1.2-2 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry): Practice Set 2: 1-hour Pack

Total Marks

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

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Read Poem 1 (From a Railway Carriage) carefully, then answer Questions 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 18. Read Poem 2 (The Number 12 Bus) carefully, then answer Questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Support every answer with reference to the text, using short quotations where they help. If you need more room for a longer answer, continue on lined paper.

Poems

Poem 1: From a Railway Carriage

Robert Louis Stevenson, 'From a Railway Carriage', from A Child's Garden of Verses (1885). Public domain (Stevenson died in 1894); reproduced as commonly anthologised.

1 Faster than fairies, faster than witches,

2 Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;

3 And charging along like troops in a battle,

4 All through the meadows the horses and cattle:

5 All of the sights of the hill and the plain

6 Fly as thick as driving rain;

7 And ever again, in the wink of an eye,

8 Painted stations whistle by.

9 Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,

10 All by himself and gathering brambles;

11 Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;

12 And there is the green for stringing the daisies!

13 Here is a cart run away in the road

14 Lumping along with man and load;

15 Here is a mill and there is a river:

16 Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

Poem 2: The Number 12 Bus

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Original poem written for Revision Library.

1 The number 12 comes creaking round the bend,

2 its window fogged with everybody's breath,

3 and Priya taps her bus pass twice

4 before the doors sigh closed like tired lungs.

5 We pass the chip shop with its steamed-up glass,

6 the barber's chair still empty at half eight,

7 a dog tied up outside the grocer's door,

8 watching the pavement with patient amber eyes.

9 Kwame behind me counts the stops out loud,

10 one, two, three, though nobody has asked him,

11 and an old man folds his paper into eighths

12 as if the news might weigh less folded small.

13 I used to think the bus was just a box,

14 a tin can rattling down a tin can street,

15 until I noticed how it holds us all,

16 each stop a doorway into someone's life.

17 Sixteen stops from home to school and back,

18 and every one of them I know by heart,

19 not the street names, not the numbers on the signs,

20 but the small, particular lives that live there.

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1 Look at Poem 1, lines 1-8 and lines 9-16.

(a) According to line 5, what two features of the landscape does the poet mention? **(1)**

(b) According to lines 9-10, what is the child doing? **(1)**

(c) Give one adjective from line 8 that describes the stations. **(1)**

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2 In stanza 1 of Poem 2 (lines 1-4), what does Priya do twice before the doors close?

(1)

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3 Give two details from stanza 2 of Poem 2 (lines 5-8) that describe things the bus passes on the street.

(2)

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4 Explain what the poet means by the phrase 'Fly as thick as driving rain' (line 6).

(2)

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5 Find and copy one word from lines 9-12 that means a person who travels around with no fixed home.

(1)

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6 Explain the effect of the phrase 'before the doors sigh closed like tired lungs' (line 4).

(2)

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7 Explain what the simile in lines 11-12 ('as if the news might weigh less folded small') suggests about the old man.

(2)

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8 Look at line 3 of Poem 1: 'And charging along like troops in a battle'.

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

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

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9 Look at line 8 of Poem 1: 'Painted stations whistle by.'

(a) Identify the poetic technique used in the word 'whistle'. **(1)**

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

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10 Look at line 2 of Poem 1: 'Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches'.

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

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

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11 Poem 1 is written in two eight-line stanzas of rhyming couplets, with a fast, galloping rhythm. Explain the effect of this regular rhyme and rhythm.

(3)

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12 Look at stanza 2 of Poem 1 (lines 9-16). Explore how the poet uses list-like structure and rapid images to convey the experience of looking out of a train window.

(4)

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13 What do you think Poem 1 suggests about the experience of travelling quickly and seeing the world go by? Support your ideas with reference to the whole poem.

(6)

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14 'The Number 12 Bus' is written in free verse, without a regular rhyme scheme or fixed rhythm, unlike 'From a Railway Carriage'. Suggest one reason why the poet might have chosen this form for Poem 2.

(3)

15 Compare how the two poets present the experience of travelling and noticing the world around them. Refer to both poems in your answer.

(8)

16 Compare how the two poets use language, form and structure to explore the relationship between speed and what we notice about the world. Refer to both poems in your answer.

(10)

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17 Which poem do you think is more effective in capturing the experience of travelling and noticing the world? Justify your view with one reason from each poem.

(4)

18 How does the mood of Poem 1 change, if at all, between stanza 1 (lines 1-8) and the final lines of stanza 2 (lines 13-16)? Support your answer with reference to the text.

(5)

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Mark scheme · 1.2-2 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry): Practice Set 2: 1-hour Pack

Question 1

(a) the hill and the plain (both needed) **B1**

(a) Answer: The hill and the plain.

(b) clambering and scrambling (and gathering brambles), by himself **B1**

(b) Answer: Clambering and scrambling, and gathering brambles, by himself.

