1.22-3 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 3: 1-hour Pack

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

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Light at Cobbe's Point

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It was the equinoctial gale of that year which first taught Verity Ashworth the true meaning of the word "storm", for she had lived the whole of her twelve years within sound of the sea, and had supposed, until that night, that she knew something of its temper. She stood upon the iron gallery that encircled the lantern of Cobbe's Point, her shawl drawn tight against a wind that seemed bent upon tearing the very stones from their mortar, and watched the sea below her labouring in the darkness like some vast and maddened creature that could not be still.

Her father, Mr Ashworth, had kept the light at Cobbe's Point for the better part of twenty years, and Verity herself had known no other home since her fifth year, when her mother had died of a fever one wet November and left the two of them, father and daughter, to keep house together upon their lonely rock. It was, she sometimes thought, a strange manner of childhood, set apart from the ordinary business of villages and schoolrooms; yet she would not, on the whole, have exchanged it for any other, being of a temperament not easily daunted by solitude, nor, as this night was shortly to prove, by very much else besides.

Below, in the lamp-room, her father laboured over the great light itself, trimming the wicks and polishing the reflectors with a care he gave to nothing else in this world, for, as it was his wont to remark, a neglected lamp was no less than a murderer, though a slow and a patient one. The wind, meanwhile, continued to rise, until it no longer howled but shrieked, a long, importunate cry that set Verity's teeth on edge and made the whole tower shudder upon its foundation of rock.

It was Verity's turn to keep the watch upon the gallery while her father saw to the lamp below, and it was thus that she was first to observe, far out upon the tumbling water, a light that was not the beam of her own lighthouse: a small, wavering point, now visible, now lost among the troughs of the waves, accompanied, some minutes later, by the dull report of a distress gun, scarcely to be distinguished from the general tumult of the gale. She called down the stair to her father in a voice she scarcely recognised as her own, and heard, in reply, only the single word "Wreck", uttered with a grim composure that frightened her more than any cry of alarm could have done.

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There followed some hours of which Verity afterwards found she could remember only fragments: the lifeboat men labouring up the path from the cove with lanterns held high against the rain, in search of such succour as the keeper's cottage might afford; her father's low voice giving orders that were somehow both urgent and unhurried; and, presently, an importunate knocking upon the keeper's door below, which she ran down to answer before her father could forbid her.

She had expected, she could not afterwards have said quite what: a bearded giant of a man, perhaps, roaring with the sea still in his lungs. What she found, wrapped in a borrowed coat far too large for him and shivering upon the doorstep between two of the lifeboat men, was a boy of perhaps her own age, his face the colour of tallow, his eyes wide with a terror he was plainly too proud, or too exhausted, to give voice to. "Ship's boy off the Mercy Ann," said one of the men, setting him down gently in the nearest chair. "Rest of the crew we cannot speak to yet, miss, but this one came off the wreck alive, and that is more than we looked for an hour since."

Verity, without quite deciding to do so, found that she had already fetched the blanket from her own bed and was wrapping it about the boy's shoulders, and pressing into his cold hands a cup from which the steam rose thin and grey in the lamplight. He was, she could see, loath to speak of what he had witnessed, and she did not press him, but watched him instead with an expression she thought she understood very well, having worn something like it herself on the night her mother died: the look of a person who has been, for a little while, entirely alone in the world, and cannot yet quite believe that this is no longer so.

By the time the grey light of morning crept in at the small window, the wind had abated to no more than a stiff breeze, and the boy, whose name they had by then learned was Daniel, slept at last beside the dying fire, worn out with cold and grief and the sheer labour of having survived. "You did well tonight," her father said, pausing on the stair only long enough to say it, before returning to his lamp, for the light, he always said, would not tend itself; and Verity found that four such words, spoken so plainly, pleased her rather more than a great deal of embracing would have done. She climbed once more to the gallery, where the sea, though still restless, no longer wore the aspect of a beast but only of water, tired, like everything else that night, from its own violence. She was not, she told herself, a person given to imagining that she had done anything very remarkable; and yet she found, watching the light sweep its slow circle over the calming water, a small, steady satisfaction in the thought that when the importunate knock had come, she had not been afraid to answer it.

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1 List four details the writer gives about the appearance or condition of the rescued boy when he is first brought to the door.

(4)

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2 Give two details the text provides about how Mr Ashworth tends the lighthouse lamp during the storm.

(2)

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3 In the first paragraph, the sea is described as 'labouring in the darkness like some vast and maddened creature that could not be still'. Explain what this simile suggests about the storm and about Verity's feelings as she stands on the gallery.

