



EP.E83 Comprehension: Fiction Set 14

GL ASSESSMENT / CSSE 11+ Entrance English (GL Assessment / CSSE style) · Calculators not allowed ·
about 45 minutes

Total Marks

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Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

The Attic Telescope

Original short fiction written for Revision Library.

Zoe pulled the string for the attic light for the third time, but it only produced a dull, unconvincing flicker before dying completely. She unclipped the torch from her belt loop instead and swept its beam across boxes stacked higher than her head, each one labelled in her grandfather's slanting handwriting: KITCHEN, WINTER COATS, PHOTOGRAPHS - DO NOT LOSE. Downstairs, her mother was taping up another cardboard box, and the sound was sharp and final in the emptying house. In three weeks, Grandad Tomasz would move into Fernbank House, where there were no stairs to climb and someone came round every morning to check he had taken his tablets.

Wedged behind the cold water tank, half hidden beneath a dust sheet gone grey with age, was something long and rectangular that did not match any of the labelled boxes. Curious, Zoe dragged it into the torchlight and lifted the sheet away. Underneath lay a scuffed wooden case with brass clasps, and when she eased them open, a telescope lay nestled inside a bed of faded green felt, its barrel the colour of an old penny. Beside it, tucked into a pocket sewn into the lid, was a slim leather notebook, its pages soft and curling at the corners.

Zoe carried both downstairs and spread the notebook open on the kitchen table. Page after page was filled with careful diagrams: circles of stars connected by faint pencil lines, dates scrawled in the margins, and notes in her grandfather's unmistakable hand. Most meant nothing to her, but one entry, near the very back, made her sit up straight. It was dated for that exact night, and beneath the date, underlined twice, were the words: Perseid shower, peak visibility, clear skies forecast - do not miss it this year.

"You want to drag a telescope that's older than me out into the garden at eleven o'clock?" her mother said, not unkindly, but with the particular weariness of someone who had spent the whole day wrapping plates in newspaper. "It's probably not even pointed at anything real anymore, Zoe. Things like that need adjusting; they don't just work after sitting in a loft for years." Zoe held the notebook out anyway, open to the marked page, until her mother sighed and rubbed her eyes. "Fine. Ten minutes. Then you're both coming in, telescope and all."

Setting up the tripod took longer than Zoe expected, her fingers clumsy with cold as she fitted the brass legs together the way a diagram in the notebook seemed to suggest. For a long while nothing happened except the slow ache of standing still in the dark, her breath clouding in front of the eyepiece. Then, without warning, a thin streak of light tore across the sky like a match struck in the dark, there and gone before she could even call out. Zoe froze. For a moment she was certain she had imagined it, until a

Her mother appeared at the back door in her dressing gown, arms wrapped around herself against the cold, clearly intending only to call Zoe inside. Instead she stopped on the step, one hand pressed flat against her chest, as a third streak split the sky directly overhead. "Oh," she said softly, and came to stand beside the telescope without being asked. For a while neither of them spoke, the sky above the small back garden performing quietly for an audience of two, as though it had been rehearsing this exact display for years, waiting only for someone patient enough to look up.

It was only once they were back inside, the telescope dripping gently with condensation by the radiator, that Zoe turned to the very last page of the notebook and found a note she had missed before, written in smaller, careful letters beneath the final star chart: For whoever finds this next - the sky keeps its promises even when I cannot climb the stairs to see them. Look up for me sometimes. Zoe read it twice, then a third time, feeling something in her chest tighten and loosen all at once.

She was still awake long after her mother had gone to bed, turning the notebook over in her hands and thinking about Fernbank House, and whether its windows faced the right direction, and whether anyone there would mind if a girl turned up tomorrow with an old brass telescope under her arm and a very important question to ask her grandfather. The Perseids, she had read on the very first page, would keep falling for another six nights yet, and that gave Zoe exactly enough time to find out.

- 1** Where is Zoe at the start of the extract, and what does she use to see after the attic light fails?

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Find and copy the phrase from paragraph 1 that shows the attic light does not work properly.

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

3 Give the meaning of each of the following words as they are used in the passage.

(a) 'unconvincing' (paragraph 1) (1)

(b) 'nestled' (paragraph 2) (1)

(c) 'weariness' (paragraph 4) (1)

(d) 'condensation' (paragraph 7) (1)

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Look at paragraph 2: 'its barrel the colour of an old penny'. Explain the effect of this comparison.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Look at paragraph 6: the sky is described as 'performing quietly for an audience of two, as though it had been rehearsing this exact display for years'. Explain the effect of this personification.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 According to paragraph 2, what does Zoe find wedged behind the cold water tank?

(Total for Question 6 is 1 mark)

7 According to paragraph 3, what event did the notebook say to expect that exact night?

(Total for Question 7 is 1 mark)

- 8** Look at paragraph 4. What does the description of the mother's 'particular weariness' suggest about how she is feeling?

(Total for Question 8 is 1 mark)

- 9** Which word class best describes 'clumsy' as it is used in the phrase 'her fingers clumsy with cold' (paragraph 5)?

(a) Choose the correct word class.

(1)

- ☐ A) Noun
- ☐ B) Verb
- ☐ C) Adjective
- ☐ D) Adverb

(Total for Question 9 is 1 mark)

- 10** Look at paragraph 1: 'Zoe pulled the string for the attic light for the third time, but it only produced a dull, unconvincing flicker before dying completely.' Is this a simple, compound or complex sentence? Explain how you know.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Look at paragraph 4: 'Things like that need adjusting; they don't just work after sitting in a loft for years.' What is the function of the semicolon in this sentence?

(Total for Question 11 is 1 mark)

- 12** Look at paragraph 5: 'a thin streak of light tore across the sky like a match struck in the dark.' Explain the effect of this simile.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

13 According to paragraph 5, what colour was the second streak of light?

(Total for Question 13 is 1 mark)

14 Explain the effect of the contrast between the mother's words in paragraph 4 and her reaction in paragraph 6.

(Total for Question 14 is 3 marks)

15 According to paragraph 6, what does Zoe's mother do without being asked?

(Total for Question 15 is 1 mark)

16 What does the note in paragraph 7, 'For whoever finds this next... Look up for me sometimes', suggest about Grandad Tomasz's character or feelings?

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

17 According to paragraph 8, how many more nights would the Perseids keep falling?

(Total for Question 17 is 1 mark)

18 Look at paragraph 4: "Fine. Ten minutes. Then you're both coming in, telescope and all."
Identify how the writer's punctuation shows that the mother is speaking in short, firm statements.

(Total for Question 18 is 1 mark)

19 Look at paragraph 5: 'Zoe froze.' Explain the effect of this short sentence.

(Total for Question 19 is 2 marks)

20 Paragraph 6 is devoted entirely to a shared, wordless moment between Zoe and her mother. Explain the effect of this.

(Total for Question 20 is 2 marks)

21 Evaluate how effectively the writer builds a sense of wonder in paragraphs 5 and 6. You should comment on: the writer's word choices; the description of the sky; the effect on the reader.

(Total for Question 21 is 4 marks)

22 Using evidence from across the whole passage, explain the significance of the final paragraph in changing the reader's understanding of the story.

(Total for Question 22 is 3 marks)

23 Based on the evidence in the extract, predict what Zoe might do the next day. Give one reason from the text to support your prediction.

(Total for Question 23 is 2 marks)

24 Explain how the writer creates a sense of anticipation and wonder across the whole extract.
Refer to at least two techniques in your answer.

