

PRE SIXTH A LEVEL ENGLISH  
SUMMER HOMEWORK

Read the following extract from a Gothic novel and use the questions below to write a response. **Bring your response to the first English lesson in Year 12.**

***In this extract the narrator is describing a past adventure to Gregory and Brown, a man who was his assistant on the night of the adventure.***

‘Without giving myself time to think, I knocked away the cement all round the marked stone, and then gave it a prise on the right side with my crowbar. It moved at once, and I saw that it was but a thin light slab, such as I could easily lift out myself, and that it stopped the entrance to a cavity. I did lift it out unbroken, and set it on the step, for it might be very important to us to be able to replace it. Then I waited for several minutes on the step just above. I don’t know why, but I think to see if any dreadful thing would rush out. Nothing happened. Next I lit a candle, and very cautiously I placed it inside the cavity, with some idea of seeing whether there were foul air, and of getting a glimpse of what was inside. There was some foulness of air which nearly extinguished the flame, but in no long time it burned quite steadily. The hole went some little way back, and also on the right and left of the entrance, and I could see some rounded light-coloured objects within which might be bags. There was no use in waiting. I faced the cavity, and looked in. There was nothing immediately in the front of the hole. I put my arm in and felt to the right, very gingerly...

‘Just give me a glass of cognac, Brown. I’ll go on in a moment, Gregory...  
‘Well, I felt to the right, and my fingers touched something curved, that felt—yes—more or less like leather; dampish it was, and evidently part of a heavy, full thing. There was nothing, I must say, to alarm one. I grew bolder, and putting both hands in as well as I could, I pulled it to me, and it came. It was heavy, but moved more easily than I expected. As I pulled it towards the entrance, my left elbow knocked over and extinguished the candle. I got the thing fairly in front of the mouth and began drawing it out. Just then Brown gave a sharp ejaculation and ran quickly up the steps with the lantern. He will tell you why in a moment. Startled as I was, I looked round after him, and saw him stand for a minute at the top and then walk away a few yards. Then I heard him call softly, “All right, sir,” and went on pulling out the great bag, in complete darkness. It hung for an instant on the edge of the hole, then slipped forward on to my chest, and put its arms round my neck.

‘My dear Gregory, I am telling you the exact truth. I believe I am now acquainted with the extremity of terror and repulsion which a man can endure without losing his mind. I can only just manage to tell you now the bare outline of the experience. I was conscious of a most horrible smell of mould, and of a cold kind of face pressed against my own, and moving slowly over it, and of several—I don’t know how many—legs or arms or tentacles or something clinging to my body. I screamed out, Brown says, like a beast, and fell away

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backward from the steps on which I stood, and the creature slipped downwards, I suppose, on to that same step. Providentially the band round me held firm. Brown did not lose his head, and was strong enough to pull me up to the top and get me over the edge quite promptly. How he managed it exactly I don't know, and I think he would find it hard to tell you. I believe he contrived to hide our implements in the deserted building nearby, and with very great difficulty he got me back to the inn. I was in no state to make explanations, and Brown knows no German; but next morning I told the people some tale of having had a bad fall in the abbey ruins, which, I suppose, they believed.

**M.R James, 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' (1904)**

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- Use the following questions to write a response to the extract.
- Write in paragraphs and use quotations to support your ideas.
- Your response should be a minimum of one A4 side if handwritten or 300 words if typed and a maximum of two A4 sides if handwritten or 600 words if typed.

**Questions to shape your written response (remember to use quotations to support your ideas):**

1. *[Looking at the extract overall]* Which adventure is the narrator describing? Where did it take place? What did he discover?
2. *[Looking more closely at paragraphs 1 and 2]* How does the author create tension in this part of the extract? Look at more than one detail or example.
3. *[Looking closely at the end of the second and the third paragraph]* How does the author create horror in this part of the extract? What really happened in this moment of horror? Does the narrator remember?
4. *[Looking at the passage overall]* How does the narrator feel when he is narrating his past adventure? How do you know? How might this affect the reader?