

Reading Practice Exam 2

Questions 1-10

This passage is from Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor*, originally published in 1857.

- No man likes to acknowledge that he has made a mistake in the choice of his profession, and every man, worthy of the name, will row long against wind and tide before he allows himself to cry out, “I am baffled!” and submits to be floated
- 5 passively back to land. From the first week of my residence in X—I felt my occupation irksome. The thing itself—the work of copying and translating business-letters—was a dry and tedious task enough, but had that been all, I should long have borne with the nuisance; I am not of an impatient nature,
- 10 and influenced by the double desire of getting my living and justifying to myself and others the resolution I had taken to become a tradesman, I should have endured in silence the rust and cramp of my best faculties; I should not have whispered, even inwardly, that I longed for liberty; I should
- 15 have pent in every sigh by which my heart might have ventured to intimate its distress under the closeness, smoke, monotony, and joyless tumult of Bigben Close, and its panting desire for freer and fresher scenes; I should have set up the image of Duty, the fetish of Perseverance, in my small
- 20 bedroom at Mrs. King’s lodgings, and they two should have been my household gods, from which my darling, my cherished-in-secret, Imagination, the tender and the mighty, should never, either by softness or strength, have severed me. But this was not all; the antipathy which had sprung up
- 25 between myself and my employer striking deeper root and spreading denser shade daily, excluded me from every glimpse of the sunshine of life; and I began to feel like a plant growing in humid darkness out of the slimy walls of a well.
- 30 Antipathy is the only word which can express the feeling Edward Crimsworth had for me—a feeling, in a great measure, involuntary, and which was liable to be excited by every, the most trifling movement, look, or word of mine. My southern accent annoyed him; the degree of education
- 35 evinced in my language irritated him; my punctuality, industry, and accuracy, fixed his dislike, and gave it the high flavour and poignant relish of envy; he feared that I too should one day make a successful tradesman. Had I been in

40 anything inferior to him, he would not have hated me so
thoroughly, but I knew all that he knew, and, what was
worse, he suspected that I kept the padlock of silence on
mental wealth in which he was no sharer. If he could have
once placed me in a ridiculous or mortifying position, he
would have forgiven me much, but I was guarded by three
45 faculties—Caution, Tact, Observation; and prowling and
prying as was Edward's malignity, it could never baffle the
lynx-eyes of these, my natural sentinels. Day by day did his
malice watch my tact, hoping it would sleep, and prepared to
steal snake-like on its slumber; but tact, if it be genuine,
50 never sleeps.

I had received my first quarter's wages, and was returning
to my lodgings, possessed heart and soul with the pleasant
feeling that the master who had paid me grudged every
penny of that hard-earned pittance—(I had long ceased to
55 regard Mr. Crimsworth as my brother—he was a hard,
grinding master; he wished to be an inexorable tyrant: that
was all). Thoughts, not varied but strong, occupied my mind;
two voices spoke within me; again and again they uttered the
same monotonous phrases. One said: "William, your life is
60 intolerable." The other: "What can you do to alter it?" I
walked fast, for it was a cold, frosty night in January; as I
approached my lodgings, I turned from a general view of my
affairs to the particular speculation as to whether my fire
would be out; looking towards the window of my sitting-
65 room, I saw no cheering red gleam.