4.2 Tense Shifts and Control: 30-minute Pack

about 30 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

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

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 Look at the following verb forms as they are used in the source text. Identify the tense of each one.

(a) 'climb' (line 1) **(1)**

(b) 'has gone' (line 8) **(1)**

(c) 'had worked' (lines 9-10) **(1)**

(d) 'will drive' (line 29) **(1)**

(e) 'did' (line 3, 'as it always did') **(1)**

(Total for Question 1 is 5 marks)

2 Which tense is used to narrate the main events taking place 'today' in the extract, such as climbing the ladder and opening the boxes?

- ☐ A) Past simple
- ☐ B) Present simple
- ☐ C) Future simple
- ☐ D) Past continuous

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

3 Which sentence uses its tenses consistently?

- ☐ A) When the bell rang, the pupils pack their bags and left.
- ☐ B) When the bell rings, the pupils packed their bags and left.
- ☐ C) When the bell rang, the pupils pack their bags and leave.
- ☐ D) When the bell rang, the pupils packed their bags and left.

(Total for Question 3 is 1 mark)

---

4 Explain one effect of the writer's choice to narrate the main events of the extract in the present tense rather than the past tense.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

---

5 Combine each pair of simple sentences into ONE sentence, using the past perfect to show which action happened first.

(a) He locked the door. He left the house. **(1)**

(b) She read the letter. She cried. **(1)**

(c) The rain stopped. They went outside. **(1)**

(Total for Question 5 is 3 marks)

---

6 Complete the sentence correctly: 'I will read the rest of the letters when I ___ home.'

- ☐ A) arrive
- ☐ B) will arrive
- ☐ C) arrived
- ☐ D) am arriving

(Total for Question 6 is 1 mark)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

7 Rewrite each sentence as reported (indirect) speech, changing the tense correctly.

(a) Grandad said, 'I am tired after the long journey.' **(2)**

(b) She said, 'I will keep these letters forever.' **(2)**

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

---

8 Look at this sentence: 'He must have written this letter just before the ship sailed.' Identify the verb form 'must have written' and explain what it suggests about how certain the writer is.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

---

9 Complete the sentence using the correct third conditional forms: 'If my grandfather ___ (not / go) to sea, he ___ (not / meet) my grandmother.'

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

---

10 Identify and correct the tense-shift error in this sentence: 'The letters were fragile, so I am handling them very carefully.'

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

11 Write a short entry (80-120 words) for a local heritage website describing an item passed down through a family.

In your answer you should:

- use the past tense to explain when and how the item was originally made or used
- use the future tense to explain how it will be displayed in an upcoming exhibition
- keep your tense choices deliberate and consistent throughout.

(Total for Question 11 is 8 marks)

---

12 Explain the difference in meaning between 'I lived in Leeds.' and 'I have lived in Leeds.'

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

---

13 Look again at line 19: 'as though the dust itself is glowing.' If the writer had instead written 'as though the dust itself were glowing', what effect would the subjunctive form 'were' create?

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 4.2 Tense Shifts and Control: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) present simple **B1**

(a) Answer: present simple

(b) present perfect **B1**

(b) Answer: present perfect

(c) past perfect **B1**

(c) Answer: past perfect

(d) future simple (will + infinitive) **B1**

(d) Answer: future simple

(e) past simple **B1**

(e) Answer: past simple

Question 2

B) Present simple **B1**

Answer: B

Question 3

D) When the bell rang, the pupils packed their bags and left. **B1**

Answer: D

Question 4

identifies a straightforward effect, e.g. the present tense makes the events feel immediate or as though they are happening as we read (oe) **B1**

develops this with reference to the text, e.g. it draws the reader into the writer's unfolding discovery of the letters and the light in the attic, as if we do not yet know what will happen (oe) **B1**

Answer: Narrating in the present tense creates a sense of immediacy, making the reader feel as though the events of clearing the attic are happening in real time; this pulls us into the writer's unfolding discovery of the letters, as if the outcome is not yet known.

Question 5

(a) He had locked the door before he left the house. (or: After he had locked the door, he left the house.) oe **B1**

(a) Answer: He had locked the door before he left the house.

(b) She had read the letter before she cried. (or: After she had read the letter, she cried.) oe **B1**

(b) Answer: She had read the letter before she cried.

(c) The rain had stopped before they went outside. (or: Once the rain had stopped, they went outside.) oe **B1**

(c) Answer: The rain had stopped before they went outside.

Question 6

A) arrive **B1**

Answer: A

Question 7

(a) backshifts the present simple 'am' to the past simple 'was' **B1**

(a) produces a grammatically complete reported sentence, e.g. Grandad said (that) he was tired after the long journey, cao **B1**

(a) Answer: Grandad said that he was tired after the long journey.

(b) backshifts 'will' to 'would' **B1**

(b) produces a grammatically complete reported sentence, with 'these' changed to 'those' (or kept as 'these' if the letters are still close to the reporter), e.g. She said (that) she would keep those letters forever, cao **B1**

(b) Answer: She said that she would keep those letters forever.

Question 8

identifies the form as a modal verb ('must') plus a perfect infinitive ('have written'), used to speculate about a completed past action **B1**

explains that it suggests strong logical certainty or confident deduction about the past, rather than a simple factual statement (oe) **B1**

Answer: 'Must have written' is a modal verb ('must') plus a perfect infinitive ('have written'), used to speculate about something in the past. It suggests the writer feels very confident in this deduction, even though they were not there to witness it directly.

Question 9

'if' clause correctly formed with the past perfect: had not gone, cao **B1**

main clause correctly formed with would (not) have + past participle: would not have met, cao **B1**

Answer: If my grandfather had not gone to sea, he would not have met my grandmother.

Question 10

identifies the shift from the past tense 'were' to the present tense 'am handling' **B1**

correct rewrite using a single consistent tense throughout, e.g. The letters were fragile, so I handled them very carefully, oe (accept a fully present-tense version: The letters are fragile, so I am handling them very carefully) **B1**

Answer: The letters were fragile, so I handled them very carefully.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Question 11

Content and organisation (AO5)

Level 1 Simple description of the item, with little sense of organisation between its history and the upcoming exhibition. **1-2**

Level 2 Some clear description of the item's history and the exhibition, in a generally suitable register for a heritage website. **3**

Level 3 Clear, well-organised description moving convincingly from the item's history to the exhibition, in a register well suited to a heritage website. **4**

Tense control (technical accuracy) (AO6)

Level 1 Past and future tenses are used inconsistently or inaccurately. **1-2**

Level 2 Past tense used for the item's history and future tense used for the exhibition, with occasional inaccuracies. **3**

Level 3 Past tense used accurately and consistently for the item's history, and future tense used accurately and consistently for the exhibition, with the shift between them clearly and deliberately signalled. **4**

Indicative content:

- An opening sentence naming the item and using the past tense to state when and by whom it was made or used.
- Further past-tense detail giving a sense of the item's original purpose or significance to the family.
- A clear shift signalled by a discourse marker (e.g. 'Now,' or 'This autumn,') moving into the future tense.
- Future-tense detail explaining how and where the item will be displayed in the exhibition.
- Register appropriate to a heritage website: informative, engaging and free of the first-person confessional tone of a diary.

Question 12

'I lived' (past simple) shows a period in the past that is over, or does not connect it to now (oe) **B1**

'I have lived' (present perfect) links the past to the present, e.g. it is still true, or it is an experience that matters now (oe) **B1**

Answer: 'I lived in Leeds' places it in a finished past period; 'I have lived in Leeds' connects the time in Leeds to the present, for example that it is still where I live or that it is part of my experience up to now.

Question 13

identifies that 'were' is the subjunctive form, used for something hypothetical, imagined or contrary to fact, whereas 'is' presents it as a straightforward observation **B1**

explains the effect, e.g. the subjunctive would distance the image, signalling more clearly that this is only a trick of the light and not literally true, adding to the dreamlike, uncertain mood of the passage (oe) **B1**

Answer: 'Were' is the subjunctive form, used for hypothetical or unreal ideas, so it would signal more clearly that the glowing dust is only an imagined impression rather than a literal description; this would deepen the dreamlike, uncertain mood already suggested by 'as though' and 'somehow'.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk