1.22-4 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 4: 1-hour Pack

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

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Arrival at Marsh End

Source written for Revision Library in a classic literary style (original, copyright-free).

The carriage had been climbing since noon, and still the moor rolled away on every side, vast and colourless beneath a sky the hue of pewter. Eleanor Marsh pressed her gloved hand to the window and watched the last farmhouse recede into that grey immensity, until nothing remained to mark the road save the wheel-ruts filling slowly with rain. She had been travelling since dawn, and weariness had long since given way to a quieter apprehension: the sense, not easily reasoned away, that she was passing out of one life and into another from which there could be no easy return.

It was nearly five o'clock, and the light failing fast, when the carriage turned at last between two crumbling stone pillars and entered an avenue of limes so ancient and so densely grown that their branches met overhead in a dripping vault. Eleanor caught her first sight of the house through this tunnel of wet leaves: a long, low frontage of grey stone, its windows dark and numerous as the cells of a hive, its roofline broken by a solitary weathervane that turned, with a mournful creak, first one way and then another, as though undecided which quarter of the wind to trust. She had been told the house was called Marsh End, and she thought, as the carriage drew up before its door, that no name could have suited it better; for it seemed indeed to stand at the very end of things, forbidding further passage, admitting nothing beyond itself but the moor and the failing light.

The door was opened before she had properly descended by a woman of perhaps fifty years, spare and upright, in a gown of such severe black that Eleanor took her, for one uncertain moment, to be in mourning. This was Mrs Kelsall, the housekeeper, whose greeting, though civil enough in its words, was delivered with a reticence that Eleanor would come to know well in the weeks that followed: a manner of speaking that gave away no more than duty strictly required, and left the rest, always, to be guessed at. "You will be tired from the journey, Miss Marsh," said she, taking up one of the smaller boxes herself. "The master is from home until Thursday. You will meet your pupil directly."

Eleanor followed her across a vestibule floored in black and white stone, and into a hall so vast and so ill-lit that the portraits ranged along its walls seemed less to hang there than to lurk, their painted eyes following her progress with an attention she found it difficult entirely to dismiss as fancy. No sound reached her but the ticking of a great clock upon the stair, and, once, from some upper region of the house, what she took at first for the wind in a chimney, and then, listening again, was no longer sure that it had been the wind at all.

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It was in this hall that Mrs Kelsall paused, and turned, and for the first time looked at Eleanor directly. "Master Julian is a delicate child," she said, choosing her words, it seemed to Eleanor, with unusual care, "and much altered since his poor mother died. You will find him quiet. I would not have you expect otherwise, nor" - here she hesitated, and the pause lengthened until Eleanor thought she did not mean to finish the sentence at all - "nor be surprised by anything he may tell you. Children imagine a great deal, in a house like this one, with no one but servants for company." She said no more, but led the way up the staircase with the air of one who had already said too much.

Eleanor's room, when she reached it, proved small but not uncomfortable, with a narrow bed, a washstand, and a single window that looked out, not upon the avenue by which she had come, but upon the marsh itself, stretching away grey and featureless to a horizon she could no longer distinguish from the sky. She stood at this window some minutes after Mrs Kelsall had gone, watching the last light drain out of the day, and turning over in her mind all that had been said, and, more particularly, all that had been left unsaid. She was one and twenty, and had faced, she told herself, worse trials than an old house and a taciturn housekeeper. And yet, as the dark came down at last over the marsh, and a single light appeared, briefly, in a window she could not account for, she found her resolve required rather more effort to maintain than she had expected it would.

1 List four details the writer gives about the appearance or manner of Mrs Kelsall when she first opens the door to Eleanor.

(4)

2 Give two details the text provides about how Julian has changed since his mother died.

(2)

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3 The writer describes the weathervane which 'turned, with a mournful creak, first one way and then another, as though undecided which quarter of the wind to trust'. Explain what this description suggests about the atmosphere of Marsh End and about the mood the writer wants to create as Eleanor first arrives.

(4)

4 By the end of the extract, Eleanor 'found her resolve required rather more effort to maintain than she had expected it would'. Explain what this description suggests about the change in Eleanor's feelings by the close of the extract.

(4)

5 Re-read the moment when Mrs Kelsall hesitates before saying, "nor be surprised by anything he may tell you," pausing so long that Eleanor 'thought she did not mean to finish the sentence at all'. Explain what impression the reader forms of Mrs Kelsall's character, and of what she may be choosing not to tell Eleanor, from this hesitation.

(4)

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6 Explain what impression the reader forms of Eleanor's character from the final paragraph, including her private thoughts about her own past trials and her reaction to the unexplained light.

