

## Comprehension

Carefully read the passage below and answer ALL of the questions which follow.

The Interrogation: A short story

The door flew open and harsh artificial light flooded the tiny room. Bob squinted, attempting to defend himself from the accursed light and struggling to make out who, or what, had assaulted his senses. Two amorphous masses lingered in the brightly lit threshold for a second, then entered the room and locked the door behind them.

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Fear and uncertainty gripped Bob. As the shapes drew closer, he realised that he was not going to enjoy what was coming. He attempted to stand up, to meet the black shapes head-on, but the closer of the two forms shoved him violently back into his chair.

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Now Bob got a good look at the first intruder. The dark blob materialised into a tall, bulky man, his thick-rim glasses clinging to his head like moss to a cliffside. His angry grey eyes bore holes into the timid office worker's skull. Stomping around the desk toward Bob, he spoke, his voice imbued with the bass of a rockslide and the pride of a lion.

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"What is the problem?"

Bob didn't understand. What was this idiot going on about? "I don't know what you are talking..."

The motion was so quick that Bob didn't even have time to comprehend what was about to happen. One moment, the bulky man had been standing completely still, and the next Bob's left cheek was stinging, red from the vicious slap that had been applied. The office worker was stunned. Had the goon even moved?

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The man spoke again. "What is the *problem*?"

"Ow! What the hell was that for? I swear, I don't know what's going on!"

The second shape that had entered the room now calmly slid forward, materialising into a rail-thin woman with shoulder-length red hair flecked with blond streaks. She calmly strode to the opposite side of the desk from the brute and sat primly on the corner of it, right hand smoothing out the creases of her skirt as she did so, her left arm clutching a yellow notepad to her chest. Bob had to turn his chair in order to see her, but she did not turn toward him, her hair obscuring her face.

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Then, after what seemed like ages, she spoke, her voice a melodious whisper: "Look, Bob, you're a nice guy, but we can't do our job without you telling us what exactly the problem is, okay? So just help us out, and we can let you go."

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"Let me go? This is MY office!"

The redhead slowly nodded, then turned to look at the person whose office they had invaded. Her rich green eyes, too dark and vivid to be natural, found their purchase and burned themselves into Bob's memory. "Oh, we know. And yet, we can't let you leave, not until you give us what we want. We're on

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a *schedule* here, Bob, and you're holding us up. We need you to tell us what the problem is. Otherwise we can't do our jobs."

Bob was incensed. "Clearly you guys don't listen well. I already told you: I have no idea what you are talking about."

The woman's expression hardened, her silvery voice adopting a slight but noticeable edge. "My partner has already asked you once, and quite politely. Please don't make him repeat himself." 35

Bob stole a glance at the man, who was now towering over him from across the desk, and desperately racked his mind for something, anything, he could tell these two goons to make them leave him alone. He came up blank. "What, about the problem? What problem?"

The man stepped forward, as if to strike Bob again, but the woman held up her hand and he stopped. She sighed, and gracefully stood next to the corner of the desk. Even though when standing she was several inches shorter than he, at the moment, while sitting in his chair, Bob felt dwarfed by her presence. 40 42

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**END OF ARTICLE. Please answer the following questions:**

- 1) Bob "squinted" in line 1. Why did he do this? (2)
- 2) Which of the following words is least similar in meaning to "gracefully" (line 41)? (1)
  - a) Elegantly
  - b) Stylishly
  - c) Technically
  - d) Delicately
- 3) Comment on the use and effect of the word "assaulted" (line 2). (2)
- 4) What do you think the word "primly" (line 21) means? (1)
- 5) Re-read lines 8-11. Pick one simile and one metaphor from these lines and describe its effect. (4)
- 6) Re-read lines 1-11. How do you think Bob feels here? Use quotations to support your answer. (4)
- 7) Re-read lines 14-16. Comment on the way this paragraph is written. How does it mimic Bob's own experience of the events which it describes? (3)
- 8) What comparisons are made between the two intruders? Use quotations to illustrate your point. (4)

## Writing Task

Create a piece of descriptive writing about an abandoned mansion, describing the mansion in detail. (20)