1.2 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry): 1-hour Pack

Total Marks

ISEB Common Entrance 13+ English (Reading and Comprehension) · about 60 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Read Poem 1 carefully, then answer Questions 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 18. Read Poem 2 carefully, then answer Questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Support your answers with reference to the text, including short quotations where helpful. Continue longer answers on lined paper if you need more space.

Poems

Poem 1: Low Tide at Bracelet Bay

Original poem written for Revision Library.

1 At Bracelet Bay the water sighs,
2 Retreating slow as sleep,
3 And leaves a mirror on the sand
4 For gulls to stand and keep.

5 My grandad rolls his trousers up
6 The way he did before,
7 And walks me out past pools of glass
8 To where the mussels moor.

9 He points his stick towards the rocks
10 Like an old and patient king,
11 And tells me how the sea forgets
12 Then remembers everything.

13 The crabs retreat beneath the weed,
14 Small soldiers in retreat,
15 While starfish freckle every pool
16 Like stars beneath our feet.

17 The wind has combed the grass to grey,
18 The cliffs stand blunt and bare,
19 And somewhere out beyond the buoys

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

20 A trawler cuts the air.

21 I used to think the tide came in

22 Because the moon was sad,

23 That every wave that reached the shore

24 Was lonely for the lad

25 Who built his castles out of sand

26 And watched them wash away,

27 Not knowing that the sea, like time,

28 Would take them anyway.

29 Now grandad's gone six years this spring,

30 Yet still I come to stand

31 Where mussels moor and starfish freckle

32 This forgetful, patient sand.

Poem 2: Auntie Pearl's Allotment

Original poem written for Revision Library.

1 Auntie Pearl grows runner beans

2 in rows as straight as Sunday hymns,

3 tying each stem to its cane

4 with strips of old tights, knotted twice.

5 She talks to the tomatoes

6 the way some people talk to dogs,

7 scolding the greenfly, praising the sun,

8 naming every bloom before it opens.

9 When August comes she fills a bucket

10 with beans too long to count,

11 and presses one, still warm, into my hand

12 saying eat it now, before it knows it's picked.

13 I did not understand her then,

14 how a woman with soil under her nails

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

15 could hold a whole summer

16 in the shape of a single bean.

17 Now I keep an allotment of my own,

18 smaller than hers, and less straight,

19 but every August I press a bean

20 into someone's hand, still warm,

21 and say her sentence exactly as she said it.

1 Look at stanzas 2, 4 and 5 of Poem 1 (lines 5-20).

(a) In stanza 2 (lines 5-8), what does grandad do with his trousers before walking onto the sand? **(1)**

(b) In stanza 4 (lines 13-16), what are the crabs compared to? **(1)**

(c) Give one adjective from stanza 5 (lines 17-20) that describes the cliffs. **(1)**

2 In stanza 1 of Poem 2 (lines 1-4), what does Auntie Pearl use to tie the bean stems to their canes?

(1)

3 Give two details from stanza 2 of Poem 2 (lines 5-8) that show how Auntie Pearl 'talks' to her plants.

(2)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

4 Explain what the poet means by the phrase 'the water sighs' (line 1).

(2)

---

5 Find and copy one word from stanza 2 (lines 5-8) that means 'to attach securely in place', as boats do.

(1)

---

6 Explain the effect of the simile 'as straight as Sunday hymns' (line 2).

(2)

---

7 What does the phrase 'before it knows it's picked' (line 12) suggest about the beans?

(2)

---

8 Look at line 10 of Poem 1: 'Like an old and patient king'.

(a) Identify the poetic technique used in this line. **(1)**

(b) Explain the effect of this technique on the reader. **(2)**

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

9 Look at stanza 3 of Poem 1 (lines 9-12), where the poet writes that the sea 'forgets / Then remembers everything'.

(a) Identify the poetic technique used in this description of the sea. **(1)**

(b) Explain the effect of this technique. **(2)**

10 Look at stanza 5 of Poem 1 (lines 17-20).

(a) Identify an example of alliteration in this stanza. **(1)**

(b) Explain the effect of this alliteration. **(1)**

11 Poem 1 is written in eight four-line stanzas with a regular ABCB rhyme scheme throughout. Explain the effect of this regular structure and rhyme scheme.

(3)

12 Look at stanza 4 of Poem 1 (lines 13-16): 'While starfish freckle every pool / Like stars beneath our feet.' Explore how the poet uses imagery here to connect the sky and the sea.

