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13+ Assessment Test - English

The Test (Section A Reading – Prose)

Time: 1 hr 15 minutes total. Total 50 marks.

Excerpt from Gulliver's Travels (adapted) – Jonathan Swift.

Gulliver found himself in the land of Brobdingnag, inhabited by giants. He was captured by a farmer, who put him on display as a circus wonder at local fairs. He was then sold by the farmer to the Queen of Brobdingnag.

1. My late master withdrew, bidding me farewell, and saying he had left me in a good service; to which I replied not a word, only making him a slight bow.
2. The queen observed my coldness; and when the farmer was gone, asked me the reason. I made bold to tell her majesty that I owed no other obligation to my late master than his not dashing out the brains of a poor harmless creature, found by chance in his fields; which obligation was amply recompensed by the gain he had made in showing me through half the kingdom, and the price he had now sold me for. That the life I had since led was laborious enough to kill an animal of ten times my strength. That my health was much impaired by the continual drudgery of entertaining the rabble every hour of the day; and that, if my master had not thought my life in danger, her majesty would not have got so cheap a bargain. But I was out of all fear of being ill-treated under the protection of so great and good an empress, as I had already found my spirits revive by the influence of her most august presence.
3. This was the sum of my speech, delivered with great improprieties and hesitation. The queen, giving great allowance for my defectiveness in speaking, was, however, surprised at so much wit and good sense in so diminutive an animal. She carried me to the king, who was then retired to his cabinet. His majesty, a prince of much gravity and austere countenance, asked the queen, after a cold manner, how long it was since she grew fond of me. She commanded me to give to his majesty an account of myself, which I did in a very few words.
4. Although the king is a learned person, when he observed my shape exactly, and saw me walk erect, he conceived that I might be a piece of clockwork contrived by some ingenious artist. But when he heard my voice, and found what I delivered to be regular and rational, he could not conceal his astonishment. He was by no means satisfied with the relation I gave him of the manner I came into his kingdom and put several other questions to me, still receiving rational answers, no otherwise defective than by a foreign accent and an imperfect knowledge of the language.

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5. His majesty sent for three great scholars who, after they had examined my shape, were of different opinions concerning me. They all agreed I could not be produced according to the regular laws of nature, because I was not framed with a capacity of preserving my life, either by swiftness, or climbing of trees, or digging holes in the earth. They observed by my teeth that I was a carnivorous animal; yet most quadrupeds being an overmatch for me, and field mice, with some others, too nimble, they could not imagine how I should be able to support myself, unless I fed upon snails and other insects. They would not allow me to be a dwarf, because my littleness was beyond all degrees of comparison; the queen's favourite dwarf being nearly thirty feet high.
6. After this, I entreated to be heard a word or two. I applied myself to the king, and assured his majesty that I came from a country which abounded with several millions of both sexes, and of my own stature; where the animals, trees and houses were all in proportion, and where, by consequence, I might be as able to defend myself, and to find sustenance, as any of his majesty's subjects could do here. To this they only replied with a smile of contempt, saying I had been instructed well in my lesson.

QUESTIONS:

- 1 Describe Gulliver's state of mind in paragraph 2. (2 marks)

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- 2 State the part of speech (verb, noun, adverb etc.) and explain the meaning of the words '**drudgery**' and '**august**' in paragraph 2. (2 marks)

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- 3 Find 5 adjectives to describe the king's personality. Add three more of your own. (4 marks)

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- 4 (Paragraph 5) Re-write 'most quadrupeds being an overmatch for me' in your own words. (2 marks)

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- 5 In the last sentence, who do you think 'they' imagined Gulliver's instructor to be? Explain your thoughts. (2 marks)

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- 6 Reading the whole passage, describe the feelings and reactions of the king, queen and scholars towards Gulliver. (4 marks)

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- 7 Punctuate the following sentences correctly.

- i) mandy threw the apple's out of the window right onto matts head. 4 errors (2 marks)

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- ii) the must see film of the year is the new spiderman movie 4 errors (2 marks)

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- iii) The childrens bedrooms all have bunk beds I think. 2 errors (1 mark)

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- 8a How would you react if you came across someone like Gulliver, with a similar tale, in your life? (2 marks)

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- b What would you do with Gulliver if you found him? (2 marks)

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Answers given below, together with an explanation of why the other options are incorrect.

- 1 Gulliver is ill and weakened from his recent experiences. His speech was brave / courageous. We can assume that he feels lucky and grateful to have been sold to the queen. He is now unafraid and reinvigorated in her presence.
- 2 Drudgery – noun. Dull, uninspiring or menial work / labour
(one of these or similar adjectives together with the idea of work / a task / labour – one mark)

August – adjective. Majestic, grandeur, dignified.
(one of these adjectives or a suitable synonym – one mark)
- 3 Paragraph 2: grave (from 'gravity'), austere, cold.
Paragraph 3: learned, astonished (from 'astonishment'), unsatisfied (from 'by no means satisfied').

Any five of the above will receive the full five marks.