(4)

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4 By the end of the extract, the sea 'no longer wore the aspect of a beast but only of water, tired, like everything else that night, from its own violence'. Explain what this description suggests about the change in mood by the close of the extract.

(4)

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5 The writer describes Verity finding 'that she had already fetched the blanket from her own bed and was wrapping it about the boy's shoulders' before she had 'quite decided to do so'. Explain what this detail suggests about Verity's character.

(4)

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6 Re-read the moment when Verity's father says only, "You did well tonight," before returning to his lamp. Explain what impression the reader forms of Mr Ashworth's character, and of his relationship with Verity, from this brief exchange.

(4)

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7 The word 'watch' appears twice in the extract: as a noun in 'It was Verity's turn to keep the watch upon the gallery' (paragraph 4), and as a verb in 'she did not press him, but watched him instead' (paragraph 7). Explain the meaning of the word in each of its two different uses.

(a) Explain what 'watch' means when it is used as a noun, as in 'keep the watch'. **(1)**

(b) Explain what 'watch' means when it is used as a verb, as in 'watched him instead'. **(1)**

(c) Explain how a reader can tell, from the surrounding words, which of these two meanings is intended each time 'watch' is used. **(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) Verity's father is the keeper of the lighthouse at Cobbe's Point. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(b) Verity's mother helps her prepare the lighthouse for the storm. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(c) The storm and the rescue of the boy take place during the night. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

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9 'scarcely to be distinguished from the general tumult of the gale' - 'tumult' means:

- ☐ A) a period of complete calm
- ☐ B) a single, sudden flash of light
- ☐ C) a loud, chaotic uproar or disturbance
- ☐ D) a gentle, repeated pattern
- ☐ E) a pleasant musical sound

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10 'in search of such succour as the keeper's cottage might afford' - 'succour' means:

- ☐ A) payment demanded for a service
- ☐ B) a formal introduction
- ☐ C) punishment for wrongdoing
- ☐ D) help or aid given in a time of difficulty
- ☐ E) a written record of events

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11 'and, presently, an importunate knocking upon the keeper's door below' - in this older usage, 'presently' means:

- ☐ A) repeatedly, over and over
- ☐ B) many years earlier
- ☐ C) currently, at this very moment
- ☐ D) never again
- ☐ E) a short time afterwards

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12 'his face the colour of tallow' - 'tallow' is closest in meaning to:

- ☐ A) a pale, yellowish-white colour, like candle wax
- ☐ B) a deep, healthy red
- ☐ C) a bright, cheerful pink
- ☐ D) a dark, sun-browned tan
- ☐ E) a vivid green

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13 'He was, she could see, loath to speak of what he had witnessed' - 'loath' means he was:

- ☐ A) forbidden by an adult
- ☐ B) reluctant and unwilling
- ☐ C) eager and willing
- ☐ D) unable to, due to injury
- ☐ E) too young to understand

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14 'the wind had abated to no more than a stiff breeze' - 'abated' means the wind had:

- ☐ A) grown stronger
- ☐ B) changed direction completely
- ☐ C) lessened in force
- ☐ D) become colder
- ☐ E) stopped and then started again

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15 Look closely at the wording of the extract.

(a) Find and copy one phrase from the first paragraph that compares the sea to a living creature. **(1)**

(b) Find and copy one phrase from the paragraph describing the rescued boy that shows how frightened he was. **(1)**

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16 Number the following events 1 to 4 to show the order in which they happen in the extract: 'Verity's father tells her she did well, before returning to his lamp', 'Verity first feels the full force of the equinoctial gale on the gallery', 'Verity answers an importunate knocking at the keeper's door', 'Verity sights a distress light and hears the report of a gun far out at sea'.

(4)

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17 In the phrase 'the equinoctial gale of that year', the word 'equinoctial' most nearly means:

- ☐ A) lasting for exactly one full year
- ☐ B) taking place far out at sea, away from land
- ☐ C) happening only once in a person's lifetime
- ☐ D) caused by unusually warm weather
- ☐ E) occurring around the time of year when day and night are of equal length

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18 'watched the sea below her labouring in the darkness' - 'labouring' here means the sea was:

- ☐ A) shrinking smaller
- ☐ B) falling completely silent
- ☐ C) glowing gently
- ☐ D) working or straining with great effort
- ☐ E) freezing solid

---

19 'being of a temperament not easily daunted by solitude' - 'daunted' means:

- ☐ A) discouraged or intimidated
- ☐ B) delighted and amused
- ☐ C) confused about directions
- ☐ D) made physically tired
- ☐ E) offended or insulted

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20 'as it was his wont to remark' - 'wont' here means:

- ☐ A) his mistake
- ☐ B) his private opinion, rarely shared aloud
- ☐ C) his habitual practice or custom
- ☐ D) his hope
- ☐ E) his fear

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21 'an importunate knocking upon the keeper's door below' - 'importunate' means the knocking was:

- ☐ A) barely audible
- ☐ B) persistent and demanding immediate attention
- ☐ C) cheerful and light-hearted
- ☐ D) accidental and brief
- ☐ E) coming from a great distance

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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)

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23 Explain how the writer structures the extract as a whole to build tension around the shipwreck before allowing the tension to ease at the very end.