(4)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

13 What do you think Poem 1 suggests about memory and the passing of time? Support your ideas with reference to the whole poem.

(6)

14 'Auntie Pearl's Allotment' is written in free verse, without a regular rhyme scheme or fixed rhythm, unlike 'Low Tide at Bracelet Bay'. Suggest one reason why the poet might have chosen this form for Poem 2.

(3)

15 Compare how the two poets present family members who have shaped the speaker's life. Refer to both poems in your answer.

(8)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

16 Both poems explore the idea that ordinary objects and places can hold powerful memories. Compare how the two poets present this idea, considering their use of language, form and structure.

(10)

17 Which poem do you think is more effective in presenting the passing of time? Justify your view with one reason from each poem.

(4)

18 How does the mood of Poem 1 change between the earlier stanzas and the final two stanzas (lines 25-32)? Support your answer with reference to the text.

(5)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 1.2 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry): 1-hour Pack

Question 1

(a) rolls them up / rolls his trousers up (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: He rolls his trousers up.

(b) soldiers / small soldiers (in retreat) **B1**

(b) Answer: Small soldiers (in retreat).

(c) blunt OR bare (either accepted) **B1**

(c) Answer: Blunt (or bare).

Question 2

strips of old tights (knotted twice) **B1**

Answer: Strips of old tights, knotted twice.

Question 3

scolding the greenfly (any one detail) **B1**

praising the sun / naming every bloom before it opens (any other detail, up to two marks total) **B1**

Answer: Any two of: scolding the greenfly; praising the sun; naming every bloom before it opens.

Question 4

recognises the sea/water is given a human quality (personification) as it withdraws (oe) **B1**

explains the effect: suggests the retreating tide sounds soft, gentle, weary or tired, creating a calm, peaceful mood/atmosphere (oe) **B1**

Answer: The water is personified as sighing, suggesting the tide withdraws softly and wearily, creating a calm, gentle mood at the start of the poem.

Question 5

moor **B1**

Answer: Moor.

Question 6

compares the neat rows of beans to the order, discipline or ritual of a church hymn/service (oe) **B1**

suggests Auntie Pearl's care, precision and almost reverent attitude towards her gardening, with a hint of gentle humour/affection in the comparison (oe) **B1**

Answer: The simile compares the neat rows of beans to the order and ritual of Sunday hymns, suggesting Auntie Pearl treats her gardening with careful, almost reverent precision, while the comparison also adds warmth and gentle humour.

Question 7

identifies personification: the bean is given the human ability to 'know' (oe) **B1**

explains the effect: suggests the bean should be eaten immediately for freshness, and adds playful humour/affection while making an ordinary vegetable feel almost alive (oe) **B1**

Answer: The bean is personified as able to 'know' it has been picked, humorously suggesting it must be eaten straight away while perfectly fresh, and making an everyday vegetable feel almost alive and precious.

Question 8

(a) simile **B1**

(a) Answer: Simile.

(b) suggests grandad appears wise, dignified, calm or authoritative (oe) **B1**

(b) links to his age/experience and his sense of ownership or command over the coastline/rocks he points to (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Comparing grandad to 'an old and patient king' suggests he appears dignified, wise and calmly in command of the shoreline, reflecting his age and experience.

Question 9

(a) personification **B1**

(a) Answer: Personification.

(b) makes the sea seem alive, powerful or mysterious, as if it has its own mind or memory (oe) **B1**

(b) links to the poem's wider theme of time/memory, suggesting the sea holds and releases memories much as people do (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Giving the sea the human abilities to forget and remember makes it seem alive and mysterious, and foreshadows the poem's theme that, like the sea, memory and time both fade and return.

Question 10

(a) 'grass' and 'grey' (line 17), or any other valid pair of alliterative words from the stanza **B1**

(a) Answer: 'The wind has combed the grass to grey' (the repeated hard 'g' sound in 'grass' and 'grey').

(b) the repeated hard sound mimics the harsh, dragging action of the wind, or emphasises the bleak, worn appearance of the landscape (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The harsh repeated 'g' sound echoes the wind's dragging, scouring action and emphasises the bleak, faded colour of the grass.