(Total for Question 24 is 4 marks)

Mark scheme · EP.E83 Comprehension: Fiction Set 14

Question 1

- **B1** Identifies that Zoe is in the attic, and that she uses a torch after the light fails
- **Answer: Zoe is in the attic, and she uses a torch after the attic light fails.**

Question 2

- **B1** produced a dull, unconvincing flicker
- **Answer: produced a dull, unconvincing flicker**

Question 3

- (a) **B1** Meaning close to 'not believable, or not really working properly'
- **(a) Answer: not believable, or not really working properly**
- (b) **B1** Meaning close to 'lying snugly, tucked comfortably in place'
- **(b) Answer: lying snugly, tucked comfortably in place**
- (c) **B1** Meaning close to 'extreme tiredness'
- **(c) Answer: extreme tiredness**
- (d) **B1** Meaning close to 'small drops of water formed when warm air meets a cold surface'
- **(d) Answer: small drops of water formed when warm air meets a cold surface**

Question 4

- **B1** Identifies the comparison of the telescope's colour to an old penny
- **B1** Explains the effect, e.g. creates a warm, worn, old-fashioned image, suggesting the telescope has real age and history
- **Answer: The comparison to an old penny gives the telescope a warm, worn, old-fashioned appearance, suggesting it has real age and history behind it.**

Question 5

- **B1** Identifies that the personification presents the sky as a performer putting on a show
- **B1** Explains the effect, e.g. makes the meteor shower feel like a special, deliberate spectacle prepared just for Zoe and her mother, adding wonder and intimacy to the moment
- **Answer: The personification presents the sky as a performer putting on a show, making the meteor shower feel like a special, deliberate spectacle prepared just for Zoe and her mother, which adds a sense of wonder and intimacy to the moment.**

Question 6

- **B1** A wooden case containing a telescope and a leather notebook
- **Answer: A wooden case containing a telescope and a leather notebook.**

Question 7

- **B1** The Perseid meteor shower, at peak visibility
- **Answer: The Perseid meteor shower, at peak visibility.**

Question 8

- **B1** Suggests she is genuinely tired and worn out from a full day of packing, even though she is not being unkind to Zoe (accept similar valid inference)
- **Answer: It suggests she is genuinely exhausted from a full day spent packing, even though she is not being unkind to Zoe.**

Question 9

- (a) **B1** C
- **(a) Answer: C) Adjective**

Question 10

- **B1** Identifies the sentence as compound
- **B1** Explains that it contains two main (independent) clauses, each of which could stand alone as a sentence, joined by the coordinating conjunction 'but'
- **Answer: It is a compound sentence. It contains two main clauses, each of which could stand alone, joined by the coordinating conjunction 'but'.**

Question 11

- **B1** Links two closely related independent clauses without a conjunction (accept similar wording)
- **Answer: It links two closely related independent clauses, without needing a conjunction.**

Question 12

- **B1** Identifies that the simile compares the meteor's streak of light to a struck match
- **B1** Explains the effect, e.g. suggests the light was brief, sudden and bright, capturing exactly how quickly and unexpectedly it appeared
- **Answer: The simile compares the streak of light to a struck match, suggesting it was brief, sudden and bright, capturing how quickly and unexpectedly it appeared.**

Question 13

- **B1** Pale gold
- **Answer: Pale gold.**

Question 14

- **B1** Identifies the mother's initial doubt in paragraph 4, e.g. 'It's probably not even pointed at anything real anymore'
- **B1** Identifies her change in paragraph 6, e.g. she says 'Oh' softly and comes to stand beside the telescope without being asked
- **B1** Explains the effect of the contrast, e.g. it shows how the meteor shower changes her mood from tired doubt to genuine wonder, reinforcing the idea that beauty can appear when least expected
- **Answer: The mother's initial doubt in paragraph 4 ('It's probably not even pointed at anything real anymore') contrasts with her quiet wonder in paragraph 6, where she says 'Oh' softly and comes to stand beside the telescope without being asked. This contrast shows how the meteor shower changes her mood from tired scepticism to genuine wonder, reinforcing the idea that beauty can appear when least expected.**

Question 15

- **B1** She comes to stand beside the telescope
- **Answer: She comes to stand beside the telescope.**

Question 16

- **B1** Suggests he is thoughtful and caring, wanting to share the beauty of the sky with others even though he can no longer see it himself
- **B1** Suggests a sense of quiet acceptance about no longer being able to climb the stairs, alongside hope that the wonder of the sky continues through someone else
- **Answer: The note suggests he is thoughtful and caring, wanting to share the beauty of the sky with others even though he can no longer climb the stairs to see it himself, showing a sense of quiet acceptance alongside hope that the wonder continues through whoever finds it.**

