**Assessment Task for Reading**

**Topic: A New Case for Sherlock Holmes**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ reading skills.

This set of materials contains the following:

* **The reading text**
* **A set of questions**
* **Suggested answers**

**Reading Text**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Julia  Helen  Julia  Helen  Julia  Helen  Julia  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Holmes  Helen  Holmes  Helen | *The scene opens in Sherlock Holmes’ living room. Sherlock is leaning back in an armchair with eyes closed. Helen Stoner is sitting opposite him and Dr. Watson is seated at a desk taking notes.*  Your sister, Julia, is dead?  She died just two years ago, and it is about her death that I wish to speak to you.  *Sherlock Holmes opens his eyes and looks at his visitor.*  Please be precise about the details.  *Holmes resumes his position in the chair with his eyes closed.*  Every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor-house is very old, and the bedrooms are on the ground floor. Of these bedrooms the first along the corridor from the entrance hall is Dr. Roylott’s, the second my sister’s, and the third my own. There are no doors between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Is that clear?  Perfectly.  The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not gone to bed, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars he usually smoked. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she stayed for some time while we chatted about her approaching wedding. At eleven o’clock she got up to leave, but she paused at the door and looked back.  *Lights dim on the centre stage. Holmes and Watson are still visible, in the chair, eyes closed, and at the desk, writing notes. Spotlight on Julia and Helen at the front of the stage, stage left. Julia is about to exit stage left but her head is turned back towards Helen.*  Tell me, Helen, have you ever heard anyone whistle in the dead of the night?  Never.  I suppose that you couldn’t possibly whistle, yourself, in your sleep?  Certainly not. Why?  Because during the last few nights, about three in the morning, I have heard a low, clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has woken me up. I cannot tell where it comes from – perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I just wonder whether you’ve heard it too.  No, I haven’t.  Well, it is of no great importance, at any rate.  *Julia exits stage left. Lights up on centre stage. Helen continues telling her story to Holmes*.  She smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock.  I see. Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?  Always.  Why?  The doctor kept a tiger and a large monkey. We did not feel secure unless our doors were locked.  I see. Please, do proceed with your statement.  I could not sleep that night. I had a vague feeling of impending trouble. My sister and I were twins, and you know there are subtle links between twins. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amid all the noise of the gale, I heard the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister’s voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a scarf round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, like my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if something metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage, my sister’s door was swinging open. By the light of the corridor-lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face white with terror, her whole body swaying like a drunk. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She jerked violently as though she was in terrible pain.  At first I thought that she had not recognised me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out, ‘Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!’ She stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the doctor’s room, but she couldn’t say any more. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him coming from his room in his dressing-gown. As he reached my sister’s side she lost consciousness. He poured brandy down her throat and sent for medical aid from the village, but all the efforts were in vain, and she died without recovering consciousness.  One moment, are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?  I have a strong impression that I heard it, but, among the crash of the storm and the creaking of an old house, it is difficult to tell. It’s possible I may have been mistaken.  Was your sister dressed?  No, she was in her night-dress. In her right hand they found the charred stump of a match and in her left a matchbox.  Showing that she had struck a light to look around when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?  He investigated the case with great care, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. The door had been fastened from the inside, and the windows were barred by old-fashioned shutters with iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully tested, and were shown to be solid, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is blocked with iron bars. It is certain that my sister was alone when she met her end.  How about poison?  The doctors examined her for it, but without success.  What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?  I believe that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, although I cannot imagine what it was that frightened her. | 1  5  10  15  20  25  30  35  40  45  50  55  60  65  70  75  80  85 |

**END OF READING TEXT**

Adapted from *The Speckled Band* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm#8>

**Questions**

**Refer to the text and answer Questions 1-14. Write your answers in the spaces provided. For multiple-choice questions, choose the best answer and blacken ONE circle only.**

1. Complete the floor plan of the ground floor of the house described by Helen in *(3 marks*)

lines 9-15.

door

Corridor

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s Room

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s Room

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s Room

Entrance

Hall

window

Lawn

2. What happened at the following time in Helen’s account of the events? *(2 marks)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 11 pm: |  |
| 3 am: |  |

3. Why did Julia and Helen lock their rooms at night? *(2 marks)*

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4. Provide a word to replace the following words and phrase: *(4 marks)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The word/phase in the text** | **A word to replace** |
| at any rate (line 34) |  |
| custom (line 39) |  |
| secure (line 42) |  |
| proceed (line 44) |  |

