



CE.E32 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry) Set 6

ISEB COMMON ENTRANCE CE.E32 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show all your working.

The Kestrel

An original poem written for Revision Library.

- 1 Above the verge where engines roar,
- 2 A kestrel holds its patient place,
- 3 Wings beating fast, yet still, before
- 4 The tarmac's grey and hurried race.
- 5 Its feathers wear the colour of rust,
- 6 Barred dark against the amber breast;
- 7 Its eye can find, through haze and dust,
- 8 A single mouse beneath the crest.
- 9 Below, the lorries thunder past,
- 10 Their drivers locked in private thought;
- 11 Not one looks up to see it cast
- 12 Its shadow where the long grass caught.
- 13 Then, without warning, down it drops,
- 14 A fold of wings, a falling stone;
- 15 The traffic never pauses, stops
- 16 For hunger it has never known.
- 17 It rises, prey held fast and still,
- 18 And melts into the morning sky;
- 19 Tomorrow it will hover until
- 20 The long grass lets a small thing die.

- 1** According to line 1, where is the kestrel hovering?

- ☐ A) above a river
- ☐ B) above the verge where engines roar
- ☐ C) above a farmyard
- ☐ D) above the sea

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2 Find and copy the word in line 2 that shows the kestrel is calm and unhurried.

(Total for Question 2 is 1 mark)

- 3 According to stanza 2, what colour are the kestrel's feathers described as?

- ☐ A) rust
- ☐ B) grey
- ☐ C) black
- ☐ D) white

(Total for Question 3 is 1 mark)

- 4 Give two details from stanza 1 (lines 1 to 4) that show a contrast between the kestrel and the road below it.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

- 5 Give two details from stanza 2 (lines 5 to 8) that describe the kestrel's physical appearance.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

- 6 Explain the effect of the detail that the kestrel's eye can find 'a single mouse beneath the crest' (line 8).

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

7 According to stanza 3, how do the drivers below behave?

- ☐ A) they look up and admire the kestrel
- ☐ B) they are locked in private thought and do not notice it
- ☐ C) they stop their cars to watch
- ☐ D) they wave at the kestrel

(Total for Question 7 is 1 mark)

8 Find and copy the word in line 6 that describes the pattern on the kestrel's breast.

(Total for Question 8 is 1 mark)

9 Explain the effect of the phrase 'the tarmac's grey and hurried race' (line 4).

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Explain the effect of the alliteration in 'a fold of wings, a falling stone' (line 14).

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

11 Explain the effect of the metaphor describing the kestrel's dive as 'a falling stone' (line 14).

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

12 Identify the rhyme scheme of stanza 1 (lines 1 to 4) and give evidence to support your answer.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Explain the effect of the enjambment across lines 11 and 12 ('Not one looks up to see it cast / Its shadow where the long grass caught').

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

- 14** Using evidence from stanza 3, explain in your own words why the drivers fail to notice the kestrel.

(Total for Question 14 is 3 marks)

- 15** Explain the effect of the short, direct sentence that opens stanza 4: 'Then, without warning, down it drops,' (line 13).

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

- 16** Explain what lines 15 and 16 ('The traffic never pauses, stops / For hunger it has never known.') suggest about the difference between the traffic and the kestrel.

(Total for Question 16 is 3 marks)

- 17** What can you infer about the kestrel's character or nature from the poem as a whole? Use evidence from at least two different stanzas.

(Total for Question 17 is 3 marks)

- 18** Explain how the poet uses language and structure across stanzas 3 to 5 (lines 9 to 20) to build and then release tension around the kestrel's hunt. Support your answer with reference to the language and structure the writer uses.

(Total for Question 18 is 6 marks)

- 19** Explain how the poet structures the whole poem to contrast the natural world with the human world of the motorway. Refer to at least two points in the poem in your answer.

(Total for Question 19 is 5 marks)

- 20** In your opinion, how does the poet make the ending of the poem (stanza 5, lines 17 to 20) effective? You should refer to the whole poem in your answer.

