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## Comprehension Open-Ended

### Watch!

Pip's encounter with Miss Havisham:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dygXIIUBCvg> [2.40-3.58]

2013 movie adaptation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9RUEgT9zcc>

### About the Author

- *Great Expectations* is Charles Dickens's 13th novel published in 1861. It tells the story of an orphan named Pip. The novel reflects the events of the time and the relationship between society and man.
- Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is regarded as the greatest novelist of his time. His other works include *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*.
- The novel has been adapted into many TV series and movies. The latest 2013 film starred Helena Bonham Carter as Miss Havisham. A West-End production was also staged in 2013 to rave reviews.



**Read the following scene carefully. Here, Pip meets Miss Havisham for the first time.**

1. I was half afraid. However, the only thing to be done being to knock at the door, I knocked, and was told from within to enter. I soon found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was seen. It was a dressing-room, as I supposed from the furniture, though much of it was forms and uses then quite unknown to me. However,

there was a draped table with a gilded looking-glass, and that I made out at first sight to be a fine lady's dressing-table.

2. Whether I should have made out this object so soon, if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say. In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.
3. She was dressed in rich materials, satins, lace and silks. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she only had one shoe on -- the other was on the table near her hand. Her veil was half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a Prayer-book, all confusedly piled around the looking-glass.
4. It was not in the first few moments that I saw all these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. However, I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible person lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could.

5. "Who is it?" said the lady at the table.

"Pip, ma'am."

"Pip?"

"Mr. Pumblechook's boy, ma'am. Come-to play."

"Come nearer; let me look at you. Come close."

6. It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.

7. "Look at me," said Miss Havisham. "You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?"

8. I regret to state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer "No."

9. "Do you know what I touch here?" she said, laying her hands, one upon the other, on her left side.

"Yes, ma'am."

"What do I touch?"

"Your heart."

"Broken!"

10. She uttered the word with an eager look, and with strong emphasis, and with a weird smile that had a kind of boast in it. Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.

11. "I am tired," said Miss Havisham. "I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play."

-adapted from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

**Answer the following questions. Each question carries two marks.**

1. Why was the lack of daylight not a problem for its occupants?
2. What furniture was Pip's attention drawn to when he entered the room and what was his conclusion about it?
3. Why was Pip surprised that the lady's hair was white?
4. Describe the lady's physical appearance in her bridal dress.

<b>Description 1</b>	
<b>Description 2</b>	

5. Why do you think the author compared the lady to a skeleton?

<b>Reason 1</b>	
<b>Reason 2</b>	

6. Do you think the lady had good eyesight? Give a piece of evidence to support your answer.

7. What was the 'enormous lie' that was given in Pip's answer to Miss Havisham?

8. What does Miss Havisham's gesture of keeping her hands over her heart suggest about how she felt?

9. What do the clock and watch suggest about what had happened to Miss Havisham?

10. Name two differences between the appearance of Miss Havisham and a normal bride.

Miss Havisham		
A normal bride		

## More Comprehension Practice for 2015

Sequence Pip's opinions about Miss Havisham as they appear in the passage. The first opinion has been completed for you. (2 marks)

(A)	Miss Havisham looks odd.	1
(B)	She is nursing a broken heart.	
(C)	She was once a plump lady.	
(D)	She is in a wedding dress.	
(E)	She resembles a skeleton.	

Identify whether the statements below are true or false. Mark your answers with 'T' for each true statement and 'F' for each false statement and explain your reasons clearly. (4 marks)

Statement	T/F	Reason
Pip is a coward.		
Miss Havisham is wealthy.		
Miss Havisham is a wax statue.		
Miss Havisham wants Pip's company.		

## Cloze Passage: Mother's Day

1. Mother's Day is meant to be a joyous event. This special day has become an internationally recognised day of celebration but its (1) \_\_\_\_\_ however were bittersweet.
2. The concept dates back to the 1600s in England. Taking (2) \_\_\_\_\_ on the fourth Sunday of Lent, "Mothering Sunday" was an annual opportunity for Christians to visit their hometown church. It slowly evolved, as children (3) \_\_\_\_\_ far away as domestic servants came back home to spend time with their mothers and family.
3. The modern version of Mother's Day took its form in the early twentieth century, (4) \_\_\_\_\_ to Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis and her daughter Anna. Ann Marie wanted to improve health and sanitary conditions in her community. Her Mother's Day Work Clubs raised money for medicine and hired help for moms (5) \_\_\_\_\_ from tuberculosis.
4. During the American Civil War, Ann Marie lost four of her children to disease. (6) \_\_\_\_\_ her personal tragedies, Ann Marie never stopped her community service.
5. "Ann Marie involved herself in community actions in the (7) \_\_\_\_\_ of motherhood. Mother's Day was more about community service," says Katharine Antolini, a professor at West Virginia Wesleyan College.
6. Ann Marie died on the second Sunday in May of 1905. After she (8) \_\_\_\_\_ away, her daughter Anna made it her mission to make Mother's Day a holiday — not only to (9) \_\_\_\_\_ her mother, but all mothers.
7. On the second Sunday in May of 1907, Anna held a small memorial service for her mother in a church. Those present received a white carnation, which had been Ann Marie's favourite flower. Anna organized another one a year later, and this service has been generally regarded as the first (10) \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's Day event.



8. To further the cause, Anna created the Mother's Day International Association. The group was intended to promote the day and organise events.
9. Flower, stationery and candy industries soon began to take (11)\_\_\_\_\_ of the celebrated occasion. Anna was most upset with florists, who in her mind had exploited the white carnations she had first handed out as a symbol of her mother. Carnations were relatively (12)\_\_\_\_\_ in 1908, costing only half a cent. By 1912, a white carnation was about 15 cents, and by 1920, some florists were charging a dollar.
10. Of course, since then, Mother's Day has become even more of a cash cow<sup>1</sup>. In (13)\_\_\_\_\_ to Hallmark card lines and gourmet chocolates, Mother's Day gifts now include everything from purses and handbags to diamond rings and spa packages. The (14)\_\_\_\_\_ meaning of the day might have been lost but the late Anna can take some comfort in knowing that Mother's Day is now celebrated internationally and that it has survived for so (15)\_\_\_\_\_ .

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<sup>1</sup> Cash cow: a product or business which generates unusually high profits.

## **Intensive Practice: Synthesis and Transformation** [20 marks]

1. The only thing I had not done before turning in was to turn off the radio.

\_\_\_\_\_ **except** \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Louis is different from his brothers. Louis enjoys playing the trumpet.

\_\_\_\_\_, **unlike** \_\_\_\_\_.

3. If performing on stage is unfamiliar to you, you may find it daunting on your first attempt.

**If you are not** \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Bill was surprised. He emerged as the overall champion for the piano competition.

**Much to** \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Harry's fingers were blistered. He managed to play the guitar perfectly.

**Despite** \_\_\_\_\_.

6. Claudia knows her strengths. She also gives her best effort.

\_\_\_\_\_ **who not only** \_\_\_\_\_.

7. The musicians were passionate and professional. The audience was impressed.

**The audience** \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Mr Davis asked Miles if he had practised the orchestral piece well the night before.

**Mr Davis asked Miles,** \_\_\_\_\_.

9. The conductor disappeared from the stage suddenly. Kyle was puzzled.

**What puzzled** \_\_\_\_\_.

10. Gloria dislikes playing the oboe. Her sisters dislike playing the oboe too.

**Neither** \_\_\_\_\_ **nor** \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Model Response**

### **An Act of Kindness**

I whistled a merry tune as I ambled down the crowded streets around Hyde Park. Sipping on a cup of freshly brewed cappuccino, the sweetness of the hot liquid warmed my body. I was in good spirits as I had recently received my first pay cheque since I first moved to London from Singapore. Moving to London was like stepping through a gateway to an entirely new world. I had to adjust to my new surroundings: the unpredictable weather patterns, which now included a blistering cold winter season, and the densely packed roads that were constantly filled with yellow cabs and innumerable cosmopolitan pedestrians.

At every turn of the corner in Singapore, you could always meet a friendly face that you would recognise but here in London, the well-dressed men and women hurrying along the streets seemed nonchalant. Their deadened eyes had long lost their sparkle. Shoving and jostling as one hurried down the street was common. Just as I was not used to the uncaring masses, I was equally uncomfortable at the sight of beggars or the homeless on the streets.

Round the corner of the street that day, I was surprised to chance upon a frail figure huddling in a corner underneath the "Starbucks" sign. From a distance, you could tell that it was a male in his mid-twenties. He was dressed in a tattered windbreaker and striped tights, with a thin blanket thrown over his feet.

My heart went out to the poor chap who was obviously struggling to stay warm in the harsh and bleak December winter. His skin had turned terribly pale and he would shiver whenever a gust of wind blew past. He clutched the blanket tightly, trying to do all he could to wrap it around him.

