

Practice Comprehension-4

- 1 The Dovecots were a family of four: Dave and his wife Maud, Clement and his older sister Evelina. Clement sat on the sanded floor of the poor sitting-room, his plate of rice between his legs; Evelina lolled over the one battered, depreciated mahogany table, picking at the coarse food with an adolescent discontent; Dave Dovecot, a grizzled, gangling labourer, held his plate in his left hand, while with his right he plied his mouth from a peeling metal spoon; at the propped-open window of the room sat Mrs Dovecot, a long thread of a woman whose bones want had picked like an eagle. Her plate was resting on her lap, and she scraped and pecked and foraged her food like a scratching hen, while she took stock of the passers-by. 5
- 2 When Clement had finished, he took up his empty plate and, getting to his feet, went and stowed it away in the dark box of a kitchen. Returning, he slumped down beside his mother's chair and rested his head against her bony thigh. After a time he said: 'Ma, could I have the threepence I's been asking to give to Mr. Megahey? 10
- 3 'Hmn. Wa' threepence boy? Why in de name of de Lord must poor starving people got to find threepences for Jim Megahey what's got his belly sitting so pretty wi' fat?' parried Mrs Dovecot, though she knew well enough.
- 4 'I's told you and told you and told you, Ma. He's resigning and we've all got to take threepence to give him. It's been a real torture at school.' explained Clement patiently once more. 15
- 5 'Hmn. Threepence is a lot o' money for us poor folk. Hmn. Go ask your father. See what he says.'
- 6 Clement got to his feet reluctantly and moved slowly over to where his father was sitting, for he knew from experience that, in parting with money, his father was a far harder nut to crack than his mother. Dave Dovecot utilised the approach of his son by extending his empty plate. Clement look the plate to the kitchen. Then he turned once more to tackle his father. 'Can I have a threepence, Papa?' he shouted in his father's ear, for the old man was pretty near stone deaf. 20
- 7 'Eh-eh! What's that about a fence, Clement?' This time Clement put his mouth completely into his father's ear and shouted until his dark face grew darker: 'Eh-eh! Don't shout at me,' was all he got for his pains. 'Don't you deafen me. What's that the young varmint says, Maud?' Mrs Dovecot came over, and got him to understand after two or three attempts. 25
- 8 'Three pence, Maudie,' he cackled, 'three pence! Did yo' hear that, Maud? Did yo' ever hear the like? I'll bet you ain't never did. Three pence! The lad!!! have money what I's got to sweat blood for, just to give to that Megahey what's got his bread so well buttered off 'pon both sides not to mention the middle. Three pence! Ha ha! ... oh Maudie.. And he broke down once more in helpless laughter. 30
- 9 Clement went out and sat under the breadfruit tree that grew before the door, resting his back against the trunk. Evelina came to him there when the dusk was thick and sat beside him. There was a close bond of understanding and companionship between these two. Clement leaned against her so that he could feel the cheering warmth of her arms, warm as the still warm ground beneath him. Biting his nails he told her of his morning's shame. She listened as attentively as a mother, and as she listened, she pul her hand around his neck and drew his head gently down upon her young bosom. 35
- 10 When he had finished talking she put her lips down to his harsh curls, and thought for a long time. Then she said, with a little sigh: 'I know what we'll do, Clemmie. 'Member how 'fore I was took from school we big girls used to go out singing at Christmas? Well, we'll play waits. Only tonight there'll be only you and me.' Clement raised his head and gazed into his face in the starlight. 'Oh, Eve, he said, 'but it ain't anyways near Christmas.' 40
- 11 'Never you mind,' she said. 'There's still some who'll give us a penny or two. You wait. I'll get our hats and then we'll be off.' She got to her feet and slipped quickly into the house. She returned in a few moments carrying his cap in her hand, her own hat of straw on her head. She settled his cap, then produced a comb. 'When we come to the shop we'll ask for a piece of bread paper,' she said, 'then you'll play the sax while I sing.' 45
- 12 They roamed far that night. Evelina's voice rose clear and true to the accompaniment of the paper and comb, long after the moon came up and laid white hands upon the countryside. At last Evelina said, jingling the coins which they had earned in the pockets of her dress: 'Let's make this our last and call it a day.' The house with which they proposed to round off their tour had a pretentious front of red brick. The greater part of the house was in sitting in the open veranda. Bravely, Evelina unlatched the street gate and led the way up the steps to the veranda. 'Good night,' she greeted the pair in the shadows. 'We would like to sing for you.' 50
- 13 The woman chuckled softly and Evelina could see the white gleam of the man's teeth when he said, 'Sure.' The children rendered their song. When they had finished the man got to his feet and approached them, delving in his pocket. 'Thanks for your singing,' he said kindly. 'It was very nice. May, give us some light for a moment. The woman got from her chair and, leaning through a window, pressed a light switch. 55
- 14 And as the light flooded the veranda little Clement was turned to stone, for the tall, greying man foraging the handful of coins was the retiring Headmaster, Mr Megahey. Clement's scrambled retreat after Evelina had made her little curtsy was perhaps unnecessary, since Mr Megahey had his glasses off and he didn't seem to recognise him. Out in the road, Evelina let out the laughter that had been welling inside her. 60
- 15 'Just think how we never thought of where your old Head might've moved to after he left the Schoolmaster's house,' she laughed. 'But he's gin us our biggest taking for the night, anyway. He's gin us sixpence.' They counted their takings in the middle of the white road in the moonlight. When they had finished, Evelina poured the coins back into her pocket and said: 'Now I going tell you how we'll fix that brute, Mr Chase.' On the following morning the acting Head, Mr Chase. kept his word. Immediately after prayers the boys who had brought no silver were lined up across the platform. 65
- 16 They were but eight of them this morning. Two had somehow managed their threepenny pieces, while two or three others had absented themselves. Clement counted the line of boys as he took his place among them. As Mr Chase eyed their bowed heads in enjoyment, Clement stepped forward, the eight pieces of silver upon his extended palm. 'There are eight,' he told the gaping schoolmaster. 'One for each of us.' His voice struck through the silent school, clear and thrilling as a star's light. 70
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Practice Comprehension-4: Silver Boomerang

