6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: Test Pack

about 15 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

Three Accounts of the Hartley Road Fire

Written specifically for this worksheet as three original, contrasting texts (a news report, a science method and a press statement) about the same fictional event, for passive-voice analysis practice. Not derived from or based on any published work, past paper or copyrighted text.

Text A: from the Local Gazette (news report)

A fire broke out at the Hartley Road textile factory shortly after 6 a.m. yesterday. Emergency services were called immediately, and the building was evacuated within minutes. No injuries were reported, although two workers were treated for smoke inhalation at the scene. The cause of the fire has not yet been established, and an investigation has been launched by the fire service. Residents living nearby were advised to keep their windows closed while the blaze was brought under control by crews from three stations. The factory's owners are expected to issue a statement later this week.

Text B: from a school science method (lab report)

Investigating the Effect of Temperature on Reaction Rate

50 ml of dilute hydrochloric acid was measured into a conical flask. A three-centimetre piece of magnesium ribbon was added, and the flask was immediately sealed with a bung connected to a gas syringe. The volume of gas produced was recorded every fifteen seconds for two minutes. The experiment was then repeated at four further temperatures, and the results were plotted on a graph.

Text C: statement from the Council Press Office

It has been acknowledged that delays occurred in responding to residents' concerns about the Hartley Road fire. A number of mistakes were made in how the situation was initially handled, and lessons will be learned. A full review has now been commissioned, and any recommendations will be acted upon in due course. The council remains committed to keeping residents informed.

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1 Look again at the three texts above. For each sentence below, tick to show whether it is written in the active voice or the passive voice.

(a) 'A fire broke out at the Hartley Road textile factory.' **(1)**

- ☐ Active voice
- ☐ Passive voice

(b) 'The building was evacuated within minutes.' **(1)**

- ☐ Active voice
- ☐ Passive voice

(c) 'A three-centimetre piece of magnesium ribbon was added.' **(1)**

- ☐ Active voice
- ☐ Passive voice

(d) 'The council remains committed to keeping residents informed.' **(1)**

- ☐ Active voice
- ☐ Passive voice

(e) 'A full review has now been commissioned.' **(1)**

- ☐ Active voice
- ☐ Passive voice

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2 Take the active sentence: 'The manager cancelled the meeting at the last minute.' Rewrite it as instructed below.

(a) Rewrite it in the passive voice for a formal, objective workplace memo, keeping the agent named. **(2)**

(b) Rewrite it in the passive voice, this time deliberately leaving out the agent so that it is not clear who was responsible. **(2)**

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3 Evaluate which of the three texts (A, the news report; B, the science method; C, the council statement) uses the passive voice most effectively for its purpose. Support your answer with reference to all three texts.

(8)

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Mark scheme · 6.4 Passive Voice for Effect: Test Pack

Question 1

(a) Active voice cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **Active voice**

(b) Passive voice cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **Passive voice**

(c) Passive voice cao **B1**

(c) Answer: **Passive voice**

(d) Active voice cao **B1**

(d) Answer: **Active voice**

(e) Passive voice cao **B1**

(e) Answer: **Passive voice**

Question 2

(a) correct passive construction: was cancelled cao **B1**

(a) agent 'by the manager' correctly retained, with the meeting as the subject cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **The meeting was cancelled by the manager at the last minute.**

(b) correct passive construction: was cancelled cao **B1**

(b) agent correctly omitted, with the meeting as the subject cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **The meeting was cancelled at the last minute.**

Question 3

Level 0 No relevant evaluation made; little or no reference to the texts. **0**

Level 1 Simple comments on the passive voice in one or two texts, with limited reference to purpose or effect and no clear overall judgement. **1-3**

Level 2 Clear evaluation referring to all three texts, with a reasonable judgement about effectiveness supported by some accurate examples. **4-6**

Level 3 Detailed, convincing evaluation referring precisely to all three texts, reaching a well-supported overall judgement about which use of the passive voice is most effective for its purpose, with sustained awareness of genre and reader effect. **7-8**

Indicative content:

- Text B's passive voice is highly effective for its purpose: it is the accepted scientific convention, creating an objective, repeatable procedure with no ambiguity about what was done
- Text A's passive voice is mostly effective: it reads as normal, neutral news convention, though a stronger answer might note a small number of choices (e.g. 'is expected') that soften responsibility slightly
- Text C's passive voice is arguably the least effective for building trust, since the repeated deletion of an agent the council clearly knows (itself) can appear evasive rather than genuinely objective
- A strong answer reaches a clear overall judgement (e.g. Text B is most effective because objectivity is exactly what the genre requires, whereas Text C's use undermines its own credibility)
- Precise quotation from all three texts is used to support each point of the evaluation
- Accept any well-supported overall judgement, provided it is backed by accurate reference to all three texts and a clear sense of purpose

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