1.22-6 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 6: 1-hour Pack

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

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Attic Window at Greymoor House

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The coach had been three hours upon the moor road, and still the rain came on, driving hard against the windows and turning the track to a ribbon of black mud. Eleven years old and quite alone, Eleanor Fairweather pressed her face to the glass and watched the last grey light drain from the sky. The wind rose and fell in a doleful voice about the coach, and once, as they rounded a bend, she glimpsed the gaunt trunk of a lightning-blasted oak, standing black and leafless against the clouds. She was a diffident child by nature, unused to speaking her fears aloud, and she had never before travelled so far from anyone who loved her; the wind's low moaning seemed only to echo the hollow feeling that had settled in her chest since her mother's death six weeks before.

At last the coach drew up before a house that stood apart from any village, narrow and grey, with tall chimneys that seemed to claw at the darkening sky. Ivy had crept across half the frontage, and the failing light appeared almost to swallow the building whole, so that for a moment Eleanor could scarcely tell where the house ended and the night began. She climbed down, her boots sinking into the gravel, and the coachman set her small trunk and portmanteau upon the step before turning the horses about and disappearing into the rain without so much as a farewell.

Eleanor stood before the great door for a full minute before she found the courage to lift the knocker. Her hands, she noticed with some surprise, were trembling, though whether from the cold or from something less easily named she could not have said. At length the door swung inward, and there stood a stout woman in a plain grey gown, a candle held aloft in one reddened hand. 'You will be Miss Fairweather, I don't doubt,' said the woman, whose name, Eleanor would soon learn, was Mrs Hodge, the housekeeper, and who entreated her at once to come in out of the wet before she caught her death.

The hall within was dim and narrow, and Eleanor had scarcely set down her trunk when a second figure appeared at the top of the stairs, candle in hand, her expression imperious and unsmiling in the flickering light.

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'So you have come at last,' said Aunt Prudence, descending slowly, her voice querulous, as though the very lateness of the hour had been arranged to try her patience. 'I had begun to think the coach had lost its way entirely, and I am not accustomed to being kept waiting. Well, well, there is no help for it now. You are travel-worn, I daresay, and hungry besides, though I confess I had pictured a taller girl.' She studied her niece for a long moment with an expression Eleanor could not read, then admonished her sharply to wipe her feet before crossing the hall, and turned upon her heel. 'Mrs Hodge will see you fed. We will speak further in the morning, when I am better able to consider what is to be done with you.' Outside, the wind rose to a higher pitch, keening about the chimneys like a soul denied shelter, and a loose shutter somewhere above began to beat a slow, uneven rhythm against the wall.

Mrs Hodge led Eleanor down a narrow passage to a warm kitchen, where a fire burned low in the grate. 'Sit yourself by the hearth,' she said, in a voice pitched low, as though she feared the words might carry up the stairs. 'You must have a little forbearance with your aunt, my dear. She is not an unkind woman, only a reticent one, who says less than she feels, and she has had losses enough in her time to try a saint's patience.' She set before Eleanor a bowl of bread and warm milk, and watched, arms folded, until the child had eaten every crumb, saying nothing further, though her eyes were not unkind.

When at last Eleanor was shown up three flights of narrow stairs to a small room beneath the roof, she found a single window set deep into the slope of the ceiling, through which she could see nothing but darkness and the shapes of bare branches tossing in the wind. She was obliged to leave her trunk unopened, for her fingers were too numb and too weary to manage the clasps, and so she sat upon the narrow bed in her travelling coat and kept a lonely vigil at the glass. Her mother, in her last days, had besought her to be brave, and Eleanor tried now to remember the exact words, though sleep, when it came at last, arrived before she could quite recall them.

1 List four details the writer gives about the appearance of Greymoor House when Eleanor first sees it.

(4)

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2 Give two details the text provides about Eleanor's feelings as she travels to Greymoor House in paragraph 1.

(2)

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3 The writer describes the house so that 'the failing light appeared almost to swallow the building whole'. Explain what this description suggests about the atmosphere of Greymoor House and about the mood the writer wants to create as Eleanor first arrives.

(4)

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4 By the end of the extract, Eleanor 'kept a lonely vigil at the glass', trying to remember her dying mother's words before 'sleep...arrived before she could quite recall them'. Explain what this description suggests about the mood the writer creates at the close of the extract.

(4)

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5 Re-read Aunt Prudence's speech in paragraph 5, beginning 'So you have come at last'. Explain what impression the reader forms of her character from this speech.

(4)

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6 Explain what impression the reader forms of Mrs Hodge's character from paragraph 6, including both her actions towards Eleanor and her words about Aunt Prudence.

(4)

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7 The word 'trunk' appears with two different meanings in the extract: in 'the gaunt trunk of a lightning-blasted oak' (paragraph 1), and in 'the coachman set her small trunk and portmanteau upon the step' (paragraph 2). Explain the meaning of the word in each of its two different uses.

(a) Explain what 'trunk' means in 'the gaunt trunk of a lightning-blasted oak'. **(1)**

(b) Explain what 'trunk' means in 'the coachman set her small trunk and portmanteau upon the step'. **(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 travels to Greymoor House by train. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(b) The coachman waits to help Eleanor to the door. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(c) Mrs Hodge invites Eleanor to come in out of the rain. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

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9 'her voice querulous, as though the very lateness of the hour had been arranged to try her patience' - 'querulous' here means:

- [ ] A) amused and teasing
- [ ] B) complaining and peevish
- [ ] C) cheerful and welcoming
- [ ] D) hushed and gentle
- [ ] E) confident and reassuring

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10 'she studied her niece for a long moment ... then admonished her sharply to wipe her feet' - 'admonished' here means:

- [ ] A) praised warmly
- [ ] B) invited politely
- [ ] C) thanked sincerely
- [ ] D) questioned curiously
- [ ] E) warned or reprimanded sternly

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11 'You must have a little forbearance with your aunt, my dear' - 'forbearance' here means:

- [ ] A) curiosity and interest
- [ ] B) pride and confidence
- [ ] C) patience and tolerance
- [ ] D) fear and suspicion
- [ ] E) anger and resentment

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12 'She is not an unkind woman, only a reticent one, who says less than she feels' - 'reticent' here means:

- [ ] A) reserved and reluctant to speak
- [ ] B) talkative and open
- [ ] C) violent and dangerous
- [ ] D) foolish and careless
- [ ] E) generous and giving

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13 'she sat upon the narrow bed in her travelling coat and kept a lonely vigil at the glass' - 'vigil' here means:

- ☐ A) a short, cheerful song
- ☐ B) a formal written promise
- ☐ C) a busy, noisy celebration
- ☐ D) a period of staying watchfully awake
- ☐ E) a deep and peaceful sleep

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14 'Her mother, in her last days, had besought her to be brave' - 'besought' here means:

- ☐ A) shouted angrily
- ☐ B) begged or pleaded earnestly
- ☐ C) forbidden strictly
- ☐ D) forgotten completely
- ☐ E) promised casually

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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 sound of the wind. **(1)**

(b) Find and copy one phrase from the second paragraph that describes the chimneys of the house. **(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 keeps a lonely vigil at the attic window', 'The coachman sets down Eleanor's trunk and portmanteau upon the step', 'Aunt Prudence appears at the top of the stairs', 'Mrs Hodge gives Eleanor bread and warm milk in the kitchen'.

(4)

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17 'The wind rose and fell in a doleful voice about the coach' - 'doleful' here means:

- [ ] A) rhythmic and musical
- [ ] B) mournful and sad-sounding
- [ ] C) cheerful and lively
- [ ] D) extremely loud
- [ ] E) completely silent

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18 'she glimpsed the gaunt trunk of a lightning-blasted oak' - 'gaunt' here means:

- [ ] A) thick and richly leaved
- [ ] B) newly planted
- [ ] C) brightly coloured
- [ ] D) surrounded by other trees
- [ ] E) thin, bare and stark in appearance

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19 'She was a diffident child by nature, unused to speaking her fears aloud' - 'diffident' here means:

- [ ] A) physically weak
- [ ] B) easily angered
- [ ] C) shy and lacking confidence
- [ ] D) bold and outspoken
- [ ] E) extremely intelligent

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20 'who entreated her at once to come in out of the wet' - 'entreated' here means:

- [ ] A) urged or asked earnestly
- [ ] B) refused firmly
- [ ] C) laughed at
- [ ] D) ignored completely
- [ ] E) scolded harshly

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21 'her expression imperious and unsmiling in the flickering light' - 'imperious' here means:

- ☐ A) confused and uncertain
- ☐ B) tearful and sorrowful
- ☐ C) shy and retiring
- ☐ D) commanding and domineering
- ☐ E) warm and friendly

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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 the reader's understanding of Eleanor's new home and its inhabitants.

