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Reading non-fiction texts

What will the Reading paper look like?

In the Reading paper you will have to read two examples of non-literary texts on a common theme. These could be an advert, a factsheet, a newspaper or magazine article, a page from the Internet, a leaflet or an essay (e.g. travel writing).

Each year the exam includes different texts in different combinations, so you cannot predict what will be used. Also, it is highly unlikely that you will have read the material before.

What will the questions be like?

The questions fall into different, but quite predictable, categories. The trick is to recognise the type of question and what it requires. You need to prepare yourself by practising the types of questions you are likely to be asked, and you should use a range of different kinds of material. For example, a leaflet is different from an essay, and you need to be confident about how to approach the various kinds of material. This section of the book is designed to help you to do exactly that.

The wording of the questions varies from year to year and you cannot be certain which questions will appear. However, only six basic types of question are asked in this exam. Examples of these appear on page 9. If you practise answering them, you should be well prepared and able to face the exam with confidence.

What should I do?

You have one hour to complete this paper, so there is no time to waste. First, you could read the two texts. This will take some time, so alternatively, you could just read the text you need to answer the opening one or two questions. You then only need to read the second text when you reach the question(s) on that text. Only the last question will require you to consider both texts.

How will I be assessed?

The examiner will assess your answers against the assessment criteria outlined on page 5.



Reading paper sample question types

Below are some examples of the types of question you could be asked in the Reading paper. These will help you understand what you are preparing for as you work through this section of the book.

1 Locating and retrieving information

- List reasons or details/Make a list of...
- According to this text or writer, how or what or why...?
- What evidence does the writer use...?
- Explain how and/or why...

2 Impressions

- What impressions do you get of the writer?
- What impressions do you get of an organisation or people?
- What impressions do you get of a place?

3 Viewpoint and attitude

- What are the writer's attitudes to...?
- What are the writer's opinions of...?
- What are the writer's thoughts and feelings about...?

4 Intended audience

- Who is this text aimed at?

5 Analysis of persuasive techniques

- How does the writer try to encourage/interest/argue?
- How does this text try to persuade/sell/influence/show?

6 Comparison of texts

- Compare and contrast these texts.
- Using information from both texts, explain why...



My learning objectives ▼

- to select relevant details from a passage
- to present details clearly using a list or prose.

'List or find' questions

Questions that ask you to locate and retrieve information do not always appear on the Higher Tier paper, but if they do, they are usually opportunities to gain marks quickly, provided you read the passage carefully and closely.

GradeStudio



Examiner tips

- If you are asked to 'make a list' or 'list...' then you should do exactly that.
- If you are asked for ten points (or the question has 10 marks), include eleven or twelve if you can: you may have got something wrong or made the same point twice, but an extra point or two gives you a safety net.

How to tackle a 'List or find' question

When you are asked a '**List or find**' question, you need to:

- ▶ work your way through the passage in a methodical way
- ▶ look carefully for the relevant points and underline or highlight them as you go.

This will make sure that the material is clear for you to use when you have to write your answer, and you may not need to read it again.

Use the above method when you answer the following sample questions from the exam.

- 1 The first question requires a response in a list.

Read the extract opposite by Bill Bryson.
The question on this extract is:

List ten examples from this passage which show that Bill Bryson thinks Americans have a 'ridiculous' attitude towards walking. (10 marks)

- 2 Now look at the following question which asks for the same information in a different form:

What examples does Bill Bryson use to show that he thinks Americans have a 'ridiculous' attitude towards walking? (10 marks)

Notice that the second question does not say that you can use bullets or numbered points: this time you should write a paragraph using continuous prose. It would be unwise to use numbered or bullet points unless you are told that you can.

- 3 Compare your responses with those in GradeStudio on pages 12–13. Which grade is your answer closest to? How can you improve?

Activity 1



Now here's a thought to consider. Every twenty minutes on the Appalachian Trail, Katz and I walked further than the average American walks in a week. For 93 per cent of all trips outside the home, for whatever distance or whatever purpose, Americans now get in a car. That's ridiculous.

