# 9.3 Reading: Fiction: 30-minute Pack

STA KS2.E-R1 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

**Read The Rock Pool, then answer all questions. Write your answers in full sentences where a sentence is asked for.**

## The Rock Pool

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Paragraph 1

Priya crouched at the edge of the rock pool, her sandals abandoned somewhere behind her on the dry sand. The tide had slipped away that morning, leaving behind a maze of glistening pools tucked between the rocks like scattered coins. Her grandfather, Bapu, was further along the beach, his trouser legs rolled to the knee, humming to himself as he checked the crab lines he had set the evening before.

Paragraph 2

The pool in front of Priya held its own small world. A hermit crab dragged its borrowed shell across a bed of purple weed, and two tiny fish flickered between the fronds like stitches of silver thread. She dipped one finger into the cold water and watched the ripples spread and settle, spread and settle, until the pool was still again.

Paragraph 3

It was the glint that caught her eye first, a flash of green half buried in the sand at the bottom of the pool. Priya reached in, her sleeve soaking through instantly, and worked the object free. It was a bottle, old and thick, its glass the colour of sea foam left too long in shadow. A stopper of blackened cork sealed the neck, and inside, curled tight as a fern before it opens, was a scrap of paper.

Paragraph 4

'Bapu!' Priya's voice cracked with excitement, and she was on her feet before she had decided to stand. 'Bapu, come and look!'

Paragraph 5

Her grandfather straightened slowly, one hand pressed to his back, and made his way over the slippery rocks with the careful steps of someone who had learned, long ago, not to hurry near the sea. When he saw what she was holding, something shifted in his face, a memory surfacing like the bottle itself.


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Paragraph 6

'Well now,' he said quietly. 'I have not seen one of these since I was a boy.'

Paragraph 7

Together they worked the cork loose, and Priya drew out the paper with the tips of two fingers, as though it might crumble if she breathed on it too hard. The ink had faded to the colour of weak tea, but the words still held their shape: I hope whoever finds this is standing somewhere the sea has just left. Keep something small today. Write your own message and send it back out. From a boy who once stood exactly where you are standing now.

Paragraph 8

Priya read it twice, then a third time, before she looked up. 'Do you think he ever found out if anyone read it?'

Paragraph 9

Bapu shook his head, but he was smiling, the kind of smile that reaches further back than the moment it appears in. 'When I was young, folk along this coast used to send bottles out with the spring tide,' he said. 'A message, a coin, whatever they had. Some came back years later, further down the coast or further up. Most were never found at all. I sent one myself, once, though I never told anyone what I wrote.'

Paragraph 10

Priya turned the paper over in her hands, feeling the years pressed into it. She thought of the boy who had written it, standing perhaps on this very stretch of sand, not knowing whether his words would ever reach anyone, and sending them out to sea anyway. It was, she realised, a small and stubborn kind of hope, folded up and corked shut and thrown to the water to look after.

Paragraph 11

'I want to send one back,' she said at last.

Paragraph 12

Bapu found her a stub of pencil in his jacket pocket, and Priya wrote quickly, before she could talk herself out of any of it. She did not show Bapu what she had written. She rolled the new paper tight, pushed it deep into the old green bottle, and pressed the blackened cork firmly back into place. Then, wading out until the cold water reached her knees, she threw the bottle as far as her arm would allow, and watched it bob once, twice, before the tide, patient and unhurried, carried it away.


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**1** Look at the first paragraph. Which word tells us that the rock pools looked like something valuable? Tick one box.

- [ ] A) glistening
- [ ] B) scattered
- [ ] C) coins
- [ ] D) abandoned

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**2** Find and copy two words or phrases from the second paragraph that show the rock pool was full of life.

(2)

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**3** Tick one box to show whether this statement is true or false: 'Priya found the bottle in the sand beside the rocks.'

- [ ] True
- [ ] False

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**4** The writer uses several similes and comparisons throughout the text (for example, 'like scattered coins', 'like stitches of silver thread', 'as a fern before it opens'). Explain how the writer uses this language across the text to build a sense of wonder about the natural world, and comment on how effective you find it.

(4)

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**5** 'It was, she realised, a small and stubborn kind of hope, folded up and corked shut and thrown to the water to look after.' What can you infer about how this discovery has changed Priya's understanding of the world? Use evidence from across the whole text.

(3)


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**6** Compare the character of Priya with the boy who wrote the original message, using evidence from across the whole text. In your answer, consider what they have in common and how the writer shows this connection.

**(4)**

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**7** Why do you think the writer begins the text by describing the calm, everyday scene of Bapu checking his crab lines, before Priya discovers the bottle?

**(2)**

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**8** Compare how Priya feels about the sea at the start of the text with how she feels about it by the end. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**(3)**

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**9** Look at the word 'unhurried' in the final sentence. Explain what this word suggests about the tide, and why this might be a fitting way to end the story.

**(2)**

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**10** According to paragraph 9, what did people along the coast used to send out with the spring tide?

**(1)**


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**11** Explain why Priya 'did not show Bapu what she had written' in her own message.

(2)

**12** Summarise the whole story in no more than three sentences.

(3)

**13** Give two things the old message asked whoever found it to do.

(2)

**14** Give two details the text tells us about the appearance of the bottle.

(2)

**15** Summarise, in your own words, what happens between Priya calling Bapu over and the two of them reading the message (from 'Bapu!' to '...stood exactly where you are standing now').

(3)


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**16** Explain why Bapu 'straightened slowly, one hand pressed to his back' when he goes over to look at what Priya has found.

**(2)**

**17** What does the text suggest about Bapu's feelings when he first understands what Priya has found? Use evidence from paragraphs 5 and 6 to support your answer.

**(3)**

**18** Look at the last paragraph. What do you predict Priya wrote in her message? Give two reasons for your prediction, using evidence from the text.

**(2)**

**19** In paragraph 10, the writer describes the boy's hope as 'a small and stubborn kind of hope, folded up and corked shut and thrown to the water to look after'. Explain how the writer's use of language here helps you understand Priya's feelings about the message.

**(3)**


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# Mark scheme · 9.3 Reading: Fiction: 30-minute Pack

## Question 1

C) coins — **B1**

Answer: **C) coins**

## Question 2

any one relevant word or phrase, e.g. 'hermit crab' / 'dragged its borrowed shell across a bed of purple weed' — **B1**

a second, different relevant word or phrase, e.g. 'two tiny fish' / 'flickered between the fronds like stitches of silver thread' — **B1**

Answer: **Any two from: hermit crab; dragged its borrowed shell across a bed of purple weed; two tiny fish; flickered between the fronds like stitches of silver thread.**

## Question 3

False — **B1**

Answer: **False**

## Question 4

**Level 4** Detailed, perceptive explanation of the pattern of language across the text, with a considered evaluative comment on effectiveness. — **4**

**Level 3** Clear explanation of how more than one example of the language works, with some evaluative comment. — **3**

**Level 2** Explains the effect of at least one example of the language, with limited evaluation. — **2**

**Level 1** Identifies an example of the language with little or no explanation of effect. — **1**

**Indicative content:**

- 'like scattered coins' links the rock pools to treasure, suggesting they are precious and worth exploring.
- 'like stitches of silver thread' makes the fish's quick movement seem delicate and beautiful.
- 'as a fern before it opens' compares the curled paper to something natural about to unfurl, hinting at discovery and growth.
- Taken together, these comparisons build a cumulative sense of quiet wonder in an everyday coastal setting.
- Evaluative comment: the comparisons stay grounded in familiar, natural images, which makes the fantastical discovery feel believable rather than far-fetched.

## Question 5

**Level 3** Perceptive inference, well supported with evidence drawn from across the whole text. — **3**

**Level 2** Reasonable inference, supported with some evidence from the text. — **2**

**Level 1** Simple or partial inference, with limited supporting evidence. — **1**

**Indicative content:**

- Priya moves from being absorbed in small, immediate discoveries (the rock pool's tiny world) to reflecting on larger ideas of time and chance.
- She begins to understand hope as something you can act on without certainty, shown by her choosing to write and send her own message.
- This mirrors the original boy, who also sent his message 'not knowing whether his words would ever reach anyone'.
- Her final action (wading out and throwing the bottle) shows she has taken on this understanding herself, not just observed it in others.

## Question 6

**Level 4** Detailed, well-supported comparison covering more than one point of similarity, with clear explanation of how the writer shows the connection. — **4**

**Level 3** Clear comparison covering at least one point of similarity, with some explanation of how the connection is shown. — **3**

**Level 2** Reasonable comparison with limited explanation of how the connection is shown. — **2**

**Level 1** Simple or partial comparison, with little supporting evidence. — **1**

**Indicative content:**

- Both are children who stand in the same physical place, separated by many years.
- Both act on hope by sending a message without expecting a reply.
- The writer directly links them in the boy's own words: 'a boy who once stood exactly where you are standing now'.
- The structure of the story (finding an old message, then writing and sending a new one) mirrors their situations and connects them across time.
- The ending suggests the cycle will continue with whoever finds Priya's bottle next, extending the connection further.

## Question 7

recognises the opening establishes an ordinary, calm setting — **B1**

recognises this creates contrast with the discovery, making it feel more surprising or significant — **B1**

Answer: **The calm, ordinary opening sets up a normal day at the beach, so that when Priya finds the bottle it feels like a bigger, more surprising event by contrast.**


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## Question 8

**Level 3** Clear, well-supported comparison of Priya's feelings at both points in the text. **3**

**Level 2** Reasonable comparison with some relevant evidence from the text. **2**

**Level 1** Simple or partial comparison, with limited evidence. **1**

**Indicative content:**

- At the start, Priya explores the sea in a small, curious way: 'dipped one finger into the cold water and watched the ripples spread and settle'.
- At the end, her connection to the sea becomes bigger and more meaningful: she wades in and trusts the tide to carry her message.
- The tide is described as 'patient and unhurried', suggesting she now sees the sea as something to be trusted with something important.
- Overall she moves from playful curiosity to a deeper, more reflective connection with the sea.

## Question 9

explains 'unhurried' suggests the tide is slow, calm or not rushed **B1**

links this to why it fits the ending, e.g. it mirrors the slow passage of time in the story / gives a calm, gentle resolution **B1**

Answer: **'Unhurried' suggests the tide moves slowly and calmly, without rushing. This fits the ending because it mirrors the years the story has covered and gives the story a calm, peaceful close.**

## Question 10

a message, a coin, or whatever they had (also accept bottles, with or without the message mentioned: para 9 says folk sent bottles out) **B1**

Answer: **A message, a coin, or whatever they had (sent in bottles).**

## Question 11

recognises the message was personal or private to Priya **B1**

develops this, e.g. linking it to the original message being anonymous, or to the idea that some things are meant only for whoever finds them **B1**

Answer: **Her message was personal and private, meant only for whoever might one day find the bottle, just as the original boy's message had been anonymous and addressed to a stranger.**

## Question 12

**Level 3** Full, accurate summary of the whole story in the pupil's own words, within the sentence limit. **3**

**Level 2** Reasonable summary covering most of the story, mostly in the pupil's own words. **2**

**Level 1** Minimal or partial summary, covering only part of the story. **1**

**Indicative content:**

- Priya finds an old bottle with a message inside while exploring a rock pool.
- Bapu recognises the tradition of sending messages out with the tide from his own childhood.
- Priya writes her own reply and sends the bottle back out to sea.

## Question 13

keep something small today **B1**

write your own message and send it back out (to sea); any two different instructions from the note earn the two marks, so also accept write your own message and send it back out given as two separate things **B1**

Answer: **1) Keep something small today. 2) Write your own message and send it back out to sea.**

## Question 14

any one relevant detail, e.g. it was old and thick **B1**

a second, different relevant detail, e.g. the glass was the colour of sea foam left too long in shadow / it was sealed with a stopper of blackened cork **B1**

Answer: **Any two from: it was old and thick; the glass was the colour of sea foam left too long in shadow; it was sealed with a stopper of blackened cork.**

## Question 15

**Level 3** Full, accurate summary in the pupil's own words, covering the key events in a sensible order. **3**

**Level 2** Reasonable summary covering some key events, mostly in the pupil's own words. **2**

**Level 1** Minimal or partial summary, possibly limited to one event or largely lifted from the text. **1**

**Indicative content:**

- Priya calls Bapu over excitedly.
- Bapu makes his way carefully over the slippery rocks.
- He recognises the bottle from his own childhood.
- Together they work the cork loose.
- Priya carefully draws out the old paper.
- They read the faded message inside it.

## Question 16

recognises that Bapu is older / his back is stiff or aching **B1**

links this to evidence, e.g. he had been bending down to check the crab lines, so his back had been stiff from working **B1**

Answer: **Bapu is older and his back is stiff, probably from bending down while checking the crab lines, so standing up straight again takes him a moment.**


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## Question 17

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 3** Clear inference about Bapu's feelings, fully supported with well-chosen evidence from both paragraphs. | **3** |
| **Level 2** Reasonable inference about Bapu's feelings, supported with some relevant evidence. | **2** |
| **Level 1** Simple or partial inference, with little or no supporting evidence. | **1** |

**Indicative content:**

- He feels surprised and nostalgic: 'something shifted in his face, a memory surfacing'.
- He recognises the bottle from long ago: 'I have not seen one of these since I was a boy.'
- His quiet, careful tone ('he said quietly') suggests the memory affects him deeply.
- He is thoughtful rather than simply excited, unlike Priya's reaction.

## Question 18

| | |
|---|---|
| a sensible prediction linked to the story, e.g. she wrote something personal, hopeful, or about the bottle she found | **B1** |
| a reason from the text supporting the prediction, e.g. she does not show Bapu what she wrote, suggesting it is private / the original note asked for hope and something small, so hers may echo this | **B1** |

Answer: **She may have written something personal or hopeful, perhaps mentioning the bottle she found. This fits with her not showing Bapu the message (suggesting it is private) and with the original note's theme of hope and 'something small'.**

## Question 19

| | |
|---|---|
| **Level 3** Clear explanation of how the language conveys Priya's feelings, referring precisely to word choice. | **3** |
| **Level 2** Reasonable explanation of the effect of the language, with some reference to word choice. | **2** |
| **Level 1** Simple or general comment on the language, with little reference to specific words. | **1** |

**Indicative content:**

- The abstract idea of 'hope' is treated as a physical object that can be 'folded up and corked shut', showing how seriously Priya takes it.
- 'stubborn' suggests hope that persists even without certainty of being found, mirroring the boy's situation.
- 'thrown to the water to look after' suggests trust, as if the sea is being asked to care for something precious.
- This shows Priya now sees the message as meaningful and valuable, not just an interesting object.


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