Question 11

the steady, song-like rhythm and rhyme suit the poem's reminiscent, storytelling tone (oe) **B1**

the regularity creates a sense of order, control or steadiness, mirroring how the memory feels fixed and well-rehearsed (oe) **B1**

the unchanging pattern makes the emotional shift in the final stanza (grandad's death) feel more powerful by contrast, since the form does not change even though the content does (oe) **B1**

Answer: The steady rhyme and four-line stanzas give the poem a calm, song-like, storytelling rhythm that mirrors a well-rehearsed memory; because the form stays so regular throughout, the emotional shift in the final stanza feels more powerful by contrast.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Question 12

identifies the simile comparing starfish to stars ('Like stars beneath our feet') **B1**

explains that this makes the rock pools seem to hold a whole night sky, elevating an ordinary scene into something magical or wondrous (oe) **B1**

notes the inversion/reversal created: stars are usually above, but here they appear underfoot, blurring the boundary between sky and sea (oe) **B1**

links this to the poem's wider idea that nature (the sea/shore) holds hidden beauty, connecting to the sense of wonder felt by the child speaker (oe) **B1**

Answer: The simile 'Like stars beneath our feet' compares the freckled starfish to a night sky, reversing the usual position of stars (above, not underfoot) so the rock pools seem to hold their own miniature sky; this creates a sense of wonder and connects sea and sky as two versions of the same magical world.

Question 13

Level 3 Perceptive, well-developed response exploring the poem's ideas about memory and time, using a range of precisely chosen references from across the whole poem and confident, accurate terminology. **5-6**

Level 2 Clear response with relevant references from more than one part of the poem, showing sound understanding of how the poet presents memory and time. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple or general response with limited or single reference to the text, showing basic awareness of the theme. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- The personified sea, which 'forgets / Then remembers everything', works as an extended metaphor for time and memory: things fade but are never entirely lost.
- The child's naive belief about the tide (stanzas 6-7) shows an innocent, magical understanding of the world that matures, by the end, into an adult understanding of mortality.
- The image of sandcastles 'washed away' (lines 25-28) symbolises the impermanence of childhood and human life, contrasted with the enduring, cyclical sea.
- The final stanza shows the speaker still returning to the beach 'six years' after grandad's death, suggesting memory is sustained through ritual and repeated action, not erased by time.
- The repeated word 'patient' (lines 10 and 32) links grandad and the sand/sea, implying that both people and nature endure time calmly, and that the speaker has inherited some of that patience.
- Overall the poem suggests time and loss are inevitable, but memory can be kept alive through place, repetition and the retelling of stories.

Question 14

the free verse mirrors natural, conversational speech, making the memory feel informal and personal, as if being told aloud (oe) **B1**

the lack of strict pattern reflects the organic, less ordered nature of a vegetable garden, in contrast to the rhythmic, cyclical tides of Poem 1 (oe) **B1**

enjambment across line breaks (e.g. lines 11-12, 19-20) controls pacing and draws attention to key words such as 'still warm', creating an intimate, reflective tone (oe) **B1**

Answer: The free verse gives the poem an informal, conversational quality suited to a personal family memory, mirrors the organic, less regimented nature of a garden (unlike the sea's regular tides in Poem 1), and lets enjambment control pacing to emphasise key phrases such as 'still warm'.

Question 15

Level 4 Perceptive, well-developed comparison exploring both similarities and differences in detail, with precise and effective use of quotation from both poems and confident exploration of writers' methods. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear comparison with relevant textual reference from both poems and some exploration of how language, form or structure shape the presentation of each family member. **5-6**

Level 2 Some comparison with reference to both poems, though development may be limited or one-sided. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple or general comparison, with limited or no clear reference to both texts. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Both poems present an older relative (grandad; Auntie Pearl) as a figure of quiet wisdom and ritual who shapes the younger speaker's understanding of the world.
- Grandad is shown through calm action and simile ('Like an old and patient king'), suggesting dignified, authoritative wisdom linked to the natural world (the sea).
- Auntie Pearl is shown through idiosyncratic speech and habit (talking to tomatoes, naming blooms), suggesting warmth, humour and a more domestic, hands-on relationship with nature.
- Both poems end with the speaker inheriting and continuing the relative's practice: returning to the beach in Poem 1, and keeping an allotment and repeating Auntie Pearl's exact words in Poem 2, showing legacy and continuity.
- Poem 1 is more solemn and elegiac, using a direct statement of death and a regular, song-like form; Poem 2 is more affectionate and wry, using free verse and comic detail (tights as garden twine).
- Both poets use small, concrete, sensory details (mussels/starfish; beans/tomatoes) to make abstract feelings of love, loss and inheritance feel tangible and specific.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Question 16

