



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 11

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Covered Mirrors

We arrived at my great-aunt Constance's house in late November, three weeks after her funeral, to sort through sixty years of her belongings. The house stood alone at the end of a gravel road, tall and narrow, its gray shingles curling like old paper. Inside, every mirror was draped in black cloth. "An old custom," my father said. "Some families cover the mirrors after a death." He did not say who had covered them. Aunt Constance had lived alone.

For the first few days, the work was ordinary. We filled boxes with dusty china, moth-eaten coats, and bundles of yellowed letters tied with string. But the house had a voice of its own. The radiators knocked like knuckles on a door. At night, the floor above my room creaked in a slow, even rhythm, as if someone were pacing. My father blamed the wind. I wanted very much to believe him.

On the fourth night, I could not sleep. The pacing had started again, and this time I followed it. At the end of the upstairs hall, a narrow door I had never noticed stood half open. Inside was a small sewing room, cold as a cellar. On the table lay a leather diary, and on the wall hung the only mirror in the house that was not covered.

The last entry was written in my great-aunt's thin, spidery hand: *She will come in winter. She will have my eyes. I have covered the mirrors so that she will not see what I saw.*

I told myself it meant nothing. Old people wrote strange things. I turned toward the mirror and saw only my own face, pale and tired in the weak lamplight. But as I stepped back, I could have sworn my reflection blinked a half-second after I did.

The next morning, I led my father upstairs. The mirror in the sewing room was draped in black cloth, and the diary was gone. "You were dreaming, Elena," he said gently. Maybe I was. But that afternoon, sorting through a box of photographs, I found one of Aunt Constance at seventeen, standing in that same sewing room. She did not look like me. She had my face.

We left two days later, and my father sold the house in the spring. I have never told anyone that since that winter, I cannot sleep in a room with an uncovered mirror. Or that sometimes, late at night, I hear slow, even footsteps in the hallway outside my door, pacing, as if someone is waiting for winter.

Part A: Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

1. Why did Elena and her father go to the house?
 - a) To spend a holiday with Aunt Constance
 - b) To sort through Aunt Constance's belongings after her funeral
 - c) To repair the house before winter
 - d) To search for a missing diary
2. How did Elena's father explain the covered mirrors?
 - a) It was an old custom after a death.
 - b) The mirrors were broken.
 - c) Aunt Constance disliked her reflection.
 - d) The cloth protected the mirrors from dust.
3. According to the diary, why did Aunt Constance cover the mirrors?
 - a) To keep the house warm
 - b) To prepare the house for sale
 - c) So that "she" would not see what Constance saw
 - d) Because a doctor told her to
4. What did Elena discover in the photograph?
 - a) A picture of her father as a boy
 - b) A map of the house
 - c) The mirror without its cover
 - d) Aunt Constance at seventeen had Elena's face.

Part B: True or False

Write T for true or F for false.

5. Aunt Constance lived in the house with several relatives. _____
6. When Elena returned to the sewing room the next morning, the diary was gone. _____
7. Since that winter, Elena has felt comfortable sleeping in rooms with uncovered mirrors.

Part C: Elements of Gothic Fiction

Gothic fiction builds a mood of mystery and dread through isolated or decaying settings, family secrets, strange events, and uncertainty about what is real. Writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne helped shape this tradition in American literature.

8. Identify two Gothic elements in the story. Explain how one of them creates mood.

9. Gothic stories often leave readers unsure whether events are supernatural or imagined. Give one piece of evidence for each possibility.

Part D: Think and Explain

10. What might the covered mirrors symbolize in this story? Why do you think the author chose to leave the ending unresolved?
