BLOGS

Passage-based Questions for CLAT English Section- PART I

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PASSAGE 1

Mary Lennox was a strange, contrary child. She had been born in India, and, for as long as she could remember, she had always been given her own way. Her father had held a position under the English Government, and her mother had been a great beauty who cared only to go to parties and amuse herself with people who flattered her.

If Mary had not been so ill-tempered and spoiled, she might have found herself lonely, for the servants who looked after her were forbidden to talk to her, and her parents paid her very little attention. She had neither brothers nor sisters, and, being accustomed to having her own way, she was quick-tempered and self-centered.

One day, a terrible cholera epidemic swept through the house. In a matter of days, the servants fell ill, and Mary was left alone. She wandered through the empty rooms, calling for Ayah, her nurse, but no one came. At last, she was found by soldiers and sent away to England, to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, at Misselthwaite Manor, a huge, mysterious house on the edge of the Yorkshire moors.

Misselthwaite Manor was unlike anything Mary had ever known. The house was vast, with hundreds of rooms, many of them shut up and locked. The gardens were overgrown and wild, and the moor stretched for miles beyond the gates. Mary was told she must amuse herself and not trouble the servants. She was given a small, plain room and left to her own devices.

At first, Mary hated everything about her new home. She found the weather cold and the food strange. The house seemed gloomy and unfriendly, and she disliked the stern housekeeper, Mrs. Medlock. But as the days passed, Mary grew curious. She began to explore the gardens, where she met a friendly robin who seemed to want to show her something. The robin led her to a hidden door, covered in ivy, which opened into a secret garden that had been locked up for ten years.

Inside the garden, Mary discovered a world of beauty and mystery. The trees were bare, but she could see signs of life everywhere—tiny green shoots pushing through the earth, birds singing in the branches. She began to clear away the dead leaves and tend to the plants, feeling, for the first time, a sense of purpose and happiness. As she worked, she grew stronger and healthier, and her sour mood began to lift.

Mary's discovery of the secret garden changed her life. She made friends with Dickon, a local boy who loved animals and knew all about plants, and with Colin, her sickly cousin who had been hidden away in the house. Together, they brought the garden back to life, and, in doing so, found healing and friendship for themselves.

Source: From "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett

1. Which of the following best expresses a central theme of the passage?

A. The redemptive power of nature and friendship in healing a lonely heart.
B. The importance of strict discipline and obedience in childhood.
C. The inevitability of loneliness and isolation in life.
D. The struggle for wealth and social status as a path to happiness.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The passage emphasizes how Mary's character transforms as she connects with the secret garden and new friends, suggesting that companionship and the nurturing influence of nature lead to personal healing and growth. The other options are not supported by the passage's details or message.

2. What narrative point of view is used in the passage, and how does it affect our understanding of Mary?

A. First-person narration by Mary, giving a direct account of her thoughts.
B. Third-person limited, focusing on Mary's perspective and experiences.
C. Third-person omniscient, revealing insights about all characters' thoughts.
D. Second-person, directly addressing the reader as "you."

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: The story is told in third-person, closely following Mary's perspective. We see Mary described as "she" by an outside narrator, and we gain insight into her feelings and background

primarily through her experiences. The narrator focuses on Mary (and occasionally provides context about her past), rather than shifting into the minds of all characters, which makes option B the best choice.

3. Which choice best describes Mary Lennox's character development over the course of the passage?

A. She remains as spoiled and bitter at the end as she was at the beginning.
B. She transforms from a sullen, self-centered child into a more curious and compassionate person.
C. She starts off timid and becomes increasingly angry and rebellious.
D. She is portrayed as perfect and kind from start to finish, with no significant change.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: In the passage, Mary initially appears disagreeable and withdrawn due to her upbringing. As the story progresses (especially after she arrives at Misselthwaite Manor and discovers the garden), she grows more active, curious, and caring. This marks a clear shift from her earlier sour demeanor, reflecting personal growth. The other options misrepresent or oversimplify her development.

