

General tips:

- Visualise the scene when reading
- Annotate the text (summarise each paragraph, write meanings of figurative language)
- Before reading the passage, look through the questions and identify question types
- Remember to read the sentence that tells you the general context of the story

Comprehension B question types:

(a) Direct

- Avoid lifting (only relevant details)

(b) Answer in your own words

- Answer like a direct question
- Paraphrase verbs or adjectives (avoid paraphrasing nouns)

Healthy oceans are essential to life on earth as they are at the heart of the water cycle. The thousands of cubic kilometres of water which evaporate from the oceans every year fall as rain and snow over land, ensuring our survival by replenishing our reservoirs and supporting our agriculture. However, these oceans also provide for life on earth in a more direct way, in the harvesting of fish and other sea creatures for food.

Apart from 'replenishing our reservoirs', in what way is water necessary for our survival? Answer in your own words. [2]

Answer:

Water is essential for the growth of crops.

("oceans provide fish for us to eat" -> excess denied)

(c) Inference

- Use context clues to make deductions
- Answers cannot be gained directly or lifted from the passage
- Don't overthink

Before me were two giraffes under a dangling crane that had just unloaded them like a case of tyres. [1]

What does this suggest about how the giraffes were treated?

Answer:

The giraffes were treated carelessly.

Whenever I locked eyes with an animal, I sensed something more genuine than I ever felt from the people I knew; what I saw in the giraffe's eyes awoke my concern. I pushed in closer, expecting the dock workers would shove me back to where I belonged.

Why did the writer expect the dock workers to shove him back? [1]

Answer:

The writer expected the dock workers to shove him back as he was not a dock worker.

(d) Evidence and explanation

- Find evidence from the text (can be figurative or literal) that answers the question
- Paraphrase the evidence into literal English to convey the meaning clearly
- Explain with context

Suddenly, there was the momentary gleam of light, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and metal. Someone in the next room had lit a dark lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement and then, all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour, I sat with straining ears. Then, suddenly, another sound became audible — a very gentle, hissing sound, like that of a small jet stream escaping continuously from a kettle. The instant we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match and lashed furiously with his cane, like a madman.

The writer describes the nervous anticipation while waiting for the criminal. Explain how the language used suggests that they were tense and nervous. Support your ideas with three details from the paragraph. [3]

“Quote” suggests that [explanation with context]

Answer:

“sat with straining ears” suggests that they were listening intently for any sign of movement.  
“sprang from the bed” suggests that Holmes was on tenterhooks as soon as he heard a sound.  
“lashed furiously... like a madman” suggests that Holmes was trying to recklessly protect himself from unknown danger.

‘We’ve got to get her on her feet or she’s done,’ The zoo doctor said, alarmingly, to the Old Man by way of hello. Two dock workers with crowbars started yanking at the crushed crate around the tangled giraffe — not fast enough for me or the Old Man, who started pulling away smashed panels himself. The straps around the giraffe went taut, groaning as the crane heaved her upwards, the workers plunging their hands in to steady her.

At the end of the paragraph, the dock workers are trying to get the female giraffe to her feet. Explain how the language used in this paragraph emphasises how difficult the task was. Support your ideas with two details from the paragraph. [2]

Answer:

“Two dock workers with crowbars started yanking at the crushed crate” suggests that it required a lot of strength and energy to extract the giraffe from its destroyed confinement.

“the workers plunging their hands in to steady her” suggests that the worker had to react quickly in order to prevent the giraffe from falling.

(e) Language for impact

(i) Tone and attitude

Positive tone:

- Hopeful
- Encouraging

Negative tone:

- Disapproving
- Mocking
- Sarcastic (!! most common)
- Disrespectful
- Detached

Positive/ neutral attitudes:

- Optimistic
- Tolerant

Negative attitudes:

- Disapproves of
- Pessimistic
- Sceptical

In the end, a visit to the wilderness, might be one that is done with thousands of others, led by park rangers armed with a thick book of dos and don'ts, barking instructions at everyone! [1]

Answer:

The writer has a mocking/ sarcastic tone.

(ii) Irony/ Contrast/ Unusual/ Paradox

- Expected outcome vs Actual outcome
- Use connectors that show contrast (but, however, yet)
- Don't lift — Explain

‘My friend lashed at it savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale and filled with horror.’ Explain the contrast between the sentences. [2]

Answer:

In the first sentence, he reacted in a ruthless manner and without hesitation, but in the second sentence, he was (extremely) fearful.

Outsiders might consider it incongruous that “a country with limited free speech could foster such creative cuisine.” Explain the paradox that exists in the above statement. [2]

Answer:

It is paradoxical that Singapore, a nation with limited free speech and thus, may appear to restrict creativity, would feature so much inventiveness in the form of its cuisine.

(iii) Literary devices

- Interpret the device
- Look out for common traits

Common devices:

- metaphors
- similes
- personification

My joints creak and my bones are reminiscent of gates swinging on rusty hinges. The hair on my head vacated their premises long ago and my eyesight and hearing are approaching their retirement. It seems my mind has had enough of me for one lifetime. The sunrise is obscured by wisps of silver clouds, the world still half asleep. I look around my home for one last time and notice a pile of leaflets on the floor, though I cannot remember how they got there.

Explain in what way is the writer's joints and bones reminiscent of gates swinging on rusty hinges. [1]

Format: Just like... likewise...

Answer:

Just like how gates on rusty hinges do not swing smoothly and properly, likewise the writer's joints and bones are not working as well as they used to be as the writer is old.

(iv) Effectiveness

- Identify key words
- Think of associated meanings
- Explain how it contributes to the given effect
- Don't lift
- Don't use the same words in the passage/ question

My father was illiterate and he endured pain throughout his life because his hands never learnt to write. This started in first grade, where the remedy for a wrong answer was ten ruler strokes across a stretched palm.

What is unusual and effective about the use of the word 'remedy'? [2]

Answer:

The word 'remedy' is unusual because it refers to a solution, but here, remedy refers to a physical punishment for not knowing the answer.

(v) Writer's craft

Possible tools

- ellipses "... " (suspense)
- long dashes — (additional info, suspense)
- short sentences (emphasis, tension, impact)

Back then, nobody knew much about giraffes; I'd only seen pictures. Staring at the downed one, I was sure this was a real-life dead giraffe... until it opened its brown-apple eye to gaze up at me.

What is the effect of the pause shown by the three dots? Explain how it adds to the situation. [2]

Answer:

The ellipses adds suspense and emphasises the unexpected nature of the giraffe's movement, making the moment more impactful for the reader.

Credits: The Academic Workshop, SACSS and ChatGPT