in 'forbidding countenance' and 'austere countenance'. **(1)**

**(b)** Explain what 'countenance' means when it is used as a verb, as in 'I will not countenance'. **(1)**

**(c)** Explain why a reader needs to recognise that the same word is being used as two different parts of speech (a noun and then a verb) in order to understand both sentences correctly. **(1)**

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**8** Are the following statements about the opening of the extract True or False? Write True or False for each.

**(a)** Alice's father died only a short time before she arrived at Greymoor House. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

**(b)** Alice had visited Greymoor House several times before this occasion. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

**(c)** The housekeeper who opens the door is described as young and cheerful. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

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**9** 'with all the fortitude she could muster' - 'fortitude' is closest in meaning to:

- ☐ A) courage and strength in facing hardship
- ☐ B) sudden anger
- ☐ C) financial wealth
- ☐ D) forgetfulness
- ☐ E) physical exhaustion


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**10** 'It was not a room calculated to raise the spirits of any child, however resilient' - 'resilient' here means a child who is:

- [ ] A) easily discouraged by hardship
- [ ] B) unusually talkative
- [ ] C) extremely wealthy
- [ ] D) able to recover quickly from difficulty
- [ ] E) short in height

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**11** 'seemed to appraise her as a merchant might appraise a bale of doubtful wool' - 'appraise' means to:

- [ ] A) compliment warmly
- [ ] B) ignore completely
- [ ] C) examine and judge the value or quality of something
- [ ] D) forget entirely
- [ ] E) purchase immediately without inspection

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**12** 'her heart quailed within her at so cold a welcome' - 'quailed' means Alice's heart:

- [ ] A) grew hot with anger
- [ ] B) grew cold with fear or apprehension
- [ ] C) beat rapidly with excitement
- [ ] D) leapt with sudden joy
- [ ] E) settled into calm indifference

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**13** 'in a less austere countenance' - 'austere' is closest in meaning to:

- [ ] A) cheerful and welcoming
- [ ] B) youthful in appearance
- [ ] C) extremely generous
- [ ] D) brightly coloured
- [ ] E) severe and stern, without warmth


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**14** 'though I trust you have not inherited his want of prudence in matters of business' - 'prudence' means:

- ☐ A) dishonesty
- ☐ B) laziness
- ☐ C) excessive and careless spending
- ☐ D) carefulness and good judgement, especially with money
- ☐ E) generosity towards others

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**15** Look closely at the wording of the extract.

**(a)** Find and copy one phrase from the first paragraph that shows Alice's spirits fell suddenly as she arrived at the house. **(1)**

**(b)** Find and copy one phrase from the paragraph beginning 'Alice followed obediently...' that shows the portraits in the hall seemed to be watching her with disapproval. **(1)**

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**16** Number the following events 1 to 4 to show the order in which they happen in the extract: 'Alice is shown to her narrow chamber beneath the eaves', 'Alice's carriage draws up before the iron gates of Greymoor House', 'a wizened housekeeper opens the door to Alice', 'Alice is summoned to supper in the dining room'.

**(4)**

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**17** In the phrase 'the grey, forbidding facade of Greymoor House', the word 'forbidding' most nearly means:

- ☐ A) brightly lit and colourful
- ☐ B) welcoming and cheerful
- ☐ C) recently built
- ☐ D) small and modest
- ☐ E) stern and unwelcoming in appearance


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**18** In the sentence 'her father having succumbed but a fortnight since to a fever', the word 'succumbed' means:

- [ ] A) laughed nervously at
- [ ] B) given way to, or died from
- [ ] C) fully recovered from
- [ ] D) written many letters about
- [ ] E) travelled a great distance to escape

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**19** The word 'wizened', used to describe the housekeeper, suggests she is:

- [ ] A) youthful and plump
- [ ] B) exceptionally tall
- [ ] C) unusually strong
- [ ] D) shrivelled and wrinkled with age
- [ ] E) newly employed at the house

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**20** 'whether it betokened pity or mere indifference she could not tell' - 'betokened' is closest in meaning to:

- [ ] A) was a sign or indication of
- [ ] B) loudly announced
- [ ] C) prevented
- [ ] D) completely disguised
- [ ] E) apologised for

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**21** When the housekeeper tells Alice 'do not loiter upon the stair', she is instructing her not to:

- [ ] A) hurry up the stairs quickly
- [ ] B) speak to any of the servants
- [ ] C) linger or delay idly on the stairs
- [ ] D) sing while climbing the stairs
- [ ] E) carry her trunk up the stairs


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**22** Compare the mood created by the writer at the very beginning of the extract with the mood at the very end. Use evidence from across the text to support your ideas.

**(5)**

**23** Explain how the writer structures the extract as a whole to build a sense of coldness before allowing a small note of hope to emerge at the very end.

**(5)**

**24** A reader said, 'This extract presents Mr Thorne as entirely without warmth.' To what extent do you agree? Support your response with detailed reference to the text, including the writer's use of language and structure.

**(8)**


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# Mark scheme · 1.22-2 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 2: 1-hour Pack

## Question 1

| | |
|---|---|
| it is a narrow room | **B1** |
| it is furnished with a single iron bedstead | **B1** |
| it has a washstand | **B1** |
| it has a small window looking out on the bare branches of an elm tossing in the wind (accept either detail: the small window, or the view of the elm) | **B1** |

**Answer: Any four of: it is a narrow room beneath the eaves; a single iron bedstead; a washstand; a small window; a view of the bare branches of an elm tossing in the wind.**

## Question 2

| | |
|---|---|
| he is described as a spare, upright man (accept: thin and straight-backed) | **B1** |
| any one further detail: he is about five and fifty years old; he has iron grey whiskers; he has eyes of a pale, penetrating blue | **B1** |

**Answer: Any two of: a spare, upright man; about five and fifty years old; iron grey whiskers; eyes of a pale, penetrating blue.**

## Question 3

**Level 1** Simple identification of the simile with limited or undeveloped comment on effect. **1-2**

**Level 2** Clear and detailed explanation of how the simile reveals Mr Thorne's businesslike, assessing attitude, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

**Indicative content:**

- The comparison to a merchant assessing goods suggests Mr Thorne views Alice as something to be evaluated for her worth or usefulness, rather than welcomed with warmth
- The word 'doubtful' implies scepticism, suggesting he is uncertain of her value or character before she has even spoken
- The simile draws directly on his own trade as a wool merchant, showing that his professional habits of mind shape even his personal relationships
- This foreshadows his later warning about 'want of prudence in matters of business', reinforcing the impression of a man who measures people much as he measures goods

## Question 4

**Level 1** Simple identification of the simile with limited or undeveloped comment on effect. **1-2**

**Level 2** Clear and detailed explanation of how the simile conveys Alice's sudden dread and sense of isolation, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

**Indicative content:**

- The image of a stone dropped into a well suggests a sudden, heavy, downward feeling, mirroring Alice's abrupt loss of spirits at her first sight of the house
- A well is deep and dark, suggesting that Alice's feeling of dread goes far beyond a passing disappointment
- The idea of a stone disappearing out of sight and sound into the depths of a well may suggest Alice's own sense of being swallowed up by an unfamiliar, unwelcoming place
- Placing the simile in the very first sentence establishes a bleak mood from the outset, before the reader learns any further detail about Alice's situation

## Question 5

**Level 1** A simple comment that the house is large or empty, with little or no reference to the text. **1-2**

**Level 2** A clear and, at the top of the band, detailed explanation of what this detail suggests, supported by relevant reference to the text. **3-4**

