

In this extract, set in 1570s Tudor England, a woman is accused of witchcraft, a crime punishable by death. Worried that she might have her very young daughter taken away, she has hidden her in a secret passage under the floorboards of her cottage.

‘OPEN THE DOOR, CRONE!’

Again, the frame of the tiny cottage shook.

Ellen sighed. ‘Crone?’ she murmured to herself, fishing a bonnet from the back of a chair, and stuffing her masses of brown curls underneath. ‘I don’t look that old . . .’

5 She stood up straight, smoothed out her smock and roughly tightened the laces in her bodice. Her appearance probably wouldn’t count for much once she had opened the door to her visitors, but she wasn’t going to make their job easier for them. She glanced at the two beds in the corner of the room, one so small it could have been a cot, and a shadow passed over her face.

I hope she remembers what to do.

10 More pounding. The door seemed to be coming off its hinges.

I hope she’ll be safe.

Ellen took a deep breath, and went to open it. Pale light and cold air, rich with the damp smells of late autumn, flooded the cottage.

15 The sight that greeted her on the other side gave her a thrill of surprise more than fear. The man in front of her had a quite impossibly handsome face. His ridged cheekbones, arched eyebrows and pointed beard gave him a determinedly devilish aspect that Ellen found rather appealing. Those features were framed by a vast ruff and tall black hat, its huge feathers nodding, the plume of some Greek warrior. And at the centre of it all were his eyes – the kind of eyes that seemed to be all pupil, cold, black forest pools. He smiled at her.

20 ‘Good day, sirs,’ said Ellen calmly. At the shoulder of the handsome man stood a taller, thinner companion. In one hand he was clutching a Bible. In the other a noose. Behind them both were the dirty, ugly, absurd faces of the villagers, pressed in a ring around her cottage.

The handsome man cleared his throat and spoke. His voice sounded like a hammer striking an anvil.

25 ‘Ellen Greenlief. By the authority of the Malleus Maleficarum, you stand accused of the practice of witchcraft, denying Almighty God and his son Jesus Christ, of sealing a covenant with the Devil, and performing diverse crimes of sorcery and necromancy with which you have afflicted the good villagers of Fordham.’

There were subdued noises of agreement from the onlookers. Ellen did her best to look underwhelmed, and smiled back at the man.

30 ‘Forgive me, gentlemen, but I suspect you’ve had a wasted journey. I am a poor housewife, no more. I spin. I weave.’

She gestured to a broken spinning wheel that was leant against the outside wall of the cottage. The handsome man laughed.

‘Ay, I can believe that. It is a web of lies and deceit that you have been weaving, and most subtly too.’

35 His smugness showed so plainly on his face, Ellen thought for a moment he might take a bow. A couple of villagers took heart from his reply and cried their approval.

‘She ain’t never been to church!’

‘She turned all our milk sour!’

40 Ellen sighed, and replied over the handsome man’s shoulder. ‘That’s a matter you should discuss with your cows, Master Garrard, not me.’ There was a titter from one of the children in the crowd. The handsome man continued to smile, although one of his eyes twitched with impatience. He waited for the villagers’ baiting to die down.

‘You’ll be pleased to hear that we’re not interested in milk, sour or otherwise.’

Ellen’s face hardened.

45 ‘If it’s evidence of witchcraft you are looking for, I am afraid you will be disappointed.’

His eyes roamed greedily over her, as though searching for something. ‘No doubt the Devil has taught you most cunning ways of concealing your art.’

50 Ellen let out a cold laugh. ‘So, if you find what you are looking for, I am damned. And if you don’t find it, I am damned for concealing it? How clever! And I thought I was meant to be the tricky one.’ Ellen smiled back, eyes narrowed, but in her mind, running over and over, there was a different speech.

Remember. She has to remember. Get away! Get away... even if they get me.

1. This is a comprehension question. Only short answers are required.

For
examiner's
use only

(a) Why does the cottage door shake? (1 mark)

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(b) During what season is the passage set? (1 mark)

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(c) Why does a 'shadow' pass over Ellen's face when she looks at the cot? (1 mark)

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(d) '*I hope she remembers what to do*' (line 20). Why do you think this is in italics? (1 mark)

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(e) Why do you think Ellen tidies herself up? Is it to:

i) prepare for all the guests who have come to visit

ii) not allow her appearance to be an excuse to accuse her

iii) make herself more attractive to the handsome man (1 mark)

Circle the answer that appears most correct.

Q1 TOTAL
/ 5

Questions continue on the next page

2. **This question tests your ability to discuss language.** The following three quotations are from the **first paragraph**. Explain how the writer conveys a sense of **activity and excitement** in each of them. Your ability to discuss the meanings of individual words and to identify literary techniques (such as metaphors or similes) will be rewarded.

*For
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use only*

(a) 'His ridged cheekbones, arched eyebrows and pointed beard gave him a determinedly devilish aspect that Ellen found rather appealing.' **(3 marks)**

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(b) '...his eyes – the kind of eyes that seemed to be all pupil, cold, black forest pools.'
(3 marks)

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Questions continue on the next page

(c) 'His voice sounded like a hammer striking an anvil.' (3 marks)

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use only

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(d) Look back at **lines 1 – 30**. What is your OVERALL impression of the 'handsome man'?

Using **adjectives** (describing words) and **ANY** quotation **NOT** used in the examination so far, write your answer below. (3 marks; 12 marks total for this question)

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Questions continue on the next page

Q2 TOTAL
/ 12

3. **This question tests your understanding of character.** Think about the **character** of the handsome man **AFTER line 24**. **In your own words**, explain what the following two quotations say about his character:

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use only*

- a) 'His smugness showed so plainly on his face, Ellen thought for a moment he might take a bow.'

EXPLANATION: (3 marks)

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- b) 'His eyes roamed greedily over her, as though searching for something.'

EXPLANATION: (3 marks)

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Q3 TOTAL
/ 6

Questions continue on the next page

4. This question tests your ability to explain the meanings of words as they appear in the passage.

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examiner's
use only*

Work out the meaning of the following words based on their meaning in the passage:

a) absurd (line 22)

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b) covenant (line 25)

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c) afflicted (line 26)

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d) diverse (line 26)

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e) subdued (line 28)

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Questions continue on the next page

Q4 TOTAL
/ 5

5. This question tests your ability to find a quotation and explain its meaning.

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use only*

(a) In lines 20-21, there is a 'companion' with the handsome man. **Using quotation to support your view**, what do you think his job is? (3 marks).

QUOTATION (1 mark)

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EXPLANATION (2 marks)

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(b) For **one further mark**, how has the writer created a sense of unease with this description of the companion in lines 20-21? (**1 mark; 4 marks total**)

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Q4 TOTAL
/ 4

Questions continue on the next page

6. This question tests your ability to explain the meanings of quotations.

For
examiner's
use only

In your own words, and based on the context of the passage, explain why the writer has written the following:

a) 'There was a titter from one of the children in the crowd.' (2 marks)

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b) 'So, if you find what you are looking for, I am damned. And if you don't find it, I am damned for concealing it? How clever! And I thought I was meant to be the tricky one.' (3 marks)

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c) 'Remember. She has to remember. Get away! Get away... even if they get me.' (3 marks)

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Questions continue on the next page

Q6 TOTAL
/ 8