5 When we moved to the States one of the things we wanted was to live in a town, where we could walk to the shops and post office and library. We found such a place in Hanover, New Hampshire. It's a small, pleasant college town, with big green, leafy residential streets, an old-fashioned main street. Nearly everyone in town is within an easy level walk of the centre, and yet almost no-one walks anywhere, ever,
10 for anything. I have a neighbour who drives 800 yards to work. I know another – a perfectly fit woman – who will drive 100 yards to pick up her child from a friend's house. When school lets out here, virtually every child gets picked up and driven from a few hundred yards to three-quarters of a mile home. (Those who live further away get a bus.) Most of the children sixteen years or older have their own
15 cars. That's ridiculous too. On average the total walking of an American these days – that's walking of all types – adds up to 1.4 miles a week, barely 350 yards a day.

At least in Hanover we can walk. In many places in America now, it is not actually possible to be a pedestrian, even if you want to be. I had this brought home to me in Waynesboro [...] when I left Katz at a launderette [...] and set off to find some
20 insect repellent for us. [...]

Waynesboro had a vaguely pleasant central business district but, as so often these days, most retail businesses have moved out of town leaving little but a sprinkling of dusty second hand shops in what was presumably once a thriving downtown.

Lots of shops were dark and bare, and there was nowhere I could find to get
25 insect repellent, but a man outside the post office suggested I try K-mart.

'Where's your car?' he said, preparatory to giving directions.

'I don't have a car.'

That stopped him. 'Really? It's over a mile, I'm afraid.'

'That's OK.'

30 He gave his head a little dubious shake, as if disowning responsibility for what he was about to tell me. 'Well, then what you want to do is go up Broad Street, take a right at the Burger King and keep on going. But, you know, when I think about it, it's *well* over a mile – maybe a mile and a half, mile and three quarters. You walking back as well?'

35 'Yeah.'

Another shake. 'Long way.'

'I'll take emergency provisions.'

If he realised this was a joke he didn't show it.

'Well, good luck to you,' he said.

Here is a student response to the first exam activity about the passage by Bill Bryson on page 11. Read the answer together with the examiner comment, then check what you have learnt and try putting it into practice.

List ten examples from this passage which show that Bill Bryson thinks Americans have a 'ridiculous' attitude towards walking. (10 marks)

A* grade answer

Question 1

- 1 Bryson and Katz walked further every 20 minutes on the Appalachian trail than the average American walks in a week.
- 2 Americans use the car for 93% of all trips, whatever the distance.
- 3 In Hanover, walking is easy but no-one walks anywhere for anything.
- 4 Bryson's neighbour drives 800 yards to work.
- 5 A perfectly fit woman will sometimes drive 100 yards to pick up her child.
- 6 The fact that she is 'fit' emphasises how lazy Americans are.
- 7 Virtually every child is picked up from school by car.
- 8 Most children aged sixteen and over have their own cars.
- 9 The average American walks only 1.4 miles a week (350 yards a day).
- 10 In many places it is not possible to be a pedestrian.
- 11 A man seems shocked at the idea of walking a mile.
- 12 He takes the joke about 'emergency provisions' seriously.
- 13 He wishes Bryson 'good luck' as if he is setting out on a trek.

Examiner comment

This answer includes more points than are strictly necessary. It is thorough and each point is clear. The answer is methodical and precise and it is obvious that the student has worked through the passage in a logical sequence, looking for all of the relevant details. For example, notice how this answer makes the point about how 'most children aged sixteen and over have their own cars'. There is no uncertainty there. The focus on the question is sharp and this would gain full marks. This answer would be awarded grade A*.

Here is another student response to the passage by Bill Bryson on page 11. The answer is in continuous prose because the exam activity below does not say you can use bullets or numbered points. Read the answer and the examiner comments.