(c) painted **B1**

(c) Answer: Painted.

Question 2

taps her bus pass (twice) **B1**

Answer: She taps her bus pass twice.

Question 3

the chip shop with its steamed-up glass (any one detail) **B1**

the barber's chair, still empty at half eight / a dog tied up outside the grocer's door (any other detail, up to two marks total) **B1**

Answer: Any two of: the chip shop with its steamed-up glass; the barber's chair, still empty at half eight; a dog tied up outside the grocer's door.

Question 4

recognises the comparison between the passing sights and heavy, dense rain (oe) **B1**

explains the effect: suggests the sights are so numerous, fast and overwhelming that the speaker cannot properly take them in, one after another (oe) **B1**

Answer: The sights from the train are compared to thick, driving rain, suggesting they come so quickly and in such numbers that the speaker cannot properly take each one in before the next arrives.

Question 5

tramp **B1**

Answer: Tramp.

Question 6

identifies personification/simile: the doors are compared to tired lungs, given a human, weary quality as they close (oe) **B1**

explains the effect: suggests the bus itself feels worn out or weary, almost like a living creature, establishing a gentle, ordinary tone for the everyday journey (oe) **B1**

Answer: Comparing the closing doors to 'tired lungs' personifies the bus as a weary, breathing creature, giving the ordinary start of the journey a gentle, slightly worn-out feel.

Question 7

identifies that folding the paper small is imagined as physically reducing its weight, suggesting the man wants the news to feel lighter or less overwhelming (oe) **B1**

explains the effect: hints at quiet worry or a need for comfort in the face of difficult news, adding a small, poignant moment to an ordinary bus journey (oe) **B1**

Answer: The simile suggests the old man imagines that folding his newspaper small might make its news feel lighter or less overwhelming, hinting at a quiet, private worry beneath the ordinary routine of his journey.

Question 8

(a) simile **B1**

(a) Answer: Simile.

(b) suggests the train's movement is powerful, forceful or almost aggressive, like an unstoppable army (oe) **B1**

(b) conveys the noise, energy and thrill of speed, as if experienced with excitement by the speaker (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Comparing the train's motion to 'troops in a battle' suggests it is powerful and forceful, almost unstoppable, conveying the noisy, thrilling energy of travelling at speed.

Question 9

(a) onomatopoeia **B1**

(a) Answer: Onomatopoeia.

(b) the word imitates the shrill, brief sound of the train passing a station (oe) **B1**

(b) reinforces the speed of the journey, as if the stations flash by almost too fast to notice, adding to the noisy, exciting sensation of travel (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The word 'whistle' imitates the shrill sound of the train passing, reinforcing how quickly the stations flash by and adding to the noisy excitement of the journey.

Question 10

(a) 'houses' and 'hedges' (repeated 'h' sound), or any other valid pair from the line **B1**

(a) Answer: 'houses' and 'hedges' (the repeated soft 'h' sound).

(b) the repeated soft sound mimics the rushing hiss of wind or air as the train speeds past, or emphasises how similar things blur together too fast to tell apart (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The repeated 'h' sound echoes the rushing hiss of air as the train speeds by, suggesting the different sights blur together too quickly to be told apart.

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Question 11

the tight rhyming couplets and bouncing rhythm mimic the fast, rhythmic clatter and motion of a speeding train (oe) **B1**

the regularity creates a playful, energetic, breathless feel suited to an excited child's-eye view from the window (oe) **B1**

the unbroken rhythm across both stanzas reflects how the train never slows, reinforcing the idea that everything is only glimpsed briefly before it vanishes (oe) **B1**

Answer: The tight rhyming couplets and driving, bouncing rhythm mimic the fast clatter and motion of a speeding train, creating a playful, breathless energy; because the rhythm never slows across either stanza, it also reinforces the poem's idea that everything glimpsed from the window is only ever seen briefly.

Question 12

identifies the repeated 'Here is...' structure (anaphora) used to introduce each new image **B1**

explains that this list-like structure mimics the rapid succession of separate, disconnected sights glimpsed one after another from the train (oe) **B1**

notes the lack of connecting explanation between images, reflecting that there is no time to dwell on any single sight before the next appears (oe) **B1**

links this to the final line 'Each a glimpse and gone for ever!', which summarises the poem's idea that fast travel offers only brief, fragmentary knowledge of the world (oe) **B1**

Answer: The repeated 'Here is...' structure introduces a rapid list of separate, disconnected images, with no explanation linking them, mimicking how the speaker can only glimpse one thing before the next appears; this builds towards the final line, 'Each a glimpse and gone for ever!', which sums up how fast travel offers only brief, fragmentary knowledge of the world.