**Indicative content:**

- The contrast between the table's size and the two places laid suggests the household is now small, quiet, and perhaps lonely
- It may hint that the house once held a larger family or more frequent company, now reduced to just Mr Thorne and his few dependants
- The detail reinforces the earlier description of the dining room as a place of 'chill and formal grandeur', suggesting grandeur without warmth or company
- It foreshadows the isolated, quiet existence Alice may face at Greymoor House, despite the size and apparent wealth of the household


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## Question 6

**Level 1** A simple comment that Mr Thorne seems strict or unfriendly, with little or no reference to the text. **1-2**

**Level 2** A clear and, at the top of the band, detailed explanation of the impression created, supported by relevant and, where appropriate, embedded quotation. **3-4**

**Indicative content:**

- His blunt admission that he is 'not a sentimental man' and will not 'pretend to a grief I do not feel' suggests a cold honesty rather than warmth
- His offer of a home is immediately made conditional, 'provided you give me no cause for complaint', suggesting a transactional rather than affectionate relationship
- Listing 'idleness, deceit, and extravagance' as the three vices he will not tolerate suggests a rigid, rule-bound character who values discipline highly
- Despite his coldness, the promise of 'a roof over your head and an education suited to your station' shows he does intend to provide practical care, suggesting he is stern rather than deliberately cruel

## Question 7

(a) a person's face or facial expression (accept 'appearance' or 'look on someone's face') **B1**

**(a) Answer: A person's face or the expression on their face.**

(b) to tolerate, allow, or approve of something (accept 'put up with' or 'permit') **B1**

**(b) Answer: To tolerate, allow, or approve of something.**

(c) recognises that reading 'countenance' with only its noun meaning (face) would make Mr Thorne's sentence about vices nonsensical, so the reader must identify its grammatical role from context **B1**

**(c) Answer: Because the noun meaning (a face) would not make sense in the sentence about vices, a reader must use the surrounding words to work out that 'countenance' is being used as a verb there instead.**

## Question 8

(a) True **B1**

**(a) Answer: True**

(b) False **B1**

**(b) Answer: False**

(c) False **B1**

**(c) Answer: False**

## Question 9

A - identifies 'fortitude' as courage or strength in facing hardship **B1**

**Answer: A) courage and strength in facing hardship**

## Question 10

D - identifies 'resilient' as able to recover quickly from difficulty **B1**

**Answer: D) able to recover quickly from difficulty**

## Question 11

C - identifies 'appraise' as examining and judging value or quality **B1**

**Answer: C) examine and judge the value or quality of something**

## Question 12

B - identifies 'quailed' as growing fearful or apprehensive **B1**

**Answer: B) grew cold with fear or apprehension**

## Question 13

E - identifies 'austere' as severe or stern, without warmth **B1**

**Answer: E) severe and stern, without warmth**

## Question 14

D - identifies 'prudence' as carefulness and good judgement, especially with money **B1**

**Answer: D) carefulness and good judgement, especially with money**

## Question 15

(a) accept: 'felt her heart sink within her like a stone dropped into a well' **B1**

**(a) Answer: felt her heart sink within her like a stone dropped into a well**

(b) accept: 'seemed to Alice to follow her with mute and melancholy reproach' **B1**

**(b) Answer: seemed to Alice to follow her with mute and melancholy reproach**

## Question 16

correctly places 'Alice's carriage draws up before the iron gates of Greymoor House' as event 1 **B1**

correctly places 'a wizened housekeeper opens the door to Alice' as event 2 **B1**

correctly places 'Alice is shown to her narrow chamber beneath the eaves' as event 3 **B1**

correctly places 'Alice is summoned to supper in the dining room' as event 4 **B1**

**Answer: 1: the carriage draws up before the iron gates; 2: the housekeeper opens the door; 3: Alice is shown to her chamber; 4: Alice is summoned to supper.**

## Question 17

E - identifies 'forbidding' as stern or unwelcoming in appearance **B1**

**Answer: E) stern and unwelcoming in appearance**

## Question 18

B - identifies 'succumbed' as giving way to, or dying from, an illness **B1**

**Answer: B) given way to, or died from**

## Question 19

D - identifies 'wizened' as shrivelled or wrinkled with age **B1**

**Answer: D) shrivelled and wrinkled with age**


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## Question 20

A - identifies 'betokened' as being a sign or indication of something **B1**

**Answer: A) was a sign or indication of**

## Question 21

C - identifies 'loiter' as lingering or delaying idly **B1**

**Answer: C) linger or delay idly on the stairs**

## Question 22

**Level 1** A simple comparison identifying that the mood changes, with limited or no supporting reference. **1-2**

**Level 2** A clear comparison supported by relevant evidence from both the beginning and the end of the extract. **3-4**

**Level 3** A perceptive, well-developed comparison that selects precise evidence from across the extract and explores the shift in mood in a nuanced way. **5**

**Indicative content:**

- At the start the mood is bleak and oppressive, established through the raw November weather and Alice's heart sinking 'like a stone dropped into a well'
- This bleakness is sustained through the ill lit hall, the reproachful portraits, and the cold formality of the dining room
- By the end, though the physical setting remains unchanged, the mood shifts towards a 'small and cautious hope', suggesting a tentative, guarded optimism rather than genuine happiness
- The hint of 'the faint beginnings of approval' in her uncle's expression contrasts with his earlier coldness, softening the mood slightly without fully resolving it
- The strongest answers will note that the hope at the close is deliberately modest and qualified, described as 'small and cautious', rather than a complete transformation of mood

## Question 23

**Level 1** A simple comment on the order of events, with limited explanation of structural effect. **1-2**

**Level 2** A clear explanation of more than one structural feature and its effect, with relevant reference to the text. **3-4**

**Level 3** A perceptive, well-developed explanation of how structure builds and then softens tension across the whole extract, with precise reference. **5**

**Indicative content:**

- The extract opens with bleak scene setting, the journey, the weather, and the forbidding house, establishing an unwelcoming mood from the very first sentence
- A series of increasingly formal, unwarm encounters follow, the housekeeper, the hall of portraits, and finally Mr Thorne himself, delaying any sense of relief and steadily building tension
- The central dialogue with Mr Thorne is structured almost like a test of character, with his list of conditions and forbidden vices mirroring the scrutiny Alice must pass to be accepted
- The final two paragraphs slow the pace and turn inward, focusing on Alice's private feelings and her uncle's fleeting, ambiguous expression, allowing a controlled, modest shift towards hope
- The recurring motif of coldness and formality (the chill dining room, the austere countenance) is only partially softened at the close, unifying the extract's structure around a single, carefully managed shift in mood

## Question 24

**Level 1** A simple statement of agreement or disagreement with limited or no textual support. **1-2**

**Level 2** A clear response with relevant reference to language or structure, showing some understanding of how Mr Thorne is presented. **3-4**

**Level 3** A detailed, well-supported evaluation exploring more than one aspect (for example his dialogue and the narrator's description), with well-chosen quotations. **5-6**

**Level 4** A perceptive, well-structured evaluation that considers different aspects of the extract in a balanced way, with precise textual support and a convincing, considered personal judgement. **7-8**

**Indicative content:**

- Consideration of evidence for a lack of warmth: his blunt, unsentimental dialogue, the merchant simile appraising Alice like 'a bale of doubtful wool', and his statement that he is 'not a sentimental man'
- Consideration of evidence against a purely cold reading: the narrator's suggestion that his expression might, 'in a less austere countenance, have been mistaken for the faint beginnings of approval'
- Discussion of how his offer of practical care, a home and an education, suggests a sense of responsibility even if it is not expressed affectionately
- Discussion of structure: the placement of this small, ambiguous hint of warmth right at the close of the extract, after so much coldness, could be read as a deliberate softening or as still fundamentally guarded and uncertain
- Reward well supported personal judgements in either direction, provided they are backed by precise textual evidence from across the extract


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