What examples does Bill Bryson use to show that he thinks Americans have a 'ridiculous' attitude towards walking? (10 marks)

C grade answer

Question 2

He says that for 93% of all trips Americans use the car ✓. 'That's ridiculous' which obviously shows he thinks it unnecessary. Also he says it is ridiculous that most of the children have their own cars. He suggests more subtly that their attitude is ridiculous when describing a 'perfectly fit woman' who sometimes will drive a mere 100 yards ✓. Most people can see this is no distance at all and because she is described as 'fit' it emphasises how lazy some Americans are when it comes to walking ✓ and how ridiculous it is. He also does this when describing his conversation with the man who seemed shocked he would walk over a mile ✓ and he presumed Bill Bryson would have a car ✓. Bryson finds it ridiculous that Americans will do anything to avoid walking.

Examiner comment

This answer makes several valid points and it is coherent. However, it does not explore the text in enough detail and too many points are missed. The answer has some quality, but it is not thorough and does not work through the passage line by line. It is a reasonable answer, but really this is a missed opportunity. This answer would be awarded grade C.



'List' questions: how to go up the grades

To move up the grades you need to keep the question clearly in your mind (in this question you were looking for examples of 'ridiculous' attitudes to walking) and you need to be thorough (in this question you needed to find at least ten examples). Student 1 packed in more than enough points. There is no virtue in length for its own sake, but you do need to be thorough and make sure that in a question such as this you mention at least ten points. So, work methodically through the passage, looking for every relevant point. Notice how Student 1's answer uses quotation in short pieces and weaves it into the answer. This is a good technique.

Putting it into practice

On your own or with a partner, explain what you now know about:

- finding relevant points in a text
- supporting your points by reference to the text's details.

In the future

- You can practise this skill with several of the texts you come across.
- Give yourself 10–15 minutes to practise this skill.

My learning objectives ▼

- to practise selecting relevant details
- to develop a secure approach to 'List or find' questions.

Exam practice and assessment

'List or find' questions ask you to find relevant material and present it in a particular way. Now it is your turn to practise a 'List or find' question.

GradeStudio



Examiner tips

- Be methodical, relevant and thorough.
- Remember that bullet points should make sense.

Activity 1

Read the extract and answer the question below. The extract is taken from a factsheet produced by CAPS (The Captive Animals' Protection Society).

List the criticisms which CAPS makes of zoos. (10 marks)

Sad Eyes & Empty Lives



In the wild, animals react to their surroundings, avoiding predators, seeking food and interacting with others of their species – doing what they have evolved for. Consequently, even what might seem 'larger' or 'better' enclosures may be [...] impoverished in terms of the animals' real needs.

- 5 Frustration and boredom are commonplace amongst animals in zoos and can lead to obsessive and repetitive behaviours in the form of pacing, swaying, and even self-mutilation. This is known as stereotypic behaviour and such pointless, repetitive movements have also been noted in people with mental illnesses. With nothing to do, animals in zoos go out of their minds. Disturbed maternal behaviour may involve over-
- 10 grooming and the rejection or killing of young. [...]

Even diets are unnatural, with zebras in zoos becoming overweight as the grass they are given is higher in calories than the grasses of the African savannah. The resulting obesity can affect fertility. [...]

- Some animals suffer such serious behavioural problems in zoos that they are given
- 15 anti-depressants, tranquillisers and anti-psychotic drugs to control their behaviour.

Zoos often refer to the animals they confine as being 'ambassadors' of their species, but just what message does it give when we see animals in such unnatural conditions, displaying disturbed behaviours?

From *The Captive Animals' Protection Society*

Activity 2

Read the extract and answer the question below.

According to this article, what actions has Carmen Glatt taken to show her concern about pollution and the environment?
(10 marks)

The day of the Eco-Pests

By Paul Vallely

Adults are unwise to try drinking water from the tap while Carmen Glatt is around. Carmen is only eleven but nobody could question her clarity of vision or her determination. She is very aware that all the water we drink is recycled, says her mum, and she is convinced that anything which comes out of a tap must be polluted in some way. She conscientiously changes the family's water filter every week.

10 'If someone gets a drink of water from the tap she says "No, No, No" and throws it away and gets some from the filter. She washes all salad and fruit with filtered water,' says her mother. As a nutritionist, Mrs Glatt is no slouch on health matters but she admits she is no match for her daughter [...]