Other possibilities:
Serious, severe, strict, steely, icy, frosty dour, unfriendly, intelligent, scholarly, well-educated, knowledgeable, frustrated, unfulfilled, aggrieved, displeased.
- 4 '...most four-legged animals being stronger than me', or a phrase with similar meaning.
- 5 Imagination can be used here. Perhaps Gulliver's instructor was a scientist from a far-off land by whom he had been 'shrunk', perhaps he had come from another planet, perhaps he had come from a community underground. An imaginative idea with a logical explanation is required. Marks should be deducted for incorrect grammar, spelling or punctuation, but effective communication is the main idea of the question.
- 6 We can infer from the text that everyone is most intrigued by Gulliver. We receive the impression that the queen looks kindly on him and is a gentle person. However the king is stern and formal, and perhaps a little jealous that the queen has already formed a relationship with Gulliver. The king is sceptical of everything about Gulliver and appears not to believe what Gulliver says to him. The scholars have no idea what to make of him despite quite a thorough examination. They are intrigued but perplexed. In the last sentence, they all show their disbelief of what he has said.
- 7
 - i) Mandy threw the apples out of the window, right onto Matt's head.
 - ii) The must-see film of the year is the new Spiderman movie.
 - iii) The children's bedrooms all have bunk beds, I think.

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- 8a Sample answer. 'Naturally I would be astonished to discover someone like Gulliver. I would be kind to him and see if I could talk to him in English. I would carefully pick him up and take him to show my parents or a teacher. We would look after him and make sure he had sufficient food and drink. My parents would also treat him well. I don't think we would be at all afraid of him, as he would be very small indeed.' **We are looking for reactions here. A good answer will not stray beyond these.**
- 8b Sample answer. 'I would carefully pick up Gulliver and put him in my pocket, making sure he was comfortable. I would take him to show my friends or parents. I would ask him lots of questions about where he was from, and what life was like there. I would like to keep him but I think my parents would discover him quickly. I think my parents would take him to the police, or perhaps to a zoo. **We are not looking for repetition of the answer in 8a). Marks in both answers should be deducted for incorrect spelling, grammar or punctuation, but the emphasis is on communicative achievement.**

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The Test (Section A Reading – Poem)

Walter de la Mare – The Listeners

'Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
'Is there anybody there?' he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word,' he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Source: *The Collected Poems of Walter de la Mare* (1979)

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QUESTIONS:

- 2 Why do you think the poem is called 'The Listeners' and not 'The Traveller'? (2 marks)

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- 3 What does the poet mean by the expression 'world of men'? (2 marks)

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- 4 Describe the house in 'The Listeners' and its situation. Use the facts and your imagination. (5 marks)

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5 How does the poet create an eerie atmosphere? (3 marks)

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6 Name three poetic or literary devices used in the poem.
Give an example of each. (6 marks)

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7 What is the significance of the bird in the poem 'The Listeners'? (1 mark)

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8 a) Which word is repeated at the beginning and the end of the poem? (1 mark)

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b) What impact does it have? (1 mark)

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9 What feeling do you get when you read the poem? Give reasons. (4 marks)

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Answers:

- 1 The poem is called 'The Listeners' because they are the main focus. The poet wants you to question who they might be. They are mysterious and enigmatic. We have a description of the traveller, and we feel we know who he is. We should be asking ourselves to whom the traveller is calling and why they are called 'phantom listeners'. We can ascertain that he is speaking of the spirits of those who lived in the house. One relevant point per mark awarded.
- 2 The 'world of men' simply refers to the world in which we all live, of living and breathing beings. It is the world of the lone traveller. It is contrasted with the world of spirits, which he encounters whilst at the house. One point per mark awarded.
- 3 We are looking for the key features of the house to be mentioned here, and then we are looking for some imaginative details of the house and its surroundings. Key features - it is a lone house and is in, or near, some kind of forest. The man can see stairs, so we can assume it is at least a two-storey house. We are also told it has a turret and that the windows are leaf-fringed, so we can perhaps assume it is covered in ivy. Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation, together with imaginative vocabulary are important throughout this answer.
- 4 There are many ways in which the poet creates an eerie atmosphere. It is set at night, the traveller is alone and it is quiet. We are perhaps startled by the bird flying up out of the turret. There are a host of phantoms, and yet all is still. The words spoken at the end are mysterious, and leave us wondering whom he is referring to. We are looking for more than just three words or phrases here, which should receive no more than two marks.
- 5 **Metaphor** – we can see the fact that no one answers the door when the traveller calls as a metaphor for the impossibility of any kind of meaningful communication between this world and the next.
Rhyme – there is a consistent rhyme scheme in the poem – strong rhymes of single syllable words for most of the poem.
Alliteration – 'the forest's ferny floor', 'louder and lifted his head', 'silence surged softly...'
Onomatopoeia – 'champed'.
Sensory imagery – readers get strong visual pictures with descriptions like 'thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair', 'neath the starred and leafy sky', 'plunging hoofs' etc.
Dialogue – allows readers to experience the action from the perspective of the traveller.
Suspense – used throughout, and leaving us without a conclusive end.
One mark for naming any of the devices above, and one mark for each example.
- 6 This is open to interpretation. Perhaps it represents nature, which is disturbed when the traveller shatters the silence. Perhaps it enhances the overall eerie effect. Or perhaps it is the only answer to the question 'Is anybody there?'. Any reasonable idea will gain one mark.
- 7
 - a) 'Silence'
 - b) It is used to bookend the poem. There was silence at the beginning, the traveller and his horse make most of the noises during the poem, and when they leave the eerie silence once again returns.
- 8 Feelings should include mystery, enigma, eeriness, atmosphere, silence being broken, isolation, loneliness, darkness. We are looking for two of these feelings, with good descriptions, or three or four feelings (adjectives) with less detailed explanation. A good answer might be: "I get the feeling of loneliness when I read the poem. The traveller is all alone and he is trying to speak to people, but no one answers. There are ghosts and animals, but no other humans".

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