4.2 Tense Shifts and Control: 10-minute Pack

about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

The Attic

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free), for tense and grammar practice.

I have never liked the attic. Even now, as I climb the fold-down ladder for what will be the last time, the smell of dust and old wood catches in the back of my throat exactly as it always did. My grandmother kept everything up here, and today my job is to decide what stays and what goes to the tip.

Boxes are stacked three deep along the far wall. I open the nearest one and lift out a bundle of letters, tied with string that has gone brittle with age. The letters are all from my grandfather, who had worked on the fishing boats before I was born. He had written to her every week that he was away at sea, and she had kept every single one, even though he only ever wrote about the weather and the size of the catch.

I sit down on an old trunk and read three of the letters properly. The paper is thin and the ink has faded to the colour of weak tea. By the time I finish the third letter, something strange has happened to the light in the attic; it seems softer, somehow, as though the dust itself is glowing.

Here is what nobody tells you about clearing a house: it is not the big, obvious things that undo you. It is not the furniture or the photographs in their frames. It is a shopping list in your grandmother's handwriting, found in a coat pocket, that stops you completely, because for one absurd second you expect her to walk

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26 in and ask why you are going through her things.

28 I fold the letters carefully and place them in the box marked KEEP.

29 Tomorrow I will drive them to my own house, where they will sit

30 in a drawer until I am ready to read the rest. For now, I climb

31 back down the ladder, and I do not look back at the attic, not

32 even once.

1 Here is a word bank of eight verb phrases, each labelled with a letter.

Letter	Verb phrase
A	sailed
B	had climbed
C	has finished
D	will arrive
E	arrived
F	had already left
G	has gone
H	will visit

Sort the eight letters into the four tense groups below by writing the correct letters next to each tense name.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

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2 What do the past perfect verbs describing the grandfather (lines 9-11: 'had worked', 'had written', 'had kept') mainly show?

- ☐ A) Actions happening at the same time as the events of today
- ☐ B) Actions that happened before the time of the main story
- ☐ C) Actions that will happen after today
- ☐ D) Actions that are imagined or hypothetical

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

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3 Identify and correct the tense-shift error in this sentence: 'I opened the old box and I am finding a photograph inside.'

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.....

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Complete the sentence correctly: 'My cousin ___ to Cardiff in 2019.'

- ☐ A) has moved
- ☐ B) moves
- ☐ C) moved
- ☐ D) has been moving

(Total for Question 4 is 1 mark)

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5 Rewrite the sentence so that the longer background action is in the past continuous: 'I read a book when the phone rang.'

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(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

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6 Explain one effect of the past perfect verbs used to describe the grandfather's letters (lines 9-13).

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(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.2 Tense Shifts and Control: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

Past simple: A and E **B1**

Past perfect: B and F **B1**

Present perfect: C and G **B1**

Future simple: D and H **B1**

Answer: Past simple: A (sailed), E (arrived). Past perfect: B (had climbed), F (had already left). Present perfect: C (has finished), G (has gone). Future simple: D (will arrive), H (will visit).

Question 2

B) Actions that happened before the time of the main story **B1**

Answer: B

Question 3

identifies the shift from the past tense 'opened' to the present tense 'am finding' **B1**

correct rewrite using a single consistent tense throughout, e.g. I opened the old box and found a photograph inside, cao **B1**

Answer: I opened the old box and found a photograph inside.

Question 4

C) moved **B1**

Answer: C

Question 5

changes 'read' to the past continuous 'was reading' **B1**

keeps 'rang' in the past simple, giving 'I was reading a book when the phone rang', cao **B1**

Answer: I was reading a book when the phone rang.

Question 6

identifies a straightforward effect, e.g. the past perfect creates a clear sense of an earlier, separate layer of time (oe) **B1**

develops this with reference to the text, e.g. it lets the writer step back into the grandfather's history without losing the reader in the present-tense 'now' of clearing the attic (oe) **B1**

Answer: The past perfect ('had worked', 'had written', 'had kept') clearly separates the grandfather's history from the present-tense 'now' of the attic, letting the writer step back into an earlier layer of time without confusing the reader about when each event took place.

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