

Edexcel style

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in English Language

Paper 1: Fiction and Imaginative Writing – Practice Paper

1EN0/01 · Practice paper

INSERT

The source(s) that follow are for use with the question paper. Do not write on this insert.

Source Booklet: Text for use with Section A

'The Spinning Room'. Original passage written in the style of 19th-century fiction for Teach io. In this extract, a girl begins her first day of work in a Yorkshire cotton mill.

The bell at Hollins Mill was rung at half past five, and by a quarter to six Martha Pryor, who was not yet fourteen, stood for the first time upon the floor of the great spinning room, with her shawl over her arm and her heart in her mouth.

5 Nothing that had been told her had prepared her for the noise. It was not one sound but a thousand, all striving together: the clatter of the frames, the shriek of the spindles, the endless thud and rumble of the engine below, which shook the very boards beneath her clogs, so that she felt it rise through her bones and
10 settle in her teeth. The air was thick and warm and white with floating cotton, which drifted about the room like snow that would not fall, and caught in her hair and her lashes, and crept into her throat when she breathed. Above all this, high in the roof, ran the long iron shafts and the leather belts that drove the
15 machines, turning, turning, without rest or pause, as if the whole building were some vast creature that had swallowed her alive.

'Tha'll piece for Sarah Bentley,' said the overlooker, a tall, sallow man named Crabtree, who carried a leather strap coiled at his belt and seemed never to look at anyone directly. 'Watch her.
20 Do as she does. If tha breaks a thread, mend it; if tha cannot mend it, tell her. And mind tha keeps thy hands out o' the gearing, or tha'll not keep 'em long.' He said this last without any particular feeling, as a man might remark upon the weather, and passed on.

25 Sarah Bentley proved to be a thin, quick girl of perhaps ten, with a face as pale as the cotton and two bright spots of colour in her cheeks. She did not speak – it would have been useless to speak – but she took Martha by the wrist and showed her, with a few swift motions, how the broken threads were to be found
30 and twisted together while the frame still ran; and her small fingers darted in and out amongst the moving parts so nimbly that Martha could scarcely follow them.

The hours that followed I will not attempt to describe in full. Martha's legs ached from standing; her eyes smarted; her fingers,
35 unused to the work, grew raw and clumsy. Twice Crabtree passed behind her, and twice she felt rather than saw the strap move at his belt. By noon she had learned to read Sarah's meaning from the smallest movement of her head; by two o'clock she had ceased to hear the engine, or believed she had; and by four she had begun
40 to think that she might, after all, survive the day.

It was then that it happened.

She did not see the beginning of it. She saw only that Sarah had stooped beneath the frame to gather up a fallen bobbin, and that the hem of her pinafore, which was frayed and too long for her, had swung forward against the turning wheel. In an instant the cloth was seized. Martha saw it drawn in, inch by inch, as a thread is drawn upon a spindle, and saw Sarah jerked sideways and down, her mouth open in a cry that no one, in all that tumult, could possibly hear.

Martha did not think. Afterwards she could never say what she had done, or in what order; only that she had flung herself upon the child and caught her about the waist, and that she had pulled with all her strength against the wheel, and that the wheel had pulled back with a strength far greater than her own. The cloth tightened. The child's face turned up to hers, white and astonished. Then there was a sharp report, like the snapping of a whip, and the pinafore tore clean away, and the two of them fell backwards together upon the boards, and lay there, while the machine, quite undisturbed, devoured the rag that had so nearly been a life.

No one stopped the frame. No one came running. Only Crabtree, at the far end of the room, turned his head a little, and looked at them for a long moment, and then looked away.

Sarah sat up. She was trembling from head to foot, but she did not weep. She looked at the torn edge of her pinafore, and then at Martha, and then she leaned close, so close that Martha felt her breath upon her ear, and shouted the only words that passed between them that whole day.

'Tha'll do,' she said. 'Tha'll do.'