I fingered the crisp dollar bills in my pocket as I looked at the man. My parents had always taught me to put my morals before anything else and to help those in need. It was the only reason I needed to walk over and do the right thing. I handed him my cappuccino. The man looked up at me with his bloodshot eyes. He took the hot beverage appreciatively with both hands.

Then, I pressed a hundred-pound note into his hand.

His eyes widened, and then they started to well. "Sir... but I... thank you! But please, I can't accept this!" He tried returning the money. It took everything in me not to grab the money back and pretend nothing had happened but I shook my head firmly. At that moment, I understood how fortunate I was to have grown up in Singapore without having to live on the streets or beg for food. Singapore is a privileged country to live in and we should always be kind to those in need, even strangers.

"No; you take it. Get yourself something nice and warm to wear. Merry Christmas." He stood up and hugged me and, for once, London was filled with much warmth and kindness.

~ Christine Low

## An Unexpected Appearance

The grating crackle of the loudspeakers rose above the susurrations of the crowd at the book fair.

"Dear shoppers, Acme book fair is happy to announce a surprise visit by beloved author, Russell Lee. Hurry and get your book autographed by the enigmatic man at the east wing..." No sooner had the announcement ceased than the enthusiastic chatter of children rose to a crescendo. Eager children flocked to the east wing to meet their favourite author while the exasperated adults tried in vain to contain their kids' excitement. From where I stood, it looked as though a group of shepherds were frantically chasing a flock of sheep that had just contracted rabies.

I had originally planned to visit the book fair with my best friend, Arielle. However, she had broken her leg while playing football. With a sigh of resignation, I headed to the fair all by myself, hoping to pick up some new fiction titles at bargain prices. With some time to spare, I figured I might as well pick up Russell Lee's latest book in his True Singapore Ghost Stories series and get an autograph. After all, it was not every day that an author makes an unexpected appearance at the book fair. Besides, Russell Lee was one of my favourite authors when I was young. I was attracted to his mysterious persona— he never appeared in public without a ski mask and sunglasses.

A scene of bedlam greeted my eyes as I ambled over to the east wing. A brigade of sales assistants shielded the author from the claws of the imps. Chaos reigned supreme as the sea of cacophonous monkeys chanted Russell's name and ran amok, ignoring the pleas of the sales assistants to be orderly and quiet. The situation at the east wing was reminiscent of a full-scale riot, except this time, there was no tear gas and the rioters were winning. Every fibre of my being screamed at me to get out of that place and I was about to comply when a voice rose above the crowd.

"Russell, we want to know your true identity!" a raucous group of tweens shrieked.

As if on cue, the rabid children clamoured and clambered past the hapless sales assistants. Russell still had his mask on, but I could see his body tense up, ready to spring at the slightest hint of danger. Unfortunately for the author, he had underestimated the agile imps and was swarmed within seconds. Little grubby hands reached for his mask and tore it to shreds. Then, the crowd fell silent.

Everyone's gaze was fixed upon a hideous sight. Russell, far from being a charming and debonair author, was ugly beyond compare. His mien was riddled with scars and he made desperate attempts to shield his face. My eyes widened in disbelief. *Could that really be Russell Lee?* I thought. Just then, the manager appeared and quickly ushered the distraught author away. Soon, the crowd of unruly children dispersed, whisked away by their parents amidst angry chastisements. I paid for the books in my hands and left the fair.

Looking back, I wished I could have done something about the incident, but try as I might, I could not think of a feasible course of action. After all, it was partly the organiser's fault that the event fell into disarray. Later that evening, Russell Lee's Facebook fan page posted a comment that the author was never scheduled to appear at Acme Book Fair and that the scarred man was an impostor. Arielle, on the other hand, kicked herself in the foot – figuratively--for missing out on such an exciting drama. It was truly a day of unexpected occurrences.

~by Low Kim Heng

## A Prank

The stick insect stared curiously at Darren. Although it hid from the blistering heat of the sun and blended well with the tree, it could not escape Darren's keen sight. Darren's eyes lit up as he thought of catching it and keeping it as a pet. *Recess will be ending soon. I should be able to keep it for a few hours and bring it home*, Darren thought.

Just then, a nefarious idea hit Darren. He remembered how his nemesis, Amy, had laughed at his English composition a few days ago. Darren had sworn to take his revenge then. Now, as he stared at the hapless insect, an idea for a cruel prank came to him. Darren rubbed his hands in glee and held the stick insect carefully between his fingers. Gingerly, he slipped the critter into the front pocket of his shorts.