(4)

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7 The word 'light' appears with two different meanings in the extract: in 'the light failing fast' (paragraph 2), and in 'a single light appeared, briefly, in a window' (paragraph 6). Explain the meaning of the word in each of its two different uses.

(a) Explain what 'light' means in 'the light failing fast'. **(1)**

(b) Explain what 'light' means in 'a single light appeared, briefly, in a window'. **(1)**

(c) Explain how a reader can tell, from the surrounding words, which of these two meanings is intended each time. **(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) Eleanor arrives at Marsh End as darkness is falling. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(b) Mrs Kelsall greets Eleanor with open warmth and affection. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(c) Mrs Kelsall carries every one of Eleanor's boxes into the house herself. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

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9 'worse trials than an old house and a taciturn housekeeper' - 'taciturn' means:

- [ ] A) generous with money
- [ ] B) saying very little; reserved in speech
- [ ] C) cheerful and talkative
- [ ] D) elderly and forgetful
- [ ] E) dishonest and untrustworthy

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10 'Master Julian is a delicate child' - 'delicate' here means:

- [ ] A) rude and badly behaved
- [ ] B) unusually tall for his age
- [ ] C) extremely wealthy
- [ ] D) skilled at outdoor sports
- [ ] E) easily hurt or affected; fragile in health

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11 'she found her resolve required rather more effort to maintain' - 'resolve' here means:

- [ ] A) a sudden idea
- [ ] B) a formal apology
- [ ] C) firm determination
- [ ] D) a written promise
- [ ] E) a feeling of sleepiness

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12 'watched the last farmhouse recede into that grey immensity' - 'immensity' means:

- [ ] A) vastness; an enormous size or extent
- [ ] B) a sudden, loud noise
- [ ] C) a narrow, winding path
- [ ] D) a bright and cheerful light
- [ ] E) a small, enclosed space

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13 'in a gown of such severe black' - 'severe' here means the gown was:

- [ ] A) far too large for her
- [ ] B) brightly patterned
- [ ] C) borrowed from someone else
- [ ] D) stark and plain, without ornament
- [ ] E) old and full of holes

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14 'the portraits ranged along its walls seemed less to hang there than to lurk' - 'lurk' means:

- ☐ A) to be freshly painted
- ☐ B) to remain hidden or half-seen, as if watching
- ☐ C) to shine very brightly
- ☐ D) to move about noisily
- ☐ E) to fall suddenly to the ground

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15 Look closely at the wording of the extract.

(a) Find and copy one phrase from the first paragraph that describes the colour of the sky. **(1)**

(b) Find and copy one phrase from the fourth paragraph that shows the hall was poorly lit. **(1)**

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16 Number the following events 1 to 4 to show the order in which they happen in the extract: 'Eleanor notices a sound from the upper part of the house that she cannot explain', 'Eleanor first catches sight of Marsh End through the avenue of limes', 'Mrs Kelsall tells Eleanor she will meet her pupil directly', 'Eleanor watches a single light appear briefly outside her bedroom window'.

(4)

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17 'weariness had long since given way to a quieter apprehension' - 'apprehension' here means:

- ☐ A) a moment of forgetfulness
- ☐ B) a feeling of anxious expectation
- ☐ C) a burst of sudden joy
- ☐ D) a complete lack of interest
- ☐ E) a feeling of physical hunger

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18 'forbidding further passage, admitting nothing beyond itself' - 'forbidding' here means the house appeared:

- [ ] A) brightly lit and inviting
- [ ] B) newly built and modern
- [ ] C) small and easily overlooked
- [ ] D) surrounded by cheerful gardens
- [ ] E) unwelcoming and threatening in appearance

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19 'was delivered with a reticence that Eleanor would come to know well' - 'reticence' means:

- [ ] A) a warm and generous manner
- [ ] B) a nervous, stammering way of speaking
- [ ] C) an unwillingness to say more than necessary
- [ ] D) a tendency to speak loudly and often
- [ ] E) a habit of exaggerating the truth

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20 'Eleanor followed her across a vestibule floored in black and white stone' - 'vestibule' means:

- [ ] A) an entrance hall or lobby leading into a building
- [ ] B) a small, enclosed garden
- [ ] C) a room used for cooking
- [ ] D) a narrow staircase
- [ ] E) a cellar beneath a house

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21 'and much altered since his poor mother died' - 'altered' means:

- [ ] A) delighted
- [ ] B) punished
- [ ] C) educated
- [ ] D) changed
- [ ] E) forgiven

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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 growing sense of unease around Marsh End and its inhabitants.