15 And it is not just the water. There is air pollution too. 'She even bought a breathing filter for her father for when he cycles to the office,' says Mrs Glatt, clearly both simultaneously overwhelmed and impressed by her daughter's tenacity. 'And he has to buy unleaded petrol,' she adds.

20 When it comes to shopping Carmen accompanies her mother to the supermarket to supervise the family purchases. 'She reads the packages of everything and watches out for certain chemicals or artificial sweeteners. She won't have certain kinds of apples because she says they taste of chemicals.'

The Daily Telegraph



Peer/Self-assessment

- 1 Check your answers to Activities 1 and 2.
 - Did you find enough clear points?
 - Did you present and organise your answer in the appropriate way?
- 2 Now try to grade your answer to Activities 1 and 2 by applying what you learnt in GradeStudio. You will need to be careful and precise in your marking.

Tick each clearly made, supported point. For a question like this, the total number of ticks will produce, or strongly influence, the final mark.



Moving up the grades

A* 9/10 ticks

A 8 ticks

B 7 ticks

C 5/6 ticks

D 4 ticks

GradeStudio

Examiner tips

- Remember that this question is not asking for a list of bullet points and the answer should be in continuous prose.
- Be methodical and thorough and make every sentence of your answer count.



My learning objectives ▼

- to select relevant evidence from a passage
- to organise the evidence into a coherent response.

'Evidence' questions

If you are asked to find evidence, it is important that you work your way through the passage in a methodical way. All passages – Internet articles, leaflets, newspaper articles and so on – have been carefully chosen and edited, so always study the relevant lines in detail. It is likely that almost every sentence is making a point or saying something that is worth including in the answer.

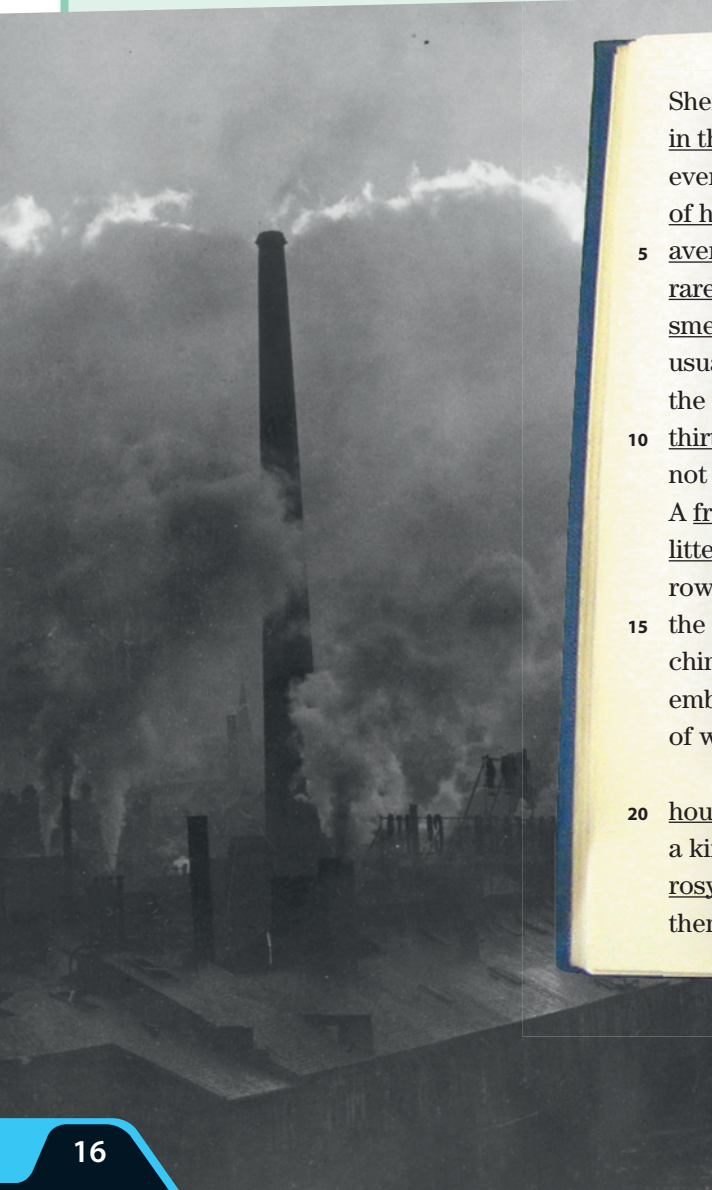
Activity 1

Read the exam question below and the passage that follows it.