Level 5 Sophisticated, perceptive comparison sustained across the whole answer, with judicious selection of quotation from both poems, precise use of subject terminology and confident critical exploration of language, form and structure. **9-10**

Level 4 Detailed, well-developed comparison with a good range of accurate textual reference from both poems and clear exploration of writers' methods across language, form and structure. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear comparison with relevant reference to both poems, addressing language and at least one of form or structure, though development may be uneven. **5-6**

Level 2 Some comparison with reference to both poems, but limited exploration of form or structure, or comparison largely one-sided. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple or general comparison, with minimal or unclear reference to the texts. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Concrete objects and places (mussels, starfish, sand; runner beans, tomatoes, the allotment) act as symbols or vessels of memory in both poems, anchoring abstract feelings of love and loss in specific, sensory detail.
- Poem 1 uses personification and simile ('the sea...forgets / Then remembers'; 'Like an old and patient king') to make the coastal setting feel alive and emotionally charged with memory.
- Poem 2 uses personification and playful, homely simile ('as straight as Sunday hymns'; the bean that 'knows it's picked') to make the allotment feel intimate and lovingly remembered.
- The contrast in form (Poem 1's regular ABCB stanzas versus Poem 2's free verse) reflects different relationships to memory: Poem 1's ritualised, cyclical form suits the elegiac tone of a fixed, often-repeated memory, while Poem 2's looser, conversational form suits a warmer, more spontaneous recollection.
- Both poems use a final stanza in which the speaker repeats or continues the older relative's action (returning to the tideline; pressing a warm bean into someone's hand and repeating Auntie Pearl's words), structurally showing memory embodied in repeated action rather than left in the past.
- Sensory, tactile detail is central to both (the cold/damp of rock pools; the warmth of a freshly picked bean), making memory feel physically present rather than merely recalled.
- Differences in tone (elegiac and wistful in Poem 1; warm and humorous in Poem 2) show that the same central idea, that ordinary places and objects hold memory, can be explored in contrasting emotional registers.

Question 17

Level 2 Clear, supported opinion with relevant, accurate reference to both poems and some explanation of how each creates its effect regarding the passing of time. **3-4**

Level 1 Valid opinion with general or limited support, referring to only one poem in detail or offering little explanation of effect. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Any coherent, clearly justified opinion is acceptable, provided it is supported with accurate reference to both poems.
- Possible view: Poem 1 is more effective because the cyclical tide and the direct statement of grandad's death ('gone six years this spring') create a powerful, elegiac sense of time passing and loss.
- Possible view: Poem 2 is more effective because the repeated August ritual, carried from Auntie Pearl to the speaker across years, shows time passing through continuity and inherited habit rather than through loss alone.
- Strong answers weigh the different methods (natural cycle and elegy in Poem 1; repeated domestic ritual in Poem 2) rather than simply asserting a preference.

Question 18

Level 3 Developed, precise exploration of the mood shift, using well-chosen quotation and appropriate terminology to show a clear grasp of how tone changes from nostalgic/playful to reflective/elegiac. **5**

Level 2 Clear identification of the mood change with relevant textual reference and some explanation of how language creates the shift. **3-4**

Level 1 Basic or general identification of a mood change (e.g. 'happy to sad'), with limited or no textual support. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Earlier stanzas (1-6) have a warm, nostalgic, almost playful tone, built through gentle imagery ('mirror on the sand', 'stars beneath our feet') and shared time with grandad.
- Stanzas 6-7 (lines 21-28) reveal the child's innocent, whimsical misunderstanding of the tide ('the moon was sad'), which retains a wistful, childlike mood before the tone darkens.
- The final stanza (lines 29-32) shifts abruptly into direct, plain statement: 'Now grandad's gone six years this spring', creating a sombre, elegiac mood through its bluntness.
- The repetition of 'mussels moor and starfish freckle' recalls the earlier imagery but now carries a poignant, bittersweet weight, showing memory persisting after loss.
- The paradoxical final phrase 'forgetful, patient sand' captures a mixed, reflective mood: acceptance of time's passing alongside quiet endurance and ongoing remembrance.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk