1.1 Comprehension: Fiction: 1-hour Pack

GL ASSESSMENT / CSSE 11+ Entrance English (GL Assessment / CSSE style) · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Keeper's Light

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). Fictional narrative created for 11+ comprehension practice.

Amara Okafor had promised herself she would not be afraid of the lighthouse, not today. Yet as she climbed the last few steps of the cliff path, the white tower seemed to lean over her like a question she could not answer.

'You are sure it is empty?' she called back to her cousin, Rhys, who was struggling with the picnic bag some way behind.

'Empty since 1987,' he puffed. 'Grandad said the keeper just vanished one winter. Left his boots by the door and never came back for them.'

Amara did not like the sound of that at all, but she kept walking. The wind off the North Sea tugged at her coat and filled her ears with a low, steady roar, as though the water itself were breathing. Above her, gulls wheeled and cried, sharp as knives against the grey sky.

The lighthouse door hung crooked on one rusted hinge. Amara pushed it, and it groaned open with a sound like an old man clearing his throat. Inside, the air was cold and smelled of salt and something else, something green and forgotten, like the inside of a shell.

'Race you to the top,' said Rhys, dropping the picnic bag with a thud and darting past her onto the spiral staircase.

Amara hesitated at the bottom step. The staircase curled upward into darkness, iron rail cold beneath her palm. Something about the silence pressed on her chest, heavy as a held breath. Still, she would not be the one left behind. She began to climb.

Round and round the stairs wound, past a narrow window here, a peeling poster there, faded so much that only the ghost of red letters remained: DANGER, it seemed to say, or perhaps DO NOT. Amara's footsteps echoed strangely, doubling and trebling until it sounded as though a whole crowd climbed with her.

At the top, Rhys stood at the great glass lantern room, his breath fogging the salt streaked panes. 'Come and see,' he said, and his voice had gone quiet in a way that was not like him at all.

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Amara joined him at the glass. Below, the sea stretched grey and enormous, folding over itself in slow, patient waves. The old lens of the lighthouse still stood in the centre of the room, an immense structure of glass rings, dusty and cracked, but somehow still catching what little light there was and scattering it into a hundred small rainbows across the floor.

'There,' Rhys whispered, pointing.

On the dusty floorboards beside the lens sat a pair of boots, cracked with age, laces long since rotted to threads. Beside them, half buried in dust, lay an open logbook, its pages rippled with damp. Amara crouched down, hardly daring to breathe, and read the last entry, written in careful, looping handwriting.

15th November. Storm still rising. Light holding, just. If anyone reads this, tell my sister the garden needs pruning before frost. I will not leave my post while the light still turns.

There was no entry after that.

Amara sat back on her heels. Outside, the wind had risen, and the old lens gave a faint, complaining creak, as though it remembered turning once, long ago, for a keeper who never came back down.

'Do you think he's still here?' Rhys asked, and for once he was not joking.

Amara looked at the boots, empty and waiting by the door, and did not answer straight away. Then she reached out and, very gently, turned the great lens a single inch, so that for a moment the whole room span with scattered, trembling light.

'I think,' she said slowly, 'that some lights are not meant to go out.'

1 Look at the phrase 'an immense structure of glass rings'. Explain why 'immense' is a more effective word choice than the plain word 'big' in this context.

(2)

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2 List four separate details the writer gives about the state of the lens and the objects found beside it in the lantern room.

(4)

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3 Look at the closing dialogue: '"Do you think he's still here?" Rhys asked... "I think," she said slowly, "that some lights are not meant to go out."' Explain what this exchange adds to the reader's understanding of Amara's character.

(3)

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4 In your own words, summarise what Amara and Rhys discover in the lantern room and why it might be significant.

(4)

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5 Look at the paragraph beginning 'The lighthouse door hung crooked...'

(a) Find and copy one phrase that shows the air inside the lighthouse smelled unpleasant or strange. **(1)**

(b) Find and copy one phrase that shows the door was old or in poor condition. **(1)**

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6 Re-read the paragraph beginning 'Amara did not like the sound of that at all...'. What does this paragraph suggest about how Amara is feeling as she approaches the lighthouse? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

(3)

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7 Look at the opening paragraph of the extract: 'the white tower seemed to lean over her like a question she could not answer.' Explain how the writer's use of language here creates a sense of unease. Refer closely to the language in your answer.