Question 13

Level 3 Perceptive, well-developed response exploring the poem's ideas about speed and perception, 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 fast travel. **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 poem's rhyme, rhythm and simile ('charging along like troops in a battle') capture the thrill and energy of speed, suggesting travel is exciting and almost magical ('Faster than fairies, faster than witches').
- The list-like 'Here is...' structure in stanza 2 suggests the world is full of countless separate lives and stories (a child, a tramp, a man with a cart) that the traveller notices only for an instant.
- Because each sight is 'a glimpse and gone for ever', the poem suggests that fast travel offers an exciting but incomplete way of experiencing the world: much is seen, but nothing is truly known.
- The poem may also suggest that the excitement and imaginative freedom of speed ('faster than fairies') make up for what is lost by never being able to look closely.

Question 14

the free verse mirrors the slower, conversational, unhurried pace of a bus journey where there is time to notice small detail (oe) **B1**

contrasts with Poem 1's rhyming couplets, which suit its fast, driving, train-like rhythm; the looser form of Poem 2 suits close observation rather than exhilarating speed (oe) **B1**

enjambment across lines (e.g. lines 3-4, 13-14) controls pacing and lets images unfold gradually, creating an intimate, reflective tone (oe) **B1**

Answer: The free verse gives Poem 2 an unhurried, conversational quality suited to noticing small details on a slow bus journey, contrasting with Poem 1's driving rhymed couplets which suit a fast train; enjambment across lines also paces the poem gently, letting each image unfold in its own time.

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 travel in each poem. **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 travel as a way of noticing the world, but at very different speeds and with different results.
- Poem 1 presents a fast, exhilarating train journey where sights blur past almost too quickly to take in, using simile and driving rhythm to convey speed and energy.
- Poem 2 presents a slow, familiar bus journey where the speaker gradually gets to know specific people and details (Priya, Kwame, the old man) 'by heart', using free verse and closely observed, named detail.
- Poem 1 suggests speed brings excitement but only fleeting, incomplete glimpses of the world ('a glimpse and gone for ever'), while Poem 2 suggests slower, repeated travel builds real familiarity ('each stop a doorway into someone's life').
- Both poems end on a moment of realisation about what travel reveals, though the tone differs: Poem 1 is breathless and energetic throughout, while Poem 2 is calm, affectionate and reflective.

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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:

- Language: Poem 1 uses vivid, fast-paced simile ('Faster than fairies, faster than witches'; 'like troops in a battle') to convey exhilarating speed, while Poem 2 uses gentler personification and simile ('sigh closed like tired lungs'; 'as if the news might weigh less folded small') to convey quiet, close attention to ordinary detail.
- Form: Poem 1's tight rhyming couplets and galloping rhythm mimic the relentless, regular clatter of a speeding train; Poem 2's unrhymed free verse, with enjambment across stanzas, mimics the slower, more natural pace of noticing the world from a bus.
- Structure: Poem 1 uses an anaphoric, list-like structure ('Here is...Here is...') in stanza 2 to convey a rapid catalogue of glimpsed, disconnected images; Poem 2 builds cumulatively across five stanzas towards a single reflective realisation in the final stanza ('each stop a doorway into someone's life'), showing understanding built gradually rather than glimpsed instantly.
- Both poems use concrete, specific detail (a cart, a mill, a river; a dog, an old man's newspaper) to ground abstract ideas about perception and travel in sensory, everyday images.
- The contrast in speed becomes a wider comment: fast travel is exciting but leaves things unknown and 'gone for ever'; slow, repeated travel is quieter but builds real, particular knowledge of the world ('not the street names... but the small, particular lives that live there').

Question 17

Level 2 Clear, supported opinion with relevant, accurate reference to both poems and some explanation of how each creates its effect regarding travel and perception. **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 its galloping rhythm and vivid simile ('Faster than fairies, faster than witches') make the reader feel the thrill and speed of the train journey directly.
- Possible view: Poem 2 is more effective because its quiet, closely observed detail (the old man folding his newspaper, Kwame counting the stops) makes the ordinary bus journey feel emotionally real and specific.
- Strong answers weigh the different methods (speed and simile in Poem 1; slow, accumulated detail 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 the tone moves from breathless excitement to a wistful note of transience. **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. 'exciting to sad'), with limited or no textual support. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- Stanza 1 is fast, exhilarating and almost overwhelming in its energy, built through simile and dense imagery ('Fly as thick as driving rain').
- Stanza 2 narrows its focus onto small, individual figures glimpsed briefly through the repeated 'Here is...' structure.
- The final exclamation 'Each a glimpse and gone for ever!' introduces a note of finality and mild wistfulness beneath the poem's playful surface, as the speaker realises these glimpsed scenes can never be revisited.
- The exclamation marks keep an excited, childlike tone throughout, so the mood shifts subtly rather than dramatically, from pure delight to delight tinged with a fleeting sense of loss.

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