



Practice Comprehension # 5- The House in the Mist

1. It was a night to drive anybody indoors. Not only was the darkness impenetrable, but the raw mist enveloping hill and valley made the open road anything but desirable to a belated traveller like myself.
2. Being young and naturally indifferent to danger, I rather welcomed adventure. Consequently, when I saw a light shimmering through the mist at my right, I resolved to make for it and the shelter it so unexpectedly offered. But I did not realise then, as I do now, that shelter does not necessarily imply refuge, or I might not have undertaken this adventure with so light a heart. Yet who knows? I was young and youth, as I have said, seeks the strange, the unknown and sometimes, the terrible.
3. My path toward this light was by no means an easy one. After confused wanderings through tangled hedges, and a struggle with obstacles I could barely see and could not comprehend, I arrived in front of a long, low building. To my astonishment, I found it with doors and windows standing open to the pervading

mist, except for one square window through which the light shone from a row of candles placed on a long mahogany table.

4. The quiet and seeming emptiness of this odd and picturesque building made me pause. I am not much affected by visible danger, but this silent room, with its sinister air of expectancy, struck me most unpleasantly. I was about to reconsider my first intention, when a second look at the comfortable interior convinced me of my folly and sent me straight towards the door which stood so invitingly open.

5. Half-way up the path, my progress was again halted by the sight of a man issuing from the house I had thought was empty of all human presence. He seemed in haste and, at the moment I first saw him, was replacing his watch in his pocket. But he did not shut the door behind him, which I thought odd, especially as his final glance had been a backward one, and seemed to take in all the details of the place he was so hurriedly leaving.

6. As we met, he raised his hat. This also struck me as peculiar and his lack of surprise at an encounter more-or-less startling in such a mist was even more of a puzzle. Indeed, he was so little impressed by my presence there that he was about to pass me without a word. But this did not suit me. I was hungry, cold, and eager for creature comforts, and the house before me was pouring out not only heat, but a savoury odour which in itself was an invitation hard to ignore. I therefore addressed the man.

7. "Can I have bed and supper here?" I asked. "I am tired out with a long tramp over the hills, and hungry enough to pay anything in reason—" I stopped, for the man had disappeared. He had not paused at my question and the mist had swallowed him. But at the break in my sentence, his voice came back in goodnatured tones and I heard: "Supper will be ready at nine, and there are beds for all. Enter; you are the first to arrive, but the others cannot be far behind." A strange greeting, certainly. But I thought, "it isn't as if he denied me. He invited me to enter, and enter I will."

8. The house, to which I now naturally directed much more careful scrutiny than before, was no ordinary farm-building, but a rambling old mansion. Though furnished, warmed and lighted with candles, as I have previously described. it had

about it an air of disuse which made me feel an intruder, despite the welcome I had received. But I was not in a position to stand upon ceremony, and before long I found myself inside the great room and before the blazing logs whose glow had lighted up the doorway and added its own attraction to the inviting place.

9. Though the open door made a draught which was anything but pleasant, I did not feel like closing it. I let my eyes roam over the panelled walls and the odd pieces of furniture which gave such an air of old-fashioned richness to the place. As I had seen nothing of the kind ever before, I should have thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity of gratifying my taste for the curious and the beautiful, if the quaint old chairs I saw standing about me on every side had not all been empty. But the solitude of the place, so much more oppressive than the solitude of the road I had left, struck cold to my heart, and I missed the cheer rightfully belonging to such attractive surroundings. I sat down before the blaze, in quiet acceptance of a situation too lonely for comfort, yet not without a certain interest for a person of enquiring mind and adventurous outlook like myself. After all, if supper was to be served at nine, someone must be expected to eat it; I should surely not be left much longer without companions.

Question 1:

- a) Explain in your own words what the writer means in paragraph 2 by 'shelter does not necessarily imply refuge'. [2]

- b) Using your own words, give two details about the traveller's **personality** from paragraph 2? [2]

- c) Look at paragraph 3. What does the traveller find most surprising about the house? [1]

d) In paragraph 4 the traveller explains that he was ‘about to reconsider his first intention’. -i- What was he going to do? [1]

-ii- What made him change his mind? [1]

e) From paragraphs 5 and 6, how does the traveller feel about the man? Give two details from the text to support your answer. [3]

Feeling: _____

f) From what he says at the beginning of paragraph 7 (“Can I...anything in reason”), explain what the traveller thought the house was? [1]

g) In paragraph 9, the traveller says he had a ‘taste for the curious’. Which other word in his paragraph reflects the meaning of ‘curious’ **in this phrase**? [1]

h) Explain what kind of “welcome” the traveller had received, that is communicated in paragraphs 7 and 8 by his use of sentences like ‘despite the welcome I had received’. [1]

i) Explain in your own words the traveller's different feelings about the house. Give three details from anywhere in the text to support your answer. [3]

Marks Obtained: [/16]

Question 2:

a) Explain why has the writer used the phrase 'it was the night to drive anybody indoors' rather than 'it was a night that would make anyone want to cozy up in bed indoors' even though they have similar meanings (paragraph 1)? [1]

b) 'The darkness was impenetrable' (paragraph 1). What effect does the writer suggest about the intensity of the darkness by using the word 'impenetrable' to describe it? [1]

c) 'I was about to reconsider my first intention' (paragraph 3). What does the writer want to suggest to the reader at this point in the story? [1]

d) What effect is the writer trying to create by the use of the word 'swallowed' in paragraph 7? [1]

e) What two impressions does the writer want to convey to the reader in the sentence: 'I am tired out with a long tramp over the hills, and hungry enough to pay anything in reason-' [1]

f) In paragraphs 8/9, how does the writer emphasise the contrast between the outward atmosphere of the room and the traveller's inner feelings? [1]

g) Identify one example of how the writer uses language effectively to convey his feelings about the building at first glance in paragraph 4, 'The quiet ... so invitingly open.' Explain the impression the writer creates in the expression you have identified. [3]

Marks Obtained: [/9]