Question 1:

a) Why do you think Mrs. Dovecot asked about the reason of the donation again if "she knew well enough". (line 13). How do you think she felt during this moment?

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Feeling:..... [2]

b) Explain what the writer means when he says, "Dave Dovecot availed the approach of his son." (line 21)

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.....[2]

c) How did Clement feel about his situation - after his parents refused to help him out- as he sat "under the breadfruit tree" (line 34) . Give two details from the text to support your answer.

Clement's feeling:

Details:.....
.....
.....[3]

(d) (i) After hearing Clement's story, Evelina "thought for a long time" and came up with a plan to solve his problem. (line 40). Explain in your own words, what was her plan?

.....[1]

(ii) What was the problem with this plan?

.....[1]

e) Explain why Evelina was ready to end their journey, 'Let's make this our last and call it a day'. (line 51)

..... [1]

f) (i) Why do you think the headmaster lined up the boys who had brought no silver across the platform?

..... [1]

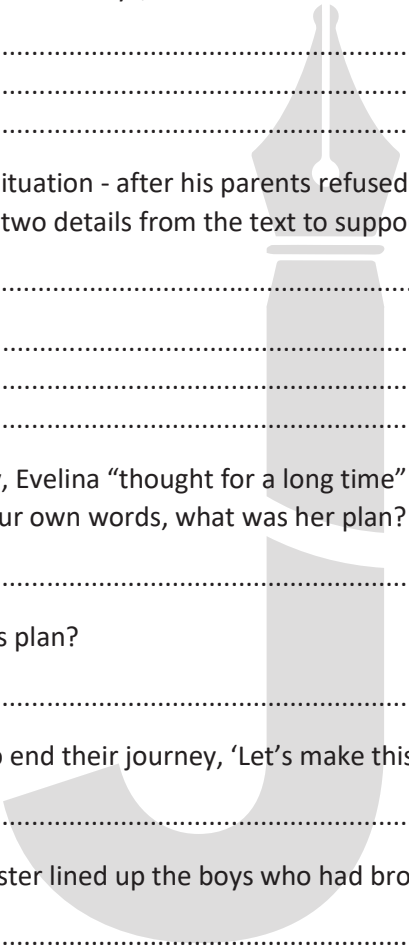
(ii) Give one detail from the text that shows us how Mr. Megahey demonstrated behavior contrary to his usual demeanor.

.....[1]

g) When Evelina said, 'Now I'm going tell you how we'll fix that brute, Mr. Chase.' What was she planning to do? (line 68-69)

.....[1]

(h) Explain using your own words, Evelina's different feelings about Clement's situation.



Give three details from anywhere in the text to support your answer.

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.....[3]

Question 2:

a) Read this sentence from the text: 'Dave Dovecot, a grizzled, gangling labourer, held his plate in his left hand, while with his right he piled his mouth from a peeling metal spoon;'

What effect does the writer want to suggest about the water by using the words 'grizzled, gangling labourer'? [2]

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b) What two impressions does the writer want to convey to the reader in the sentence:

'A long thread of a woman whose bones want had picked like an eagle'

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.....[2]

c) What effect is the writer trying to suggest by using the phrase. "his father - was a far harder nut to crack."(line 21) [1]

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d) Explain why the Evelina uses the word 'brute' rather than the word 'man' in the expression "Now I going tell you how we'll fix that brute, Mr. Chase". (line 68-69) [1]

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e) Identify one example of how the writer uses language effectively to convey Clement's situation 'The lad'll have money what I's got to sweat blood for..... down upon her young bosom.' (Paragraph 8- 9)

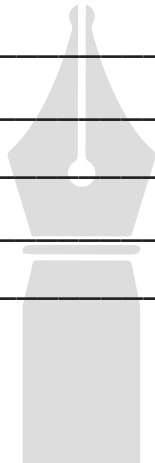
Explain the impression the writer creates in the example you have identified. [3]

Example:.....

Explanation:.....

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e) Identify one example of how the writer uses language effectively to convey his feelings about the storm, from the text: ("Shortly afterwards, the first terrible dust storm...but the writhing cloud was approaching silently and with great speed.") Explain the impression the writer creates in the expression you have identified. [3]



Marks Obtained: [/9]