What evidence does Orwell use to suggest that Sheffield was a dreadful place? (10 marks)

The key pieces of evidence in the text have been underlined to show you how to work on a passage and make a good selection of relevant details.

- 1 Use the text to produce an answer and practise integrating short pieces of text into your response.
The passage below was written by George Orwell in 1937 after he visited the industrial north of England.



Sheffield, I suppose, could justly claim to be called the ugliest town in the Old World: its inhabitants, who want it to be pre-eminent in everything, very likely do make that claim for it. It has a population of half a million and it contains fewer decent buildings than the
5 average East Anglian village of five hundred. And the stench! If at rare moments you stop smelling sulphur it is because you have begun smelling gas. Even the shallow river that runs through the town is usually bright yellow with some chemical or other. Once I halted in the street and counted the factory chimneys I could see; there were
10 thirty-three of them, but there would have been far more if the air had not been obscured by smoke. One scene especially lingers in my mind. A frightful patch of waste ground [...] trampled bare of grass and littered with newspapers and old saucepans. To the right an isolated row of gaunt four-roomed houses, dark red, blackened by smoke. To
15 the left an interminable vista of factory chimneys, chimney beyond chimney, fading away into a dim blackish haze. Behind me a railway embankment made of the slag from furnaces. In front, across the patch of waste ground, a [...] building of red and yellow brick [...].

At night, when you cannot see the hideous shapes of the
20 houses and the blackness of everything, a town like Sheffield assumes a kind of sinister magnificence. Sometimes the drifts of smoke are rosy with sulphur, and serrated flames, like circular saws, squeeze themselves out [...] of the foundry chimneys.

From *The Road to Wigan Pier* by George Orwell

Activity 2

- 1 Now try the question below about the following extract.
What evidence does John Ingham use to show the scale of the problem of litter and waste? (10 marks)
- 2 Compare your responses with those in GradeStudio on pages 18–19.
 Which grade is your answer closest to? How can you improve?

Daily Express

Rubbish attitudes laying waste to our landscapes

From the hedgerows of Cornwall to the country lanes of Cumbria, our green and pleasant land is under threat – not from alien species threatening to devour
 5 our native flora and fauna but from a mountain of waste.

Wherever you look, our beautiful landscape is defaced by rusting fridges, plastic bags, clapped-out cars, fast-food
 10 litter, old prams, tyres [...].

The plague of illegal dumping has become so bad in my corner of rural Surrey, we find ourselves ringing the council to get rubbish removed on an ever-increasing
 15 basis. According to Keep Britain Tidy, it costs local authorities more than £400 million to clean up litter each year.

We live in a consumerist, throwaway society in which it seems to be the norm
 20 to get rid of cars, furniture and electrical

appliances within a couple of years of buying them. Is your two-year-old computer a bit slower than the new ones on the market? Dump it. Is your mobile
 25 phone clumpy and old-fashioned? Dump it, along with the other 90 million cluttering up the country. Get a trendy one.

And everything we buy, from chocolate to computers, comes swaddled in layers of paper, plastic and cardboard which could
 30 be recycled but is more likely simply to be chucked out.

Each year, homes and businesses throw away 100 million tons of rubbish – enough to fill Trafalgar Square to the top
 35 of Nelson's Column every day. Some of it is dealt with sensibly and responsibly. Increasingly, though, it is simply dumped in our streets, on our verges and in our fields.
 40



Here are three student responses to the exam question below about the article by John Ingham on page 17. Read the answers together with the examiner comments, then check what you have learnt and try putting it into practice.