4. Which of the following is implied about Mary's upbringing, even if it is not stated outright in the passage?

A. She was largely ignored by her parents and left in the care of servants.
B. She was deeply loved and spoiled by an attentive mother.
C. She had many close friends during her childhood in India.
D. She received an excellent education and was taught to be kind to others.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The passage hints that Mary's parents paid little attention to her – for instance, her mother is mentioned as being too busy or disinterested to care for Mary, leaving servants to tend to her.

5. How does the setting of Misselthwaite Manor and its surroundings affect Mary in the passage?

A. The fresh moorland air and new environment begin to invigorate Mary, improving her appetite and mood.
B. The gloomy manor makes Mary even more angry and she withdraws completely.
C. The constant rain and cold cause Mary to fall ill and become more irritable.
D. The luxurious comforts of the manor instantly make Mary happy without needing to change herself.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: In the passage, the Yorkshire moor and gardens have a positive impact on Mary. Coming from the stifling heat of India and a lonely life, the brisk air and open spaces of Misselthwaite Manor awaken her curiosity and health. Mary starts to eat better and explore outdoors, showing an improved spirit.

6. In the context of the passage, the “secret garden” is most likely a symbol of:

A. the hidden potential for renewal and growth in people who have been lonely or hurt.
B. the wealth and social status of Mary’s family back in India.
C. the mysterious and dangerous elements of Misselthwaite that should be avoided.
D. the strict rules that Mary must follow in her uncle’s household.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The secret garden symbolizes hope, rejuvenation, and the possibility of personal growth. Just as the long-neglected garden comes back to life with care, Mary (and others) experience emotional healing and transformation through tending it. The garden is a private, safe space where positive change occurs.

7. Which answer best describes how the passage is structured narratively?

A. It begins with Mary’s current situation and then includes a flashback to her past in India, explaining how she became who she is.
B. It presents events in strict chronological order, starting from Mary’s infancy to the present with no background breaks.
C. It is told through letters Mary writes, which reveal the story in a series of correspondences.
D. It alternates point-of-view between Mary and her uncle in each section of the passage.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The passage's structure provides context for Mary's character by shifting from her present circumstances to important background information.

8. What can be inferred about Archibald Craven based on his actions regarding the secret garden in the passage?

A. He is still grief-stricken over his wife's death, which is why he locked the garden and avoids it.
B. He despises gardening and locked the garden to save money on its upkeep.
C. He is strict and enjoys punishing Mary by keeping her away from the garden.
D. He secretly spends time in the garden himself but pretends it's closed.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The passage mentions that the garden had been locked up after a tragic event (the death of Mr. Craven's wife in that garden). From this, we infer that Mr. Craven cannot bear to look at the place associated with his loss. His avoidance of the garden suggests deep grief and emotional pain.

9. Which of the following is a clear cause-and-effect relationship illustrated in the passage's plot?

A. Because Mary disobeys the manor's rules, she is sent back to India.
B. Because a cholera epidemic orphaned Mary, she is sent to live with her uncle in England.
C. Because Mary is kind to everyone she meets, she immediately makes many friends at Misselthwaite.
D. Because Mary finds life at Misselthwaite boring, she decides to run away from the manor.

Correct Answer: B

Explanation: The passage describes how a cholera outbreak in India led to the death of Mary's parents and caretakers, resulting in Mary being sent to Misselthwaite Manor in England. This is a direct cause (the epidemic and her orphaning) and effect (her relocation and new life with her uncle).

10. Which choice best characterizes the tone of the passage, and how does it shift (if at all)?

A. It starts out bleak and forlorn but becomes increasingly hopeful as Mary's circumstances improve.

B. It maintains a light, humorous tone throughout, even when discussing Mary's troubles.

C. The tone is angry and sarcastic from beginning to end, reflecting Mary's bitter viewpoint.

D. The passage is written in a dry, scientific tone, focusing only on facts about gardening.

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: The passage initially has a somber, gloomy tone when describing Mary's unhappy early life and the loneliness at Misselthwaite Manor. However, as Mary begins to explore her new world- discovering the secret garden and forming connections, the tone becomes warmer and more hopeful.