(5)

24 A reader said, 'Eleanor is presented as being in real danger from the very first page.' 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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Question 1

she is a woman of perhaps fifty years	**B1**
she is spare and upright	**B1**
she wears a gown of severe black	**B1**
she takes up one of the smaller boxes herself (accept any other detail from the passage, e.g. her greeting is civil but reticent, giving away no more than duty requires; credit any four)	**B1**

Answer: Any four of: a woman of perhaps fifty years; spare and upright; wearing a gown of severe black; civil but reticent greeting, saying no more than duty requires; takes up one of the smaller boxes herself.

Question 2

he is described as 'much altered'	**B1**
Eleanor will find him quiet	**B1**

Answer: Any two of: he is much altered since his mother's death; Eleanor will find him quiet.

Question 3

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 conveys an unsettled, uneasy atmosphere, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- Giving the weathervane the ability to be 'undecided' personifies it, making the house itself seem restless or uncertain rather than simply an ordinary building
- 'Mournful' suggests sadness or grief, hinting at the house's history before any character has explained it
- The weathervane pointing 'first one way and then another' suggests instability, mirroring Eleanor's own uncertainty about what awaits her
- Placing this detail as Eleanor's first close view of the house establishes an uneasy, foreboding mood before she has even stepped inside

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 Eleanor's growing unease, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- Earlier, Eleanor tells herself she has 'faced worse trials', suggesting an outward confidence at the start of the paragraph
- The phrase 'rather more effort ... than she had expected' suggests this confidence is beginning to falter, despite her attempt to reassure herself
- The understated, restrained way this is expressed, rather than an outright statement of fear, matches the controlled, formal narrative voice used throughout the extract
- Linking this change directly to the unexplained light suggests the house's mysteries are having a real effect on Eleanor's composure, closing the extract on a note of quiet unease

Question 5

Level 1 A simple comment that Mrs Kelsall seems guarded or hesitant, 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 reference to the text. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The lengthening pause suggests Mrs Kelsall is deliberately choosing what to reveal, rather than speaking freely, reinforcing the 'reticence' established earlier in the extract
- Her instruction not to be 'surprised by anything he may tell you' hints that Julian may say strange or troubling things, which she does not wish to explain further
- Her comment that children 'imagine a great deal, in a house like this one' suggests she wants to explain away Julian's claims as childish fancy, without fully reassuring Eleanor
- The narrator's closing observation that she 'had already said too much' implies Mrs Kelsall knows more than she is willing to share, building a sense of a withheld secret at the heart of the house

Question 6

Level 1 A simple comment that Eleanor seems brave or worried, 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 reference to the text. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- Telling herself she has faced 'worse trials than an old house and a taciturn housekeeper' suggests Eleanor tries to reason herself into courage, showing a resilient, practical character
- That her resolve 'required rather more effort to maintain than she had expected' suggests this outward confidence is not entirely secure, hinting at real, growing unease beneath it
- Her private reflection, rather than any outward display of fear, suggests a controlled, self-possessed character who keeps her feelings to herself, much as Mrs Kelsall does
- Linking her wavering resolve directly to the unexplained light suggests she is beginning to suspect that something at Marsh End cannot easily be reasoned away

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Question 7

(a) the general daylight of the day, which is fading as evening comes on (accept: daylight, brightness of the day) **B1**

(a) Answer: The general daylight of the day, which is fading as evening approaches.

(b) a specific, single source of light, such as a lamp or candle, that can be seen from a distance (accept: a glow, a lamp) **B1**

(b) Answer: A specific, single source of light, such as a lamp or candle, glimpsed from outside.

(c) recognises that 'the light', paired with 'failing', describes daylight gradually fading, whereas 'a single light', with the indefinite article 'a' and the word 'single', signals one countable, specific light seen in a particular place, so grammar and context, not the word alone, show which meaning is meant **B1**

(c) Answer: 'The light failing fast' uses 'the' and pairs the word with 'failing', showing it means the daylight of the whole day gradually disappearing, while 'a single light' uses the article 'a' and the word 'single' to show one particular, countable light source appearing in one place; the surrounding words, not the word 'light' alone, signal which meaning is meant.