What evidence does John Ingham use to show the scale of the problem of litter and waste? (10 marks)

E grade answer

Student 1

In the newspaper article there is a lot of evidence used to show the size of the problems of litter and waste in Britain.

The writer refers to lots of big companies in the text, for example, 'According to Keep Britain Tidy, it costs local authorities more than £400 million to clean up litter each year'. ✓

The numbers used could shock the reader and hopefully make them think twice before throwing a piece of litter on the floor.

Big numbers and statistics are used quite a lot in this text, the writer talks of dumping your mobile phone 'along with the other 90 million cluttering up the country' ✓ and how each year '100 million tons of rubbish are thrown away.' ✓

Examiner comment

Student 1's answer is short and, although it begins by claiming there is 'lots of evidence' to show the size of the problem of litter and waste, it does not actually find much at all. The claim that the text refers to 'lots of big companies' is a complete mystery, and 'Keep Britain Tidy' is not a company. However, the answer does mention the cost of cleaning up the litter. The next paragraph does not answer the question and drifts into the effect of the text on the reader. The final paragraph is better and picks up two more relevant pieces of evidence, but there are only three in total and that means a maximum grade of E.

B grade answer

Student 2

John Ingham uses this evidence to show the size of the problems of litter and waste in Britain. He says that it costs 'more than £400 million to clean up litter each year'. ✓

Homes and businesses throw away '100 million tons of rubbish' ✓ which is enough to 'fill Trafalgar Square up to the top of Nelson's Column'. ✓ He tells us 'increasingly, rubbish is simply dumped in our streets, verges and in fields' ✓ and he suggests that rubbish is 'everywhere' from 'Cornwall to Cumbria'. ✓ He calls it a 'mountain of waste' ✓ that defaces our beautiful landscape. He says that '90 million mobile phones' ✓ clutter up our countryside.

Examiner comment

Student 2's answer is not long but the focus on the question is good and this is a sound answer. Several valid points are made but some are missed, which could be a result of a rather disorganised approach.

The answer does not track the text in a logical sequence and there is always a risk that points will be missed if you dart here and there. There is nothing wrong in this answer, but it is not thorough or efficient enough in gathering the evidence to gain the highest marks. It would get grade B.

A* grade answer

Student 3

John Ingham suggests this problem is nationwide from Cornwall to Cumbria ✓ and the waste is 'a mountain', suggesting its large scale. ✓ He claims that rubbish is everywhere. It is 'wherever you look'. ✓ He then lists the items that litter the 'beautiful' countryside such as 'rusting fridges, plastic bags and old prams' ✓ and uses the word 'plague' to suggest that litter is spreading like an infectious disease. ✓ He uses personal experience (calling the council every week) ✓ and the shocking statistic of £400 million just to clean up the litter. ✓

He describes Britain as 'consumerist and throwaway', a place where it is 'normal' to get rid of items before they are really useless. ✓ 90 million 'dumped' phones is a staggering statistic ✓ and he draws attention to all the packaging on consumer items. This packaging, he claims, is likely to be 'chucked', not recycled. ✓ 100 million tons of rubbish thrown away each year by homes and businesses is another dramatic statistic, ✓ and the reference to filling Trafalgar Square to the top of Nelson's Column is a dramatic illustration of the scale of the problem. ✓ He ends by insisting that there is increasing dumping on verges, streets and fields. ✓

Examiner summary

This answer is totally focused on the question and it finds the evidence in a clear and thorough way. It is easy to follow and it has fluency and coherence. Working methodically through the text seems to ensure comprehensive coverage and misses nothing. You might notice that some explanation is offered where it is considered necessary, but the focus on the question is never lost. The key skill is to select enough relevant material from the text. This answer would gain full marks and reach a grade A*.



'Evidence' questions: how to go up the grades

To move up the grades you should begin by working your way through the text carefully but quickly, using a pen or a highlighter to mark the relevant points.

Keep the question firmly in mind and don't get distracted in the way that Student 1's answer does. Sometimes a little explanation is sensible, but you do not have time to get bogged down in