

# Comprehension



You have 10 minutes to complete this test.

## The Story of Doctor Dolittle

Many years ago—when my grandparents were little children—there was a kind and wise doctor. His name, you ask? “Dolittle,” he would say with a smile, “John Dolittle, M.D.”. “M.D.” means that he was a proper doctor and knew a whole lot.

He lived in a little town called Puddleby-on-the-Marsh. All the folks, young and old, knew him well by sight, and so whenever he walked down the street in his high hat and dark, yet sometimes dirty, suit everyone would say, “There goes the Doctor! What a clever man.” He often wore a discreet pocket-watch attached to his suit and sometimes carried a cane that shone brilliant blue in the light. Even the dogs and the children would run up and follow behind him. Some even believed that the crows, upon spotting the Doctor, would caw and nod their heads at his presence. Despite the crows being a bad omen, Doctor Dolittle didn’t mind. “All species are equal,” he would commonly say. The truth is, there was something almost magical about him, and no-one knew why.

The house he lived in, on the edge of the town, was quite small; his garden, however, was very large and had a wide lawn and stone seats and weeping-willows hanging over. His sister, Sarah Dolittle, was housekeeper for him, but most of the time he insisted on doing the work himself. Despite his name, laziness was not in his nature. He was very fond of animals; it was obvious by looking into his garden. Besides the gold-fish in the pond, that were darting to and fro, there were soft, gentle rabbits, energetic white mice and a dozen or so chickens pecking at the ground quickly. Sarah must have been there recently. He also had an old lame horse—twenty-five years of age—and many other animals. His sister used to grumble about them and said they made the house and garden untidy, which was true, but the Doctor didn’t mind much. “Let them be,” he used to say, with a hearty laugh. “They are wild animals! What do you expect from them- to pick up a mop and bucket?” **(Written by Hugh Lofting)**

**Here are some questions on the extract you have just read. Circle the correct answer.**

1. In the first paragraph, there is a phrase spoken by the narrator that draws the reader into the text. Where do you think this is?
  - a) ‘When my grandparents were children’
  - b) ‘there was a wise and kind doctor’
  - c) ‘His name, you ask?’
  - d) “‘Dolittle,” he would say with a smile’
  - e) ‘He was a proper doctor’
2. Which two things make the Doctor recognisable on the street?
  - a) His hat and suit
  - b) His hat and pocket-watch
  - c) His pocket-watch and cane
  - d) His cane and hat
  - e) His hat and suit

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3. In the second part of the extract, there is an example of alliteration that stands out in the paragraph.

Where is this?

- a) 'Knew him well by sight'
- b) 'There were rabbits'
- c) 'No-one knew why'
- d) 'carried a cane that shone brilliant blue'
- e) 'walked down the street in his high hat'

4. The word 'caw' is an example of a literary device used to portray the sound of a word. What is this literary device called?

- a) Metaphor
- b) Onomatopoeia
- c) Alliteration
- d) Personification
- e) Symbolism

5. What does the term 'omen' mean?

- a) A sound
- b) A sign
- c) A smell
- d) A taste
- e) A movement

6. What is the **first** thing that is made obvious about where the Doctor lives?

- a) That it was very large
- b) That it had a wide lawn
- c) That there were weeping willows in it
- d) That it was quite small
- e) That it was on the edge of town

7. What is ironic about the sentence: 'Despite his name and appearance, laziness was not in his nature'?

- a) The Doctor was an M.D and therefore could not be lazy
- b) People knew him as a doctor and knew he was not lazy
- c) His surname spells out 'Do' and 'Little', suggesting laziness
- d) His cane makes him appear lazy or unstable
- e) His suit is occasionally dirty, suggesting laziness

8. Why do you think the narrator suggests that Sarah must have been out in the garden recently?

- a) Because the rabbits were out of their hutches
- b) Because the chickens were pecking at food
- c) Because the mice were energetic
- d) Because the gold-fish were darting to and fro
- e) Because the rabbits had recently been stroked

9. Why did the Doctor's sister not like the animals?

- a) Because they made the garden untidy
- b) Because they made the kitchen untidy
- c) Because there were so many of them
- d) Because the horse was lame
- e) Because the chickens always needed feeding

10. How would you best describe a 'hearty laugh'?

- a) Vigorous and cheerful
- b) Sudden and frightening
- c) Softly and quietly
- d) Harshly and powerfully
- e) Sarcastic and rude

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## Answers

1. C- The question 'His name, you ask?' is directed at the reader and draws us into the narrative
2. A- The narrator points out that his hat and suit make people say 'There goes the doctor!', suggesting that they are the most recognisable features of his outfit
3. D- 'Carried a cane that shone brilliant blue' has a double alliteration with the letters 'c' and 'b'
4. B- 'caw' is an onomatopoeia as it spells out the sound of the crows' birdsong
5. B- the term 'omen' means a sign, or a feeling that someone gets about the future. Omens can be good or bad
6. E- in the third paragraph, the narrator tells us that 'The house he lived in, on the edge of town, was...'. The first thing we find out, therefore, is that he lives on the edge of town
7. C- His surname is ironic because he DOES do a lot- he is not a lazy man
8. B- we can infer that the chickens were pecking the ground because there was food on them. Sarah, therefore, may have just gone out to feed them
9. A- in the final paragraph, the narrator tells us how Sarah doesn't like the animals because they make the 'house and garden untidy'
10. A- a hearty laugh is one that is vigorous, cheerful and energetic