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Visuteach 11+ English Comprehension Test 4

Contents

Reading Passage	page 2
Questions	pages 3-5

You have 45 minutes to complete this reading test.

Spend 10 minutes reading the story and the questions.

You can mark the story by underlining words and phrases.

Do not fill in any of the answers during this time.

After the 10 minutes is over, you will have 35 minutes to answer the questions.

YOU MAY WRITE IN EITHER INK OR PENCIL

Passage taken from 'The Surgeon of Gaster Fell' by Arthur Conan Doyle

Bleak and wind-swept is the little town of Kirkby-Malhouse, harsh and forbidding are the fells upon which it stands. It stretches in a single line of grey-stone, slate-roofed houses, dotted down the furze-clad slope of the rolling moor.

5 In this lonely and secluded village, I, James Upperton, found myself in the summer of '85. Little as the hamlet had to offer, it contained that for which I yearned above all things--seclusion and freedom from all which might distract my mind from the high and weighty subjects which engaged it. But the inquisitiveness of my landlady made my lodgings undesirable and I determined to seek new quarters.

10 As it chanced, I had in one of my rambles come upon an isolated dwelling in the very heart of these lonely moors, which I at once determined should be my own. It was a two-roomed cottage, which had once belonged to some shepherd, but had long been deserted, and was crumbling rapidly to ruin. In the winter floods, the Gaster Beck, which runs down Gaster Fell, where the little dwelling stood, had overswept its banks and torn away a part of the wall. The roof was in ill case, and the scattered slates lay
15 thick amongst the grass. Yet the main shell of the house stood firm and true; and it was no great task for me to have all that was amiss set right.

The two rooms I laid out in a widely different manner--my own tastes are of a Spartan turn, and the outer chamber was so planned as to accord with them. An oil-stove by Ripplingille of Birmingham furnished me with the means of cooking; while two great
20 bags, the one of flour, and the other of potatoes, made me independent of all supplies from without. In diet I had long been a Pythagorean, so that the scraggy, long-limbed sheep which browsed upon the wiry grass by the Gaster Beck had little to fear from their new companion. A nine-gallon cask of oil served me as a sideboard; while a square table, a deal chair and a truckle-bed completed the list of my domestic fittings.
25 At the head of my couch hung two unpainted shelves--the lower for my dishes and cooking utensils, the upper for the few portraits which took me back to the little that was pleasant in the long, wearisome toiling for wealth and for pleasure which had marked the life I had left behind.

30 If this dwelling room of mine were plain even to squalor, its poverty was more than atoned for by the luxury of the chamber which was destined to serve me as my study. I had ever held that it was best for my mind to be surrounded by such objects as would be in harmony with the studies which occupied it, and that the loftiest and most ethereal conditions of thought are only possible amid surroundings which please the eye and gratify the senses. The room which I had set apart for my mystic studies was
35 set forth in a style as gloomy and majestic as the thoughts and aspirations with which it was to harmonise.

Comprehension Questions

1. a) In paragraph 2, state two things sought by James Upperton.

(2 marks)

b) In your own words, explain why he sought those two things.

(2 marks)

2. In paragraph 2, in your own words, explain why he decided to change his lodgings.

(2 marks)

3. In your own words, explain how James Upperton found his new lodgings.

(2 marks)

4. Why do you think that James Upperton found the dilapidated cottage ideal?

(2 marks)

5. Give two things that needed fixing at the cottage.

(2 marks)

6. In line 17, the word 'Spartan' is used. What does this show about Upperton's tastes?

(2 marks)

7. Why do you think that the sheep had little to fear from Upperton? (Line 22)

(2 marks)

8. Look at lines 26-28. In your own words, describe the life that Upperton had left behind.

(2 marks)

9. Which two words from the list best describe James Upperton?

obnoxious
polite
considerate
pensive
extravagant
independent

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(2 marks)

10. What do the following words mean?

seclusion (line 6) _____

(2 marks)

atoned (line 30) _____

(2 marks)

ethereal (line 33) _____

(2 marks)

gratify (line 34) _____

(2 marks)

11. a) In paragraph 5, what was different about the way the two rooms were laid out?

(2 marks)

b) What does this show about what James Upperton valued?

(3 marks)