

Heart of Darkness: Multiple Choice Questions

After reading the following passage from *Heart of Darkness*, choose the best answer to each question.

The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished spires. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realize his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns—and even convictions. The Lawyer—the best of old

fellows—had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones.

Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin the game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more somber every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changes to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men.

1. The pronoun “her” in the opening sentence is an example of [A] simile [B] metaphor [C] personification [D] hyperbole
2. The phrase in the opening sentence “The flood had made” refers to the [A] rising of the tides [B] flood the ship had just encountered [C] ebb and flow of the tide [D] quickness with which the ship moves
3. The serious, ominous tone of the passage is best suggested in which of the following lines? [A] “Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation . . .” [B] “. . . became more somber every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.” [C] “Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht.” [D] “The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance.”
4. The statement “. . . In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint” is the author’s symbolism for [A] the unity of the sea and the ship [B] the closeness of the author to the sea [C] the unity of earth and heaven [D] the lack of feeling the main character has for the sea
5. The atmosphere created by the word “brooding” is [A] oppressive [B] agitated [C] meditative [D] placid
6. The word “interminable” in the second paragraph implies that the waterway [A] ends abruptly [B] narrows as it continues [C] continues without end [D] continues for a long way
7. The somber characterization of Marlow set against the “brooding gloom” provides [A] foreshadowing [B] verisimilitude [C] contrast [D] symbolism
8. In paragraph four, the “bond of the sea” refers to which of the following
I. a common feeling of affection
II. an acceptance of the ideas and stories of each other
III. the voyages the men made together [A] I only [B] II only [C] III only [D] I and II only
9. Which of the following pairs of words suggests the contrasting light and dark imagery?
I. luminous space, red clusters (first paragraph)
II. luminous estuary, brooding gloom (third paragraph)
III. glowing white, dull red (fifth paragraph) [A] II only [B] III only [C] I and II only [D] II and III only
10. Taken as a whole, the passage is best described as [A] a narrative with an historical perspective [B] a discussion with anecdotes [C] an expository passage largely concerned with definition [D] a descriptive passage that makes use of visual imagery

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| 1. C | 6. C |
| 2. A | 7. A |
| 3. B | 8. D |
| 4. C | 9. D |
| 5. A | 10. D |