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ENGLISH PRACTICE TEST 1: FICTION

From *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*

by Mary Shelley

PART A

COMPREHENSION EXERCISE (50 marks)

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

(The marking scheme is a recommendation. The marker must of course use his/her own discretion on appropriate marking, deducting marks for spelling and grammatical errors, or adding marks for points that do not appear below.)

1. Look at lines 1-7. In the first sentence of this passage, the writer creates atmosphere by describing these events as occurring on 'a dreary night in November'. Note two details that add to the 'dreary' atmosphere in this paragraph. (2 marks)

One mark each for:

- rain pattering against panes
- candle nearly burnt out
- darkness, half-light
- use of words: dismally, dim, lifeless

2. Look at lines 4-7. Note two details which indicate that the main character does not think of his creation as human. (2 marks)

One mark each for:

- uses the word 'it' to refer to his creation
- describes it as a 'creature'

3. Look at lines 8-15. Explain in your own words why the writer mentions the 'lustrous black' of the hair and the 'pearly whiteness' of the teeth of his 'creation'. (3 marks)

One mark each for such points as:

- the writer is creating a contrast between the beauty of the features Frankenstein had selected and the creature's ugliness in reality
- the more perfect are these features, the more ugly they look when contrasted with the creature's eyes
- the writer is highlighting the care that the central character put into selecting his creation's features
- the writer describes these as 'luxuriances', implying that it was not necessary that these features should have been so perfect
- the writer is setting up a contrast between the black/white of these lifelike qualities, with the 'dun-white' (grey-brownish white) of the creature's eyes

4. Explain what you think is meant by the words: 'The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature.' (line 16) (2 marks)

One or two marks depending on how clearly the following is stated:

- life is governed by fate or fortune, which make it changeable
- so too, human feelings are subject to change
- the changes in human feelings are even more dramatic than the changes created by fate or fortune

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Part A: Suggested Answers to Comprehension Questions:

5. Why does the central character make this comment at this point in the passage? (3 marks)

One mark each for three points, out of the following:

- the point is made to show how conflicted the central character is
- the conflict is experienced at the level of his feelings: between desire (to create his creature) and horror (at his creation)
 - the writer is highlighting how Frankenstein's feelings have swung from hope to horror
 - the writer is emphasising how deeply the central character experiences his feelings of horror and disgust
- this claim is the opposite of what is commonly held (that is, it is normally thought that the accidents of fate and fortune cause the greatest tumult to life) so:
 - the writer is making a point that is meant to be jarring
- the writer is emphasising that it is not an 'accident' but the character's feelings that are responsible for the 'catastrophe'

6. Explain in your own words what the central character claims to feel in lines 16-20. (3 marks)

One to three marks (depending on the quality of the description) for the following:

- the character feels that:
 - he has devoted everything to the project of giving the creature life
 - he has probably devoted himself to the project more than he should have
 - now he has succeeded, he realises that the project was wrong
 - his hopes are dashed: he is more than disappointed; he is utterly devastated
 - his dreams have been destroyed
 - he is disgusted with his creation and possibly also with himself at what he has done
 - his creation is a thing of horror to him

7. Why does the central character run from the room in line 21? (2 marks)

One mark each for:

- he can no longer bear to look at the creature
- his feelings of horror overcome him
- he is so disappointed that his long-held hopes are so thoroughly dashed

8. In lines 26-30, the central character reports a dream that he has while he sleeps. In what way does this dream express the character's feelings? (4 marks)

TWO points each for any of the following:

- the dream expresses the feelings of hope/horror that the character has spoken of
 - it shows something much desired turning into something horrible and repulsive
- the dream is about how a beautiful living thing turns into a horrible dead thing
 - the beautiful living thing is Elizabeth (whom he loves/loved, because he kisses her?)
 - the horrible dead thing is his mother (whom he did not love, because he compares her to the monster?)
- the character has just described how his greatest hope has been dashed, so the dream reflects this
 - the dream implies that his hopes for his relationship with Elizabeth have also been ruined somehow
- the dream introduces/deepens the themes of the passage as a whole
 - the contrast of life and death
 - the contrast of beauty and ugliness
 - the contrast of happiness/hope and horror/despair

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9. Why does the author write that the moon's light 'forced its way through the window shutters'? (3 marks)

One mark each for any of the following:

- the room in which he was sleeping was dark
- the moon is glowing through the window, trying to shed light on the central character
- this literary effect is called personification (where an inanimate object is described in terms that apply to a person)
- the moon is a symbol
 - the moon may represent true nature (as opposed to the 'false nature' of the creature)
- the moon's shedding of light on the central character is a metaphor
 - metaphorically, the writer is saying that it is difficult to 'shed light' on Frankenstein and his monster

10. In line 6-7, the central character reports 'a convulsive motion' that shakes the creature's limbs. Then, in lines 31-32, the central character mentions that his 'every limb became convulsed'. Why do you think that the writer repeats this idea of limbs being 'convulsed'? (3 marks)

Two-three marks if any of the following is stated:

- the limbs of creature are convulsed when he comes to life, just as the limbs of the central character are convulsed when he wakes from sleep
- by pointing out how both were 'convulsed', the writer is drawing a parallel between the central character waking and the creature waking
 - the parallel works because both were woken from sleep/death
 - it works because they are both tied to each other in the 'catastrophe' of the creature's life
- the convulsion is caused by horror (at the unnatural creation of life)