(5)

24 A reader said, 'By the end of the extract, Aunt Prudence is shown to be a thoroughly unkind woman.' 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 · 1.22-6 Comprehension: Classic Fiction Set 6: 1-hour Pack

Question 1

it stands apart from any village **B1**

it is narrow and grey **B1**

it has tall chimneys that seemed to claw at the darkening sky **B1**

ivy had crept across half the frontage (accept: the failing light appeared almost to swallow the building whole) **B1**

Answer: Any four of: it stands apart from any village; it is narrow and grey; it has tall chimneys that seemed to claw at the darkening sky; ivy had crept across half the frontage; the failing light appeared to swallow the building whole.

Question 2

she is quite alone (accept: she has never before travelled so far from anyone who loved her) **B1**

she is diffident/unused to speaking her fears aloud; OR the wind's moaning echoes the hollow feeling in her chest since her mother's death **B1**

Answer: Any two of: she is quite alone; she has never before travelled so far from anyone who loved her; she is diffident and unused to speaking her fears aloud; the wind's moaning echoes the hollow feeling in her chest since her mother's death.

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 oppressive, threatening atmosphere, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- Personifying the failing light as able to 'swallow' the house suggests a consuming, threatening force, as though the darkness has power over the building
- The detail that Eleanor 'could scarcely tell where the house ended and the night began' reinforces a disorientating, oppressive atmosphere
- This suggests the house is powerful or overwhelming, quietly foreshadowing Eleanor's own feeling of being overwhelmed by her new, unfamiliar life
- Placed as Eleanor's first full view of the building, it establishes an eerie, gothic mood right at the moment of her arrival, before any character has even spoken

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 creates a quiet, unresolved mood of loneliness and sorrow, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The phrase 'kept a lonely vigil' emphasises isolation and watchful, wakeful endurance rather than restful comfort
- The unfinished memory of her mother's words, arriving too late to be recalled before sleep, leaves the extract on a note of gentle, unresolved sorrow rather than reassurance
- The shift from the earlier storm and dramatic arrival to this still, private moment creates a quieter, more inward form of sadness
- Ending on Eleanor's unspoken grief, rather than any comfort from her aunt or Mrs Hodge, leaves the reader with a lingering sense of her loneliness

Question 5

Level 1 A simple comment that Aunt Prudence seems cold or critical, 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:

- Her complaints about being kept waiting and about Eleanor's height, offered with no words of welcome, suggest a cold, critical, self-absorbed manner
- The querulous tone suggests habitual irritability rather than a momentary lapse caused by the late hour
- The stern admonishment to wipe her feet, delivered before any comfort is offered, reinforces an impression of strictness over affection
- Passing Eleanor immediately to Mrs Hodge ('Mrs Hodge will see you fed') rather than tending to her herself suggests emotional distance from her niece

Question 6

Level 1 A simple comment that Mrs Hodge seems kind, 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:

- Speaking 'in a voice pitched low' so as not to be overheard suggests both discretion and a wish to protect or reassure Eleanor
- Her gentle defence of the aunt, 'not an unkind woman, only a reticent one', suggests loyalty and long acquaintance, and a wish to comfort Eleanor with a fuller picture
- The practical kindness of feeding Eleanor and watching until she has eaten every crumb suggests genuine warmth expressed through care rather than words alone
- Together, these details suggest a kind, perceptive woman who understands the household's sorrows better than she says outright

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Question 7

(a) the main stem or body of a tree **B1**

(a) Answer: The main stem or body of a tree.

(b) a large box or case used for carrying clothes and belongings on a journey (accept: a travelling case) **B1**

(b) Answer: A large box or case for carrying clothes and belongings on a journey.

(c) recognises that 'trunk' paired with 'oak' and 'lightning-blasted' signals a tree, whereas 'trunk' paired with 'portmanteau', 'coachman' and 'step' signals a piece of luggage, so surrounding context, not the word alone, shows which meaning is meant **B1**

(c) Answer: 'The trunk of a lightning-blasted oak' sits among words describing a tree, showing it means the tree's stem, while 'her small trunk and portmanteau' sits among words about travel and luggage, showing it means a travelling case; the surrounding words, not the word 'trunk' alone, signal which meaning is meant.