Darren snuck into the classroom a few minutes after the recess bell had rung. Thankfully, no one noticed as Darren took his seat behind Amy. The Maths teacher, Mr Low, strode into the classroom with a scowl on his face. Darren and his classmates had already gotten used to his dour face, but they could never get accustomed to his boring lessons. As Mr Low droned on monotonously, Darren was preoccupied with thoughts about how best to execute his prank. Amy, seated in front, was blissfully oblivious to Darren's dastardly plans.

Darren looked around furtively, making sure that neither Mr Low nor his classmates were watching. At the crucial moment, Darren began to have second thoughts. *Should I really do this?* Darren wondered. However, the desire for vengeance overcame him and he set his plan in motion.



Surreptitiously, Darren placed the insect on Amy's back. Barely able to contain his excitement, Darren cupped his hands over his mouth and suppressed a snicker. The stick insect, stuck in unfamiliar territory, began to crawl up towards Amy's neck. Amy felt something move behind her and without much thought, reached behind her and grabbed it. As her eyes registered the brownish creature, she let out an ear-piercing scream and flung it towards the window, stunning the entire class.

Unable to control himself, Darren broke out in loud guffaws as the other girls around Amy screamed in unison. Mr Low was astonished, but quickly regained his composure to control the chaotic situation.

Slamming his hands onto the table, Mr Low bellowed, "I want absolute silence, now!" His crystal-clear voice rose above the chaos. The class fell silent immediately when they saw Mr Low's face contorted in fury. Even Darren, who realised the gravity of the situation, quit laughing.

"It was Darren! I saw him placing an insect on Amy's back!" said Bernard, the class monitor.

Amy was still choking back tears, but threw a baleful glare at Darren as he cowered in fright. Mr Low walked over to him and Darren instantly knew he was going to be in deep trouble.

"Well? What do you have to say for yourself?" Mr Low asked.

Darren felt a lump in his throat. He knew that his excuse of exacting revenge on Amy for mocking him would never be accepted by Mr Low, so he resigned himself to fate as Mr Low rebuked him sternly.

"I'll be informing your parents about this!" said Mr Low as he walked away and resumed class. For the rest of the day, a petrified Darren sat still, like a Greek statue at the museum. *Mum will surely cane me for this!* He thought. A feeling of unease came over Darren as he anticipated the walloping from his mother, which came only too soon.

That evening, Darren lay on his bed and reflected on his wrongful deed. He could not erase the image of a whimpering Amy from his mind. Darren felt a pang of guilt for playing such a cruel prank on his classmate. He finally decided that a proper apology was warranted. Getting off his bed, Darren started to make a card for Amy.

*I'll apologise to her sincerely!* Darren thought as he penned his heartfelt apology.

~by Low Kim Heng

## **Suggested Answers**

### **Comprehension Open-Ended**

**Answer the following questions. Each question carries two marks.**

1. Why was the lack of daylight not a problem for its occupants?

**The room was well-lit by wax candles.**

[Para 1: I found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was seen in it.]

2. What furniture was Pip's attention drawn to when he entered the room and what was his conclusion about it?

**Pip's attention was drawn to the dressing table with a mirror [1m]. He gathered that it belonged to an elegant lady [1m].**

[Para 1: There was a draped table with a gilded looking-glass, and that I made out at first sight to be a fine lady's dressing-table.]

3. Why was Pip surprised that the lady's hair was white?

**The lady was dressed in bridal attire, so Pip thought that she was young.**

**OR**

**He did not expect a bride to have white hair/ be aged.**

[Para 3: And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white.]

4. Describe the lady's physical appearance in her bridal dress.

<b>Description 1</b>	<b>The bride <u>was skeletal and seemed to have shrunk in the dress</u> [1m].</b>
<b>Description 2</b>	<b>Her <u>eyes were dull and sunken</u> [1m].</b>

[Para 4: I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone.]

5. Why do you think the author compared the lady to a skeleton?

<b>Reason 1</b>	<b>The lady looked like the skeleton that was found under the church [1m].</b>
<b>Reason 2</b>	<b>The lady was still alive but was dead inside like a lifeless skeleton [1m].</b>

[Para 4: Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement.]

6. Do you think the lady had good eyesight? Give a piece of evidence to support your answer.

**No, the lady had poor eyesight [1m]. She asked Pip to come closer to her so that she could have a better look [1m].**

[Para 5: "Come nearer; let me look at you. Come close."]