(4)

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8 Re-read the paragraph beginning 'Round and round the stairs wound...'. How does the writer use structure and description in this paragraph to build tension?

(4)

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9 "'Come and see,' he said, and his voice had gone quiet in a way that was not like him at all." What does this sentence suggest about Rhys, and about what he has seen? Explain your answer.

(3)

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10 Choose the option closest in meaning to each word as it is used in the extract.

(a) 'immense' (describing the lens) is closest in meaning to: **(1)**

- ☐ A) tiny
- ☐ B) huge
- ☐ C) fragile
- ☐ D) ancient

(b) 'complaining' (describing the creak of the lens) suggests the sound was: **(1)**

- ☐ A) cheerful
- ☐ B) discontented or irritated-sounding
- ☐ C) completely silent
- ☐ D) musical

(c) 'trembling' (describing the light) suggests the light was: **(1)**

- ☐ A) shaking and unsteady
- ☐ B) bright and perfectly steady
- ☐ C) completely dark
- ☐ D) warm and orange

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11 Answer these questions about words used in the extract.

(a) Look at the first three paragraphs, from 'Amara Okafor had promised herself' to 'never came back for them.' Give one word from these paragraphs that means 'breathed heavily, especially after physical effort'. **(1)**

(b) Now look at paragraph 5, from 'The lighthouse door' to 'like the inside of a shell.' Give one word from this paragraph that means 'twisted or bent, not straight'. **(1)**

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12 Are the following statements about the opening of the extract True or False? Write True or False for each.

(a) Amara is Rhys's cousin. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(b) The lighthouse keeper vanished in the summer. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

(c) The lighthouse door had two working hinges. **(1)**

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

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13 Number the following events 1 to 4 to show the order in which they happen in the extract: 'Amara reads the last entry in the logbook', 'Amara pushes open the crooked door', 'Amara turns the great lens a single inch', 'Rhys runs ahead up the spiral staircase'.

(4)

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14 Compare how Amara feels about the lighthouse at the beginning of the extract with how she feels by the end. Use evidence from across the text to support your ideas.

(5)

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15 A reader said, 'This extract creates a powerful sense of mystery right until the final line.' To what extent do you agree? Support your response with detailed reference to the text, including the writer's use of language and structure.

(8)

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16 Using the lighthouse in the extract as your starting point, write the opening of a story describing a mysterious or abandoned place. You may continue Amara and Rhys's story, or write about a completely different place of your own invention. Write between one and two sides.

(16)

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Mark scheme · 1.1 Comprehension: Fiction: 1-hour Pack

Question 1

Level 1 A simple comment that 'immense' means very big, with little explanation of its effect. **1**

Level 2 A clear explanation of the connotations of 'immense' and its effect in context, for example the contrast with the lens's neglected state. **2**

Indicative content:

- 'Immense' suggests something impressively or overwhelmingly large, stronger than the plain word 'big'
- It emphasises the scale and former grandeur of the lens, contrasting with its dusty, cracked, neglected state
- The more formal, dramatic connotations of 'immense' suit the eerie, reflective tone of the extract

Question 2

one valid detail from: the lens is dusty; the lens is cracked; the boots are cracked with age; the laces have rotted to threads; the logbook is half buried in dust; the logbook's pages are rippled with damp **B1**

a second, different valid detail from the same list **B1**

a third, different valid detail from the same list **B1**

a fourth, different valid detail from the same list (each detail is credited once) **B1**

Answer: Any four of: the lens is dusty; the lens is cracked; the boots are cracked with age; the laces have rotted to threads; the logbook is half buried in dust; the logbook's pages are rippled with damp.

Question 3

Level 1 A simple comment that Amara is thoughtful or not scared, with little or no reference to the text. **1**

Level 2 A clear, and at the top of the band detailed, explanation of how the exchange reveals a change or development in Amara's character, supported by relevant quotation. **2-3**

Indicative content:

- Amara's slow, thoughtful reply contrasts with Rhys's simple, direct question, suggesting she has become more reflective or mature during the extract
- Her metaphorical answer ('some lights are not meant to go out') shows imagination and sensitivity rather than fear
- The detail that she 'did not answer straight away' suggests she is processing complex feelings rather than simply reacting with fright
- Overall the exchange shows Amara moving from fear towards quiet respect or wonder

Question 4

Level 1 A simple summary of what is found, largely lifted from the text, with little sense of its significance. **1-2**

Level 2 A clear summary in the student's own words of both the discovery and its significance, showing understanding of how it explains the earlier mystery. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- They find the old glass lens, still standing but now dusty and cracked
- Beside it are a pair of old boots with rotted laces and an open logbook with damp, rippled pages
- The logbook's final entry describes a rising storm and the keeper's refusal to abandon his post, with no entries after that date
- This suggests the keeper disappeared during or shortly after that storm and was never seen again, which explains the mystery Rhys mentioned earlier in the extract
- Good answers will be expressed in the student's own words rather than copied directly from the text

Question 5

(a) accept any of: 'smelled of salt and something else'; 'something green and forgotten'; 'like the inside of a shell' **B1**

(a) Answer: something green and forgotten, like the inside of a shell

(b) accept: 'it groaned open with a sound like an old man clearing his throat' or 'hung crooked on one rusted hinge' **B1**

(b) Answer: hung crooked on one rusted hinge

Question 6

Level 1 A simple, general comment about Amara's feelings, with little or no reference to the text. **1**

Level 2 A clear and, at the top of the band, detailed explanation of Amara's feelings, supported by relevant and, where appropriate, embedded quotation. **2-3**

Indicative content:

- Amara feels afraid or uneasy, though she is trying to hide it or overcome it
- The personification 'as though the water itself were breathing' makes the sea feel alive and unsettling
- The simile describing the gulls as 'sharp as knives' suggests a sense of danger or threat in the surroundings
- Despite her unease, she 'kept walking', showing determination or bravery alongside her fear
- Answers may also note the contrast between her outward composure and her inward apprehension

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Question 7

Level 1 Simple identification of a language feature (e.g. simile or personification) with limited or undeveloped comment on effect. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear and detailed explanation of how the personification and simile combine to create unease, with precise reference to the language used. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The personification of the tower 'leaning over her' makes it seem alive, threatening or watchful
- The simile comparing it to 'a question she could not answer' introduces a sense of mystery and things unknown
- This foreshadows the mystery of the vanished keeper revealed later in the extract
- The comparison suggests Amara feels small or powerless in front of the tower
- Together the devices create foreboding right from the opening line, setting the tone for the rest of the extract

Question 8

Level 1 Simple comment on one feature (for example the faded sign or the echo) with limited explanation of effect. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear, detailed explanation of more than one structural or descriptive feature and how each builds tension, with precise reference to the text. **3-4**

Indicative content:

- The repeated circular imagery 'Round and round' mirrors the spiral staircase and creates a slow, dizzying build-up
- The faded poster, where only 'DANGER' or perhaps 'DO NOT' can be made out, is deliberately unclear, creating uncertainty
- The echoing footsteps that seem to double and treble 'as though a whole crowd climbed with her' suggest an unseen presence, increasing suspense
- The gradual accumulation of small, unsettling details mirrors Amara's slow, cautious ascent, controlling the pace of the narrative
- The enclosed, dark setting of the staircase builds a sense of claustrophobia

Question 9

Level 1 A simple comment that Rhys is scared or surprised, with little or no reference to the text. **1**

Level 2 A clear, and at the top of the band detailed, explanation of the contrast between Rhys's earlier and later behaviour, supported by relevant quotation. **2-3**

Indicative content:

- Rhys has been jokey and energetic earlier in the extract ('he puffed', 'Race you to the top'), so his quietness marks a clear change
- The phrase 'not like him at all' directly signals to the reader that something has shocked or unsettled him
- This suggests what he has found in the lantern room is serious or significant, foreshadowing the discovery of the boots and logbook
- His changed tone builds suspense for the reader before the discovery is described

Question 10

(a) B **B1**

(a) Answer: B) huge

(b) B **B1**

(b) Answer: B) discontented or irritated-sounding

(c) A **B1**

(c) Answer: A) shaking and unsteady

Question 11

(a) puffed **B1**

(a) Answer: puffed

(b) crooked **B1**

(b) Answer: crooked

Question 12

(a) True **B1**

(a) Answer: True

(b) False **B1**

(b) Answer: False

(c) False **B1**

(c) Answer: False

Question 13

correctly places 'Amara pushes open the crooked door' as event 1 **B1**

correctly places 'Rhys runs ahead up the spiral staircase' as event 2 **B1**

correctly places 'Amara reads the last entry in the logbook' as event 3 **B1**

correctly places 'Amara turns the great lens a single inch' as event 4 **B1**

Answer: 1: door pushed open; 2: Rhys runs up the staircase; 3: the logbook entry is read; 4: Amara turns the lens.

Question 14

Level 1 A simple comparison identifying that Amara's feelings change, with limited or no supporting reference. **1-2**

Level 2 A clear comparison supported by relevant evidence from both the beginning and the end of the extract. **3-4**

Level 3 A perceptive, well-developed comparison that selects precise evidence from across the extract and explores the shift in feeling in a nuanced way. **5**

Indicative content:

- At the start Amara is anxious and apprehensive, trying to convince herself she 'would not be afraid'
- Early unsettling imagery (the leaning tower, the breathing sea, gulls 'sharp as knives') reinforces her fear
- By the end she seems calmer and more thoughtful, shown by her deliberate, gentle action of turning the lens 'a single inch'
- Her final reflective statement suggests acceptance, respect or quiet wonder rather than fear
- Overall there is a clear shift from fear and apprehension towards a calmer, almost respectful curiosity about the mystery
- The strongest answers will select well-chosen evidence from both ends of the extract and discuss the shift precisely

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Question 15

Level 1 A simple statement of agreement or disagreement with limited or no textual support. **1-2**

Level 2 A clear response with relevant reference to language or structure, showing some understanding of how mystery is built. **3-4**

Level 3 A detailed, well-supported evaluation exploring more than one aspect (for example language and structure, or the ending), with well-chosen quotations. **5-6**

Level 4 A perceptive, well-structured evaluation that considers different aspects of the extract in a balanced way, with precise textual support and a convincing, considered personal judgement. **7-8**

Indicative content:

- Consideration of the unresolved mystery of the vanished keeper (the abandoned boots, the logbook entry that simply stops) as central to sustained mystery
- Discussion of language devices, such as personification and simile, that build unease from the very opening line
- Discussion of structural choices, such as the deliberately unclear faded warning sign and the multiplying echo, which build suspense gradually rather than all at once
- Consideration of whether the ending resolves or deepens the mystery: the ambiguous final line 'some lights are not meant to go out' and the turning of the lens could suggest the keeper's presence remains, or could be read purely symbolically
- A balanced response might argue the ending shifts the tone from suspense towards quiet wonder, changing the mood rather than simply sustaining fear
- Reward well supported personal judgements in either direction, provided they are backed by precise textual evidence

Question 16

Content and organisation (AO5)

Level 3 A compelling and convincing narrative voice. Ideas are skilfully developed with a strong, sustained sense of atmosphere or mystery. Structure is well controlled, with an effective opening, purposeful shifts and a satisfying ending. Vocabulary is ambitious and well matched to purpose. **8-10**

Level 2 A consistent narrative voice. Ideas are developed with some effective description and a clear sense of place or mood. Structure is clear, with a suitable beginning, middle and ending. Vocabulary is chosen for effect. **5-7**

Level 1 Some awareness of narrative voice. Ideas are simple, and description may be limited or list-like. Organisation is limited, with little sense of shape. Vocabulary is plain or repetitive. **1-4**

Level 0 Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Technical accuracy (AO6)

Level 3 A wide range of punctuation is used with a high level of accuracy. Sentence structures are varied and controlled for effect. Spelling is consistently accurate, including ambitious vocabulary. Standard English forms are used extensively and effectively. **5-6**

Level 2 A range of punctuation is used, mostly accurately. There is some variety of sentence structures. Spelling is generally accurate. Standard English is used with reasonable control. **3-4**

Level 1 Punctuation is limited or repetitive, with some errors. Sentence structures are mainly simple. Spelling errors are frequent, though meaning remains clear. **1-2**

Level 0 Nothing worthy of credit. **0**

Indicative content:

- Award up to 10 marks for content and organisation (AO5) and up to 6 marks for technical accuracy (AO6), using the grids above
- Do not itemise individual points as marks; use best-fit judgement across each grid
- Reward original, well-controlled narrative writing that creates atmosphere, whether or not it continues the given characters

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