(Total for Question 20 is 8 marks)

Mark scheme · CE.E32 Reading and Comprehension (Poetry) Set 6

Question 1

- **B1** B only, cao
- **Answer: B) above the verge where engines roar.**

Question 2

- **B1** patient, cao
- **Answer: Patient.**

Question 3

- **B1** A only, cao
- **Answer: A) rust.**

Question 4

- **B1** the kestrel's wings are 'beating fast, yet still' (line 3), suggesting effort without movement (oe)
- **B1** the road is described as a 'grey and hurried race' (line 4), suggesting constant rushing movement (oe)
- **Answer: The kestrel's wings are 'beating fast, yet still' (line 3), showing effort without moving anywhere; the road below is described as a 'hurried race' (line 4), showing constant, rushing movement.**

Question 5

- **B1** its feathers are 'the colour of rust' (line 5) (oe)
- **B1** it is 'Barred dark against the amber breast' (line 6) (oe, accept any second distinct valid detail)
- **Answer: Its feathers are described as 'the colour of rust' (line 5), and it is 'Barred dark against the amber breast' (line 6).**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies the precision or sharpness of the kestrel's eyesight, spotting one small creature (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. emphasises how astonishingly focused and skilled a hunter the kestrel is, even from a great height (oe)
- **Answer: Picking out 'a single mouse' shows how astonishingly precise and sharp the kestrel's eyesight is, able to spot one small creature from high above. This emphasises what a skilled and focused hunter it is.**

Question 7

- **B1** B only, cao
- **Answer: B) they are locked in private thought and do not notice it.**

Question 8

- **B1** Barred, cao
- **Answer: Barred.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies the personification of the road as if it were rushing like a person (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. emphasises the frantic, mechanical busyness of the human world, contrasting with the kestrel's calm stillness (oe)
- **Answer: Describing the tarmac's 'hurried race' personifies the road as if it were rushing like a person. This emphasises the frantic, mechanical busyness of the human world below, which contrasts sharply with the kestrel's calm stillness.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies the repeated 'f' sound across 'fold' and 'falling' (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. the soft, rushing sound mimics the swift, sudden movement of the dive, emphasising its speed (oe)
- **Answer: The repeated 'f' sound in 'fold' and 'falling' creates a soft, rushing effect that mimics the swift, sudden movement of the kestrel's dive, emphasising just how quickly it strikes.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies the direct comparison of the kestrel to a falling stone (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. suggests sudden weight, speed and inevitability, as though the strike cannot be stopped once it begins (oe)
- **Answer: Comparing the dive to 'a falling stone' suggests sudden weight, speed and inevitability, as though the strike cannot be stopped once it begins, emphasising the kestrel's deadly, unstoppable precision.**

Question 12

- **B1** correctly identifies the pattern as ABAB (oe)
- **B1** gives correct rhyme evidence, e.g. 'roar' (line 1) rhymes with 'before' (line 3), and 'place' (line 2) rhymes with 'race' (line 4)
- **Answer: ABAB - 'roar' (line 1) rhymes with 'before' (line 3); 'place' (line 2) rhymes with 'race' (line 4).**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies that the sentence runs on from line 11 to line 12 without a pause (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. the unbroken flow mirrors the smooth, unnoticed gliding of the kestrel's shadow below (oe)
- **Answer: The sentence runs on from line 11 to line 12 without any pause. This unbroken flow mirrors the smooth, unnoticed way the kestrel's shadow glides across the grass below, unseen by the drivers.**

Question 14

- **B1** the drivers are absorbed in their own private thoughts, rather than looking at their surroundings (oe)
- **B1** the traffic keeps moving quickly and continuously, with no one stopping or pausing to look (oe)
- **B1** the kestrel and its shadow are quiet and easy to overlook against the busy, noisy road (oe)
- **Answer: The drivers are absorbed in their own private thoughts rather than paying attention to their surroundings. The traffic keeps thundering past quickly and continuously, with no one stopping or pausing to look up, and the kestrel and its shadow are quiet and easy to miss against the busy, noisy road.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies the sudden shift in pace compared with the slower, more descriptive stanzas before it (oe)
- **B1** comment on effect, e.g. mirrors the abruptness of the kestrel's strike, creating a moment of surprise for the reader (oe)
- **Answer: The short, direct sentence creates a sudden shift in pace compared with the slower, more descriptive stanzas before it. This mirrors the abruptness of the kestrel's strike, catching the reader off guard just as the mouse is caught unawares.**

Question 16

- **B1** the traffic is mechanical and inanimate, with no biological needs of its own (oe)
- **B1** the kestrel, by contrast, is driven by a genuine, living need to eat, a hunger the traffic could never feel (oe)
- **B1** this highlights how separate and indifferent the human, mechanised world is from the natural world's real needs and struggles (oe)
- **Answer: The traffic is mechanical and lifeless, with no real needs of its own, whereas the kestrel is driven by a genuine, living hunger that the traffic could never feel or understand. This highlights how separate and indifferent the human, mechanised world is from the real needs and struggles of the natural world.**