Question 8

(a) False **B1**

(a) Answer: False

(b) False **B1**

(b) Answer: False

(c) True **B1**

(c) Answer: True

Question 9

B - identifies 'querulous' as complaining and peevish **B1**

Answer: B) complaining and peevish

Question 10

E - identifies 'admonished' as warned or reprimanded sternly **B1**

Answer: E) warned or reprimanded sternly

Question 11

C - identifies 'forbearance' as patience and tolerance **B1**

Answer: C) patience and tolerance

Question 12

A - identifies 'reticent' as reserved and reluctant to speak **B1**

Answer: A) reserved and reluctant to speak

Question 13

D - identifies 'vigil' as a period of staying watchfully awake **B1**

Answer: D) a period of staying watchfully awake

Question 14

B - identifies 'besought' as begged or pleaded earnestly **B1**

Answer: B) begged or pleaded earnestly

Question 15

(a) accept: 'a doleful voice' (or 'rose and fell in a doleful voice') **B1**

(a) Answer: a doleful voice

(b) accept: 'seemed to claw at the darkening sky' **B1**

(b) Answer: seemed to claw at the darkening sky

Question 16

correctly places 'The coachman sets down Eleanor's trunk and portmanteau upon the step' as event 1 **B1**

correctly places 'Aunt Prudence appears at the top of the stairs' as event 2 **B1**

correctly places 'Mrs Hodge gives Eleanor bread and warm milk in the kitchen' as event 3 **B1**

correctly places 'Eleanor keeps a lonely vigil at the attic window' as event 4 **B1**

Answer: 1: the coachman sets down the trunk and portmanteau; 2: Aunt Prudence appears at the top of the stairs; 3: Mrs Hodge gives Eleanor bread and warm milk; 4: Eleanor keeps a lonely vigil at the attic window.

Question 17

B - identifies 'doleful' as mournful and sad-sounding **B1**

Answer: B) mournful and sad-sounding

Question 18

E - identifies 'gaunt' as thin, bare and stark in appearance **B1**

Answer: E) thin, bare and stark in appearance

Question 19

C - identifies 'diffident' as shy and lacking confidence **B1**

Answer: C) shy and lacking confidence

Question 20

A - identifies 'entreated' as urged or asked earnestly **B1**

Answer: A) urged or asked earnestly

Question 21

D - identifies 'imperious' as commanding and domineering **B1**

Answer: D) commanding and domineering

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 turbulent and disorientating: driving rain, a doleful, moaning wind, and a lightning-blasted tree, mirroring Eleanor's own hollow, anxious feelings
- This external turbulence gradually gives way, through the cold welcome from Aunt Prudence and Mrs Hodge's quiet kindness, to a more internal, private unease
- By the end, the mood is still rather than stormy: a 'lonely vigil', an unfinished memory of her mother, sleep arriving before comfort does
- Both moments share a sense of isolation, at the start amid the wild moor, at the end within a small, shut-up room, so the mood shifts in intensity and register but not in its underlying loneliness
- Strongest answers will note the movement from dramatic, external unease to quiet, internal sorrow, and comment on how this softens without ever fully resolving the extract's melancholy

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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 shapes the reader's understanding across the whole extract, with precise reference. **5**

Indicative content:

- The extract opens with the wide, wild moor and storm, establishing a vague, disorientating unease before any character beyond Eleanor is introduced
- The focus then narrows steadily, from the moor, to the house's exterior, to the hall, to Aunt Prudence's brief, critical appearance, each stage adding a more personal source of discomfort
- Mrs Hodge's kindness in the kitchen forms a contrasting pause of warmth roughly two-thirds of the way through, before the extract narrows again to Eleanor's solitary attic room
- Placing Mrs Hodge's defence of Aunt Prudence, 'not an unkind woman, only a reticent one', directly before the final paragraph complicates the reader's earlier impression, without ever fully resolving it
- The extract closes not with dialogue or action but with Eleanor's private, unfinished memory of her mother, so the structure moves from external drama to unresolved internal feeling, denying the reader a comforting 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 the reader's impression of Aunt Prudence is created. **3-4**

Level 3 A detailed, well-supported evaluation exploring more than one aspect (for example Aunt Prudence's own speech and Mrs Hodge's account of her), 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:

- Evidence supporting the claim: her querulous tone, her complaints about being kept waiting and about Eleanor's height, the sharp admonishment about wiping her feet, and her handing Eleanor straight to Mrs Hodge rather than comforting her herself
- Evidence complicating the claim: Mrs Hodge's testimony that she is 'not an unkind woman, only a reticent one, who says less than she feels', and that she 'has had losses enough...to try a saint's patience', suggesting grief rather than cruelty underlies her manner
- Discussion of the writer's restrained language and structure: Aunt Prudence is given very little direct action beyond her one speech, so the reader's judgement rests heavily on Mrs Hodge's later, more sympathetic account, which the text neither confirms nor denies
- Consideration that the extract deliberately withholds a fuller picture of Aunt Prudence, focusing instead on Eleanor's own feelings, so a confident judgement of 'thoroughly unkind' may go beyond what the text actually supports
- Reward well-supported responses in either direction, provided they use precise textual evidence and consider both the speech itself and Mrs Hodge's later comments

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