(5)

24 A reader said, 'Verity is presented as no more than a passive witness to the night's events.' 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 · 1.22-3 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 3: 1-hour Pack

Question 1

he is wrapped in a borrowed coat far too large for him	**B1**
he is shivering	**B1**
he is a boy of perhaps Verity's own age	**B1**
his face is the colour of tallow, and/or his eyes are wide with terror (accept either detail)	**B1**

Answer: Any four of: wrapped in a borrowed coat far too large for him; shivering; a boy of about Verity's own age; his face the colour of tallow; his eyes wide with terror.

Question 2

he trims the wicks	**B1**
he polishes the reflectors	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: he trims the wicks; he polishes the reflectors.

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 conveys the storm's violence and Verity's unease, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- Comparing the sea to a 'creature' suggests it seems alive, uncontrollable and dangerous, rather than a passive body of water
- 'Maddened' suggests a loss of reason or control, implying the storm is unpredictable and frightening
- 'Could not be still' suggests constant, restless violence, mirroring the tension and alertness Verity herself feels
- Placing the simile in the opening paragraph establishes a tense, unsettling mood from the very first sentence, before the reader learns any further detail about the night ahead

Question 4

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

Level 2 Clear and detailed explanation of how the description signals a calmer, more resolved mood, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The sea is no longer compared to a 'beast', suggesting the earlier sense of danger and wildness has passed
- Describing it as merely 'water' suggests it has returned to something ordinary and manageable, rather than something threatening
- 'Tired ... from its own violence' personifies the sea as exhausted by the night's storm, echoing the exhaustion of the human characters
- The word 'like everything else that night' links the sea's exhaustion to Verity's and Daniel's own tiredness, unifying the passage's closing mood of quiet, weary calm

Question 5

Level 1 A simple comment that Verity is kind or helpful, 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 phrase 'without quite deciding to do so' suggests Verity's kindness is instinctive rather than something she has to think carefully about
- Giving up the blanket from her own bed suggests genuine selflessness, since she gives up her own comfort for a stranger
- The detail contrasts with the earlier description of her fear and uncertainty during the storm, suggesting practical courage emerges naturally when she is needed
- This foreshadows the extract's closing idea that Verity 'had not been afraid to answer' the knock, reinforcing an impression of quiet, unforced bravery

Question 6

Level 1 A simple comment that Mr Ashworth seems undemonstrative or busy, 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 brief, plain praise, 'You did well tonight', suggests a man of few words rather than open displays of affection
- 'Pausing on the stair only long enough to say it' suggests his sense of duty to the lamp remains stronger than his instinct to linger with his daughter, even in a moment of pride
- The narrator's comment that 'four such words ... pleased her rather more than a great deal of embracing would have done' suggests Verity understands and values her father's undemonstrative way of showing care
- Together, the moment implies a close but restrained relationship, in which affection is expressed through brief, sincere words and shared duty rather than open emotion

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Question 7

(a) a period or turn of duty spent keeping guard or observing (accept: a shift of duty, a spell on lookout) **B1**

(a) Answer: A period or turn of duty spent keeping guard or looking out.

(b) to look at attentively or observe closely (accept: to look at carefully) **B1**

(b) Answer: To look at something or someone attentively.

(c) recognises that 'the watch', following 'keep the', functions as a thing being kept (a noun), whereas 'watched him', taking a direct object and ending in '-ed', functions as an action being performed (a verb), so the reader must use grammar and context, not the word alone, to decide the meaning **B1**

(c) Answer: Because 'the watch' follows 'keep' as something being kept, it must be a noun, while 'watched him' has an '-ed' ending and is followed directly by 'him', showing it is a verb describing an action; a reader must use these grammatical clues from the surrounding words.