5. Complete the sentence below: *(2 marks)*

On the night of the incident, Helen could not sleep because she felt that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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6. What was the relationship between Julia and Helen? *(1 mark)*

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7. Find a word or phrase in lines 45 to 57 that means the opposite of the following: *(4 marks)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Meaning** | **Word/phase in the text** |
| certain |  |
| peaceful |  |
| unafraid |  |
| steady |  |

8. Rephrase ‘could you swear to it?’ (lines 66-67) *(1 mark)*

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. Why was Helen not completely certain about what she heard? *(2 marks)*

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10. Arrange the following events in the order they happened. The first one *(4 marks)* is done for you.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Julia pointed towards something. |  | Julia staggered to her bedroom door. |
|  | Helen heard clanking sound. |  | Julia was given a drink to revive her. |
|  | Julia collapsed. |  | Julia became unconscious. |
|  | Helen looked for help. | 1 | Helen heard a scream. |
|  | Helen put a shawl around her shoulders. |  |  |

11. In lines 76-82, why was Helen certain that Julia was alone in her room? *(5 marks)*

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

12. Decide whether the following statements are true or false or if the information *(5 marks)*

is not given in the text. Put down “T”, “F” or “NG” in the space provided.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Julia visits Sherlock Holmes with Helen. |  |
| Watson is facing away from Sherlock Holmes and Helen. |  |
| Sherlock Holmes opens his eyes to emphasise what he is saying. |  |
| Helen is sitting in an armchair. |  |
| Julia leaves the stage after her death. |  |

13. Holmes speaks very little during Helen’s story. Most of the time he speaks *(1 mark)*

to

a. clarify. b. explain. c. summarise. d. instruct.

14. Which two of these adjectives best describe Sherlock Holmes? Circle them.

*(2 marks)*

Justify your answer using the information in the text.

empathetic focused disinterested detail-oriented welcoming

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Suggested Answers** | | |
| 1. | (1 mark each)  1. Helen (line 12)  2. Julia (lines 11-12)  3. Dr Roylott (line 11) | |
|  |  | |
| 2. | (1 mark each)  11pm: Julia stood up and left Helen’s room (line 20)  3am: Julia often / usually heard a whistle (lines 29-30) | |
|  |  | |
| 3. | To feel safe (1 mark) from the Doctor’s tiger and large monkey (1 mark) (lines 42-43) | |
|  |  | |
| 4. | (1 mark each)  anyway  habit  safe  continue | |
|  |  | |
| 5. | (1 mark for content; 1 mark for grammar)  . . . something bad was going to happen / would happen (line 45) or . . . there was impeding trouble or . . . trouble was impending / coming or anything similar | |
|  |  | |
| 6. | (1 mark)  twin sisters (line46). | |
|  |  | |
| 7. | (1 mark each)  vague (line 45)  wild (line 47)  terrified (line 49)  swaying (line 55) | |
| 8. | (1 mark)  “Are you sure / certain?”  Any reasonable answers | |
| 9. | The storm was loud (1 mark) and the house was (old and) creaking (1 mark) (lines 68-70) | |
|  |  | |
| 10. | (½ mark each)  2. Helen put a shawl around her shoulders.(lines 49-50)  3. Helen heard a clanking sound. (line 52)  4. Julia staggered to her bedroom door. (line 54)  5. Julia collapsed. (line 56)  6. Julia pointed towards something. (line 60)  7. Helen looked for help. (lines 61-62)  8. Julia lost consciousness. (lines 62-63)  9. Julia was given a drink to revive her. (lines 63-64). | |
|  |  | |
| 11. | (1 mark each)  The door was locked from the inside. (line 77)  There were shutters / bars on the window. (line 78)  The walls were found to be solid. (lines 79-80)  The floor was solid. (line 80)  There were bars on the chimney. (line 81) |
|  |  |
| 12. | (1 mark each)  F (The conversation is presented in flashback)  NG  T (e.g. line 6)  NG (line 2)  F (line 35) |
|  |  |
| 13. | (1 mark)  a. clarify  He does instruct from time to time (e.g. lines 7 and 44) and he explains the significance he has deduced in lines 74-5, but most of his utterances are to clarify details. |
|  |  |
| 14. | (1 mark each)  focused – closed eyes to focus on story  detail-oriented – only speaks to clarify details |

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**