7. What was the 'enormous lie' that was given in Pip's answer to Miss Havisham?

**The lie was that Pip was not afraid of Miss Havisham [1m] even though he had to stop himself from screaming when he saw her earlier [1m].**

[Para 8: I regret to state that I was not afraid of telling the enormous lie comprehended in the answer "No." para 4: I should have cried out if I could.]

8. What does Miss Havisham's gesture of keeping her hands over her heart suggest about how she felt?

**It shows that her heart was still broken [1m] and that the emotional hurt that she had suffered in the past was still affecting her [1m].**

[Para 10: Afterwards, she kept her hands there for a little while, and slowly took them away as if they were heavy.]

9. What do the clock and watch suggest about what had happened to Miss Havisham?

**She was probably abandoned at the altar at twenty minutes to nine on the day of her wedding.**

[Para 6: It was when I stood before her, avoiding her eyes, that I took note of the surrounding objects in detail, and saw that her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine.]

10. Name two differences between the appearance of Miss Havisham and a normal bride.

Miss Havisham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Sunken eyes</b></li><li>• <b>Old/ White hair</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Half arranged veil</b></li><li>• <b>Watch and chain not worn</b></li><li>• <b>Withered wedding dress</b></li></ul>
A normal bride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Bright and eager eyes</b></li><li>• <b>Young, youthful and energetic</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Properly worn veil</b></li><li>• <b>All wedding accoutrements worn</b></li><li>• <b>Fresh and splendid looking dress</b></li></ul>

## More Comprehension Practice for 2015

**Sequence Pip's opinions about Miss Havisham as they appear in the passage. The first opinion has been completed for you. (2 marks)**

(A)	Miss Havisham looks odd. <b>(para 2)</b>	1
(B)	She is nursing a broken heart. <b>(para 9)</b>	5
(C)	She was once a plump lady. <b>(para 4)</b>	3
(D)	She is in a wedding dress. <b>(para 3)</b>	2
(E)	She resembles a skeleton. <b>(para 4)</b>	4

**Identify whether the statements below are true or false. Mark your answers with 'T' for each true statement and 'F' for each false statement and explain your reasons clearly. (4 marks)**

Statement	T/F	Reason
Pip is a coward.	<b>F</b>	<b>He is only half afraid (para 1)/ He did not cry out from fear (para 4)</b>
Miss Havisham is wealthy.	<b>T</b>	<b>She has a fine dressing table (para 1) OR She dresses richly (para 3)</b>
Miss Havisham is a wax statue.	<b>F</b>	<b>She looks like a waxwork (para 4)</b>
Miss Havisham wants Pip's company.	<b>T</b>	<b>She asks him to play (para 11)</b>

## Cloze Passage: Mother's Day

1. beginnings/ origins
2. place
3. working
4. thanks
5. suffering
6. Despite
7. name
8. passed
9. honour
10. official
11. advantage
12. inexpensive/ cheap
13. addition
14. real/ true
15. long



## Synthesis and Transformation [20 marks]

1. The only thing I had not done before turning in was to turn off the radio.

I had done everything before turning in **except** turn off the radio.

2. Louis is different from his brothers. Louis enjoys playing the trumpet.

Louis, **unlike** his brothers, enjoys playing the trumpet.

3. If performing on stage is unfamiliar to you, you may find it daunting on your first attempt.

**If you are not** familiar with performing on stage, you may find it daunting on your first attempt.

4. Bill was surprised. He emerged as the overall champion for the piano competition.

**Much to** Bill's surprise, he emerged the overall champion for the piano competition.

OR

**Much to** his surprise, Bill emerged the overall champion for the piano competition.

5. Harry's fingers were blistered. He managed to play the guitar perfectly.

**Despite** having blistered fingers OR his blistered fingers OR the fact that his fingers were blistered, Harry managed to play the guitar perfectly.

6. Claudia knows her strengths. She also gives her best effort.

Claudia is a person **who not only** knows her strengths but also gives her best effort.

7. The musicians were passionate and professional. The audience was impressed.

**The audience** was impressed by the musicians' passion and professionalism.

8. Mr Davis asked Miles if he had practised the orchestral piece well the night before.

**Mr Davis asked Miles,** "Did you practise the orchestral piece well last night?"

9. The conductor disappeared from the stage suddenly. Kyle was puzzled.

**What puzzled** Kyle was the conductor's sudden disappearance from the stage.

10. Gloria dislikes playing the oboe. Her sisters dislike playing the oboe too.

**Neither** Gloria nor her sisters like playing the oboe.