INDEPENDENT JUNCTION .CO.UK
RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

ENGLISH PRACTICE TEST 1 - FICTION (Allow 1 hour 15 minutes)

PART A: COMPREHENSION EXERCISE (50 marks)

From *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley

(The central character of this passage is a scientist by the name of Frankenstein, and his 'creation' is now commonly referred to as 'Frankenstein's monster'.)

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams.

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep with horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

ENGLISH PRACTICE TEST 1 - COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

NB: Remember to add quotes or references to the text, to support your interpretation.

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)

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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)

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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)

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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)

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

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

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

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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)

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

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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)

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

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

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

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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,
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)

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

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(Total marks: /50) . . . . . .

ENGLISH PRACTICE TEST 1

PART B: COMPOSITION EXERCISE (50 marks)
Answer ONE of the following questions:

EITHER
What happens next? Continue the story in the passage. Do not introduce any new characters.
OR
Describe a frightening event, from the point of view of someone who is experiencing that event. You may write about either a real or an imagined event.

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(Total marks: /50) . . . . . .

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(For answers and suggested marking scheme, see English Practice Test 1.pdf)