Question 17

- **B1** Six more nights
- **Answer: Six more nights.**

Question 18

- **B1** The sentences are short and separated by full stops within the same piece of speech, creating a clipped, decisive tone (accept similar)
- **Answer: The sentences are short and separated by full stops within the same piece of speech, giving her words a clipped, decisive tone.**

Question 19

- **B1** Identifies that the short sentence creates an abrupt pause
- **B1** Explains the effect, e.g. it mirrors Zoe's own sudden stillness, slowing the pace and building suspense at the moment of disbelief
- **Answer: The short sentence creates an abrupt pause, mirroring Zoe's own sudden stillness. This slows the pace and builds suspense at the moment she doubts what she has just seen.**

Question 20

- **B1** Identifies that paragraph 6 focuses entirely on this shared, silent moment
- **B1** Explains the effect, e.g. slows the pace and emphasises the significance and intimacy of the moment the two of them share watching the sky together
- **Answer: Devoting the whole paragraph to this shared, silent moment slows the pace, emphasising how significant and intimate the experience of watching the sky together is for Zoe and her mother.**

Question 21

- **Level 1** (1-2): Simple comment(s) on word choice or content, with little or no reference to the effect on the reader.
- **Level 2** (3): Clear explanation of how language creates a sense of wonder, supported by relevant evidence.
- **Level 3** (4): Detailed, well-evidenced evaluation of how the writer's choices combine to build a sense of wonder.
- **Indicative content:**
 - The simile 'like a match struck in the dark' captures the sudden, brief brightness of the meteor
 - The short sentence 'Zoe froze.' slows the pace at the key moment of disbelief
 - Personification of the sky 'performing quietly for an audience of two' presents the meteor shower as a deliberate spectacle
 - The image of the sky 'rehearsing this exact display for years' suggests something timeless and patient, deepening the sense of wonder

Question 22

- **B1** Identifies that the final paragraph reveals Zoe's resolve to visit her grandfather and tell him what she found
- **B1** Explains that the detail about the Perseids continuing for six more nights recontextualises the earlier urgency, showing there is still time to include her grandfather
- **B1** Notes that ending on this forward-looking resolve, rather than resolving the visit itself, leaves the reader with a hopeful, anticipatory feeling
- **Answer: The final paragraph reveals that Zoe now intends to visit her grandfather and tell him what she found, and the detail that the Perseids will keep falling for six more nights recontextualises the earlier urgency, showing there is still time to include him. Ending on this forward-looking resolve, rather than resolving the visit itself, leaves the reader with a hopeful, anticipatory feeling.**

Question 23

- **B1** Gives a valid prediction, e.g. that Zoe will visit Fernbank House and bring the telescope or notebook to share the meteor shower with her grandfather
- **B1** Supports the prediction with a valid reason from the text, e.g. she lay awake thinking about whether the windows faced the right direction and had 'a very important question to ask her grandfather'
- **Answer: Zoe might visit Fernbank House the next day, bringing the telescope or notebook, to share news of the meteor shower with her grandfather, because she lay awake thinking about whether the windows faced the right direction and had 'a very important question to ask her grandfather'.**

Question 24

- **Level 1** (1-2): Simple, generic comments about anticipation with little or no reference to specific language, and little reference to more than one part of the extract.
- **Level 2** (3): Clear identification of relevant techniques with accurate quotation, and some explanation of their effect.
- **Level 3** (4): A developed, well-evidenced explanation tracking anticipation across most of the extract, referring closely to at least two distinct techniques and their combined effect on the reader.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Short sentences ('Zoe froze.') slow the pace and create suspenseful pauses
 - Personification and simile in the description of the sky ('performing quietly for an audience of two', 'like a match struck in the dark') create a magical, dramatic atmosphere
 - Withheld information builds curiosity, e.g. the notebook's final note is not revealed until the very end of the extract
 - The extract ends on anticipation about tomorrow rather than full resolution, leaving the reader wanting to know what happens next