Question 8

(a) True **B1**

(a) Answer: True

(b) False **B1**

(b) Answer: False

(c) True **B1**

(c) Answer: True

Question 9

C - identifies 'tumult' as a loud, chaotic uproar or disturbance **B1**

Answer: C) a loud, chaotic uproar or disturbance

Question 10

D - identifies 'succour' as help or aid given in a time of difficulty **B1**

Answer: D) help or aid given in a time of difficulty

Question 11

E - identifies 'presently' as a short time afterwards **B1**

Answer: E) a short time afterwards

Question 12

A - identifies 'tallow' as a pale, yellowish-white colour, like candle wax **B1**

Answer: A) a pale, yellowish-white colour, like candle wax

Question 13

B - identifies 'loath' as reluctant and unwilling **B1**

Answer: B) reluctant and unwilling

Question 14

C - identifies 'abated' as lessened in force **B1**

Answer: C) lessened in force

Question 15

(a) accept: 'like some vast and maddened creature that could not be still' **B1**

(a) Answer: like some vast and maddened creature that could not be still

(b) accept: 'his eyes wide with a terror he was plainly too proud, or too exhausted, to give voice to' **B1**

(b) Answer: his eyes wide with a terror he was plainly too proud, or too exhausted, to give voice to

Question 16

correctly places 'Verity first feels the full force of the equinoctial gale on the gallery' as event 1 **B1**

correctly places 'Verity sights a distress light and hears the report of a gun far out at sea' as event 2 **B1**

correctly places 'Verity answers an importunate knocking at the keeper's door' as event 3 **B1**

correctly places 'Verity's father tells her she did well, before returning to his lamp' as event 4 **B1**

Answer: 1: Verity first feels the storm's force on the gallery; 2: she sights the distress light and gun; 3: she answers the knocking at the door; 4: her father tells her she did well.

Question 17

E - identifies 'equinoctial' as relating to the time of year when day and night are of equal length **B1**

Answer: E) occurring around the time of year when day and night are of equal length

Question 18

D - identifies 'labouring' as working or straining with great effort **B1**

Answer: D) working or straining with great effort

Question 19

A - identifies 'daunted' as discouraged or intimidated **B1**

Answer: A) discouraged or intimidated

Question 20

C - identifies 'wont' as a habitual practice or custom **B1**

Answer: C) his habitual practice or custom

Question 21

B - identifies 'importunate' as persistent and demanding immediate attention **B1**

Answer: B) persistent and demanding immediate attention

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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 tense and threatening, established through the sea 'labouring in the darkness like some vast and maddened creature that could not be still'
- This tension is sustained through the shrieking wind, the distress gun, and the urgent knocking at the door
- By the end, the same sea 'no longer wore the aspect of a beast but only of water, tired ... from its own violence', suggesting the danger has passed and a calmer mood has settled
- The final image of Verity finding 'a small, steady satisfaction' contrasts with her earlier fear, suggesting a mood of quiet relief and modest pride rather than untroubled happiness
- The strongest answers will note that the closing calm is described as tired and restrained rather than joyful, echoing rather than simply reversing the earlier violent imagery of the sea

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 eases tension across the whole extract, with precise reference. **5**

Indicative content:

- The extract opens with the storm already building, establishing a tense, uneasy mood from the very first sentence
- A sequence of escalating signals of danger follows, the sighting of a distant light, the distress gun, the single grim word 'Wreck', each raising tension before any rescue takes place
- The central section, of which 'Verity afterwards found she could remember only fragments', is deliberately compressed and fragmented, mirroring the confusion and urgency of the rescue itself
- The arrival of the boy and Verity's quiet care for him slows the pace, shifting focus from external danger to a calmer, more intimate scene
- The final paragraph slows the pace further still, moving from her father's brief praise to Verity's private reflection on the gallery, allowing the earlier tension to ease into a controlled, modest close

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 Verity is presented. **3-4**

Level 3 A detailed, well-supported evaluation exploring more than one aspect (for example her actions and her private thoughts), 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 passive role: for much of the storm Verity mainly watches, reports and waits, as in 'It was Verity's turn to keep the watch' and her calling down to her father rather than acting alone
- Consideration of evidence against a purely passive reading: she runs down to answer the door 'before her father could forbid her', and 'without quite deciding to do so' fetches her own blanket to comfort the boy, both active, independent choices
- Discussion of the closing paragraph, where Verity's private thought that she 'had not been afraid to answer it' presents her inner resolve as a form of quiet, active courage rather than passivity
- Discussion of structure: the writer places Verity's most active moments (answering the door, comforting Daniel) at the emotional centre of the extract, suggesting the writer wants her to be seen as more than an onlooker
- Reward well supported personal judgements in either direction, provided they are backed by precise textual evidence from across the extract

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