Question 8

(a) True **B1**

(a) Answer: True

(b) False **B1**

(b) Answer: False

(c) False **B1**

(c) Answer: False

Question 9

B - identifies 'taciturn' as saying very little, reserved in speech **B1**

Answer: B) saying very little; reserved in speech

Question 10

E - identifies 'delicate' as easily hurt or affected, fragile in health **B1**

Answer: E) easily hurt or affected; fragile in health

Question 11

C - identifies 'resolve' as firm determination **B1**

Answer: C) firm determination

Question 12

A - identifies 'immensity' as vastness, an enormous size or extent **B1**

Answer: A) vastness; an enormous size or extent

Question 13

D - identifies 'severe' as stark and plain, without ornament **B1**

Answer: D) stark and plain, without ornament

Question 14

B - identifies 'lurk' as to remain hidden or half-seen, as if watching **B1**

Answer: B) to remain hidden or half-seen, as if watching

Question 15

(a) accept: 'a sky the hue of pewter' **B1**

(a) Answer: a sky the hue of pewter

(b) accept: 'so vast and so ill-lit' **B1**

(b) Answer: so vast and so ill-lit

Question 16

correctly places 'Eleanor first catches sight of Marsh End through the avenue of limes' as event 1 **B1**

correctly places 'Mrs Kelsall tells Eleanor she will meet her pupil directly' as event 2 **B1**

correctly places 'Eleanor notices a sound from the upper part of the house that she cannot explain' as event 3 **B1**

correctly places 'Eleanor watches a single light appear briefly outside her bedroom window' as event 4 **B1**

Answer: 1: Eleanor first sees Marsh End through the avenue; 2: Mrs Kelsall says she will meet her pupil directly; 3: Eleanor notices the unexplained sound in the hall; 4: Eleanor watches the unexplained light outside her window.

Question 17

B - identifies 'apprehension' as a feeling of anxious expectation **B1**

Answer: B) a feeling of anxious expectation

Question 18

E - identifies 'forbidding' as unwelcoming and threatening in appearance **B1**

Answer: E) unwelcoming and threatening in appearance

Question 19

C - identifies 'reticence' as an unwillingness to say more than necessary **B1**

Answer: C) an unwillingness to say more than necessary

Question 20

A - identifies 'vestibule' as an entrance hall or lobby leading into a building **B1**

Answer: A) an entrance hall or lobby leading into a building

Question 21

D - identifies 'altered' as changed **B1**

Answer: D) changed

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Question 22

Level 1 A simple comparison identifying that the mood is similar or 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 mood in a nuanced way. **5**

Indicative content:

- At the start the mood is uneasy and apprehensive, established through the 'grey immensity' of the moor and Eleanor's 'quieter apprehension' about the life she is entering
- This unease is developed rather than resolved across the extract, through the forbidding house, the reticent housekeeper, the lurking portraits and the unexplained sound in the hall
- By the end, the mood has intensified rather than lifted: the marsh is now indistinguishable from the sky in the dark, and an unexplained light appears that Eleanor 'could not account for'
- Eleanor's closing admission that her resolve now requires more effort than expected shows the mood has moved from a vague, general apprehension at the start to a more specific, immediate unease by the end
- The strongest answers will note that both moments use restrained, understated language rather than open fear, so the mood builds quietly and consistently rather than through any single dramatic event

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 unease across the whole extract, with precise reference. **5**

Indicative content:

- The extract opens with the wide, featureless moor, establishing a vague, general unease before any specific detail of the house has been given
- The focus then narrows steadily, from the distant house, to its guarded housekeeper, to the ill-lit hall, to the unexplained sound within it, each stage adding a more specific and personal source of unease
- The conversation about Julian is placed only once Eleanor is already inside the house, so that this new source of unease builds directly upon, rather than replacing, the earlier mood
- The final paragraph shifts to Eleanor's private thoughts, moving the sense of unease from the external setting into her own inner feelings, before ending on the unexplained light as the extract's final, unresolved image
- Ending on this unresolved detail, rather than on any reassurance, leaves the reader's unease deliberately unsettled at the close of the extract

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 unease is created around Eleanor. **3-4**

Level 3 A detailed, well-supported evaluation exploring more than one aspect (for example the setting and the characters she meets), 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 real danger: the unexplained sound in the hall, Mrs Kelsall's pointed hesitation about Julian, and the unaccountable light at the very end all suggest something is genuinely amiss at Marsh End
- Consideration of evidence against a reading of immediate danger: nothing is stated outright, every strange detail is explained away or left ambiguous (the wind in the chimney, children who 'imagine a great deal'), and no character behaves with open menace towards Eleanor
- Discussion of the writer's restrained, understated language throughout, favouring suggestion and hesitation over explicit statements of threat, which builds unease and foreboding rather than establishing certain danger
- Discussion of structure: placing the unresolved light as the extract's very last image, immediately after Eleanor privately admits her resolve is wavering, leaves the question of real danger deliberately open rather than answered
- Reward well-supported personal judgements in either direction, provided they are backed by precise textual evidence from across the extract

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