Question 17

- **B1** valid inference with evidence from one stanza, e.g. patient and controlled - 'holds its patient place' (line 2) or 'Wings beating fast, yet still' (line 3)
- **B1** valid inference with evidence from a different stanza, e.g. sharp-sighted and skilled - 'A single mouse beneath the crest' (line 8)
- **B1** a third, distinct, well-supported inference, e.g. instinctive and unstoppable when hunting - 'a fold of wings, a falling stone' (line 14) (oe)
- **Answer: The kestrel appears patient and controlled (lines 2 and 3), remarkably sharp-sighted and skilled as a hunter (line 8), and instinctive and unstoppable once it begins to hunt (line 14).**

Question 18

- **Level 1** (1-2): Identifies language or details with little or no explanation of their effect; may rely on narrative retelling with minimal reference to the text.
- **Level 2** (3-4): Explains, with some development, how specific words or details (for example the enjambment, the short sentence opening stanza 4, or the alliteration in line 14) build tension, supported by relevant quotation.
- **Level 3** (5-6): Gives a clear, well-developed explanation of how the writer's precise choices of language and structure work together across the three stanzas to build and then release tension, integrating apt quotations fluently and showing secure understanding of the effect on the reader.
- **Indicative content:**
 - the slow, unhurried description of stanza 3, including the enjambment across lines 11 to 12, sets a calm pace before the sudden action to come
 - the short, blunt sentence 'Then, without warning, down it drops,' at the start of stanza 4 abruptly changes the pace, mirroring the suddenness of the strike
 - the alliteration of 'fold of wings, a falling stone' emphasises the speed and inevitability of the dive
 - the contrast between the unaware, continuous traffic ('The traffic never pauses, stops') and the single, decisive action of the kestrel heightens the drama of the moment
 - the final stanza's calm return to hovering ('It rises, prey held fast and still') releases the tension built up in stanza 4, returning the poem to the patient stillness of the opening
 - the closing image of the kestrel continuing 'Tomorrow' suggests the tension will simply build and release again, unnoticed, in an endless cycle

Question 19

- **Level 1** (1): Identifies a single structural feature (for example the opening or the ending) with little explanation.
- **Level 2** (2-3): Explains, with some development, one or two ways the poem is structured to contrast the natural and human worlds, with reference to the text.
- **Level 3** (4-5): Gives a clear, well-supported explanation referring to at least two points across the poem (for example, the opening image, the drivers of stanza 3, and the closing return to hovering), showing secure understanding of how structure shapes the reader's experience.
- **Indicative content:**
 - the opening stanza immediately places the still, patient kestrel directly above the 'hurried race' of the road, establishing the contrast from the very first lines
 - stanza 3 develops this contrast by showing the drivers completely unaware of the kestrel above them, widening the gap between the two worlds
 - the sudden action of stanza 4 briefly interrupts the pattern, yet even this dramatic moment goes entirely unnoticed by the traffic, reinforcing how separate the two worlds remain
 - the final stanza's return to hovering, and the suggestion that this will happen again 'Tomorrow', creates a sense that the kestrel's world persists in an endless, unnoticed cycle alongside the human world
 - the poem never allows the two worlds to properly meet or acknowledge one another, which is itself a structural choice that reinforces the central contrast

Question 20

- **Level 1** (1-2): Simple or surface-level response with little reference to the poem; limited personal engagement with the question.
- **Level 2** (3-4): Some relevant explanation with limited textual reference; makes a straightforward personal comment on why the ending is, or is not, effective.
- **Level 3** (5-6): Clear, developed response with relevant textual reference and some apt quotation; explains effectively how particular techniques (for example the return to stillness, or the final image of the grass) contribute to an effective ending.
- **Level 4** (7-8): Perceptive, well-evaluated response with sustained and precise reference to the poem as a whole; explores subtlety in the writer's choices (for example the ambiguity of the final line, or the shift from a single moment to an implied endless cycle) and their effect on the reader.
- **Indicative content:**
 - the return to stillness in 'prey held fast and still' echoes the patient stillness of the opening stanza, creating a satisfying circular structure
 - the verb 'melts' in 'melts into the morning sky' suggests the kestrel disappears smoothly and effortlessly, restoring the calm, controlled tone of the beginning
 - the shift to 'Tomorrow' in the final two lines widens the poem from a single moment into an implied endless cycle, suggesting this hunt will simply repeat, unnoticed, again and again
 - the final phrase 'lets a small thing die' is deliberately understated rather than dramatic, which arguably makes the poem's exploration of nature's quiet cruelty feel more truthful and unsettling
 - candidates may reasonably disagree about how unsettling or how peaceful this ending feels, or about whether the vague phrase 'a small thing' adds distance or tenderness; credit any well-supported, thoughtful personal response, whether positive or qualified