11. Explain what happens after the central character awakes from his nightmare. (3 marks)

One to three marks (depending on the level of detail) for the following:

- the central character sees the creature
- the creature opens the curtain of the bed
- the creature fixed his eyes on his creator
- the creature utters sounds and grins at his creator
- the creature stretches out his hand to try to grab the central character
- the central character flees, running downstairs to the courtyard
- the central character remains in the courtyard, listening out for the sounds of the creature

12. Thinking of the passage as a whole, what impression do you have of the central character, Dr Frankenstein? Give textual support for your claims. (6 marks)

One mark each for any of the following or similar:

- he is very hardworking (he works on his creature 'assiduously' for two years)
- he takes great care in his work (he chooses the creature's features carefully)
- he takes pride in his work (which explains why he is so disappointed when it does not turn out as expected)
- he has deep emotions (he feels anxiety 'amounting to agony')
- he gets lost in his projects (he puts his whole heart into his work)
- he is a loner (he pursues his project alone, without colleagues)
- he is highly-strung (he experiences nightmares)

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Part A: Suggested Answers to Comprehension Questions

12. cont/...

- he is not a practical person (he pursues his projects without thinking of their practical consequences)
- he doesn't think through the consequences of his actions sufficiently (doesn't anticipate what might happen were his creation to come to life)
- he lets himself become paralysed by his feelings (he runs away and wants to sleep to avoid dealing with his monster)

13. Over the course of this passage, the writer switches from speaking of Frankenstein's 'creation' as 'a lifeless thing' (line 3) to a 'demoniacal corpse' (line 41). Explain how the writer develops the reader's perception of the 'monster'. (6 marks)

One mark each for any of the following or similar:

- writer starts out by speaking of the monster in terms less than human
 - speaks of it as a 'lifeless thing', an 'it', a 'creature'
- then writer moves to speaking of the creature in human terms
 - speaks of it as 'he'
 - then makes it move around the house, searching for his creator
- then the writer gives the creature gestures and possibly emotions too
 - the creature fixes his eyes on Frankenstein intently
 - he attempts to speak to Frankenstein
 - he attempts to stop him from fleeing
 - he 'grins' at Frankenstein
- our perceptions of the monster are mainly through the perceptions of Frankenstein
 - we do not know whether the creature's grin is friendly or evil
 - we do not know why the creature is trying to stop him from fleeing
 - Frankenstein thinks of the creature as an evil thing to be feared, so we do too

14. Over the course of this passage, the writer creates a number of contrasts, such as:

- the contrast between life and death;
- the contrast between beauty and ugliness;
- the contrast between hope and despair; and,
- the contrast between natural and unnatural things.

Choose TWO of these contrasts. In each case, say where the contrast is represented in the passage, and what the writer means by drawing the contrast. (6 marks)

One mark each for any of the following or similar:

Contrast between life/death:

- clearly shown in way writer speaks of giving life to the lifeless body of the creature
- also shown in dream, in way Elizabeth turns into corpse of mother
- entire passage is about how unnatural life is worse than death
- has given creature life, but still describes it as a 'corpse' and so thinks of it as dead

Contrast between beauty/ugliness:

- shown in figure of monster, which should be beautiful because it is 'in proportion' but is ugly
- this contrast also shown in dream, in Elizabeth/mother figure
- also shown in discussion of Frankenstein's dream of giving life to an inanimate being
 - Frankenstein thought that his dream was beautiful
 - but because the dream was wrong, it gives rise only to the ugliness of the monster

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14. cont/...

Contrast between hope/despair:

- Frankenstein shown as figure with extraordinary hope/desire to fulfil a miraculous project
- but describes how his hopes turn to horror and despair at the ghastliness of his creation
- writer implying that some dreams are so monstrous that they only lead to despair
- Frankenstein tireless when animated by hope, now paralysed by despair

Contrast between natural/unnatural things:

- things in nature which are natural (such as moon) have a good effect
- things created unnaturally (such as by science gone wrong) are things of horror, 'demoniacal' things
- monster symbolises unnatural things (and also in the Elizabeth/mother figure in dream)
- unnatural things should not exist; they cause horror because they upset the proper order of nature

15. Find two details in the passage that indicate that this story was set many years ago. (2 marks)

One mark each for:

- the room in which the creature is created is lit by candlelight
- the central character sleeps in a bed with a curtain around it
- some words in the passage are old-fashioned: beheld, dun-white, toils, demoniacal

(Total marks: 50)

PART B: COMPOSITION EXERCISE (50 marks)

Divide the marks in this way:

- roughly one third of the marks should be given for written expression (correct spelling, grammar and punctuation).
- roughly one third of the marks should be given for the sophistication of the writing in broader terms (the quality of the vocabulary, the variation in the sentence structure, the use of varied punctuation, the use of appropriate language, the paragraph structure, etc.).
- roughly one third of the marks should be given for the inventiveness of the ideas behind the composition (the imagination required to come up with the ideas expressed in the piece of writing, the way this imagination is expressed in the details of the writing, etc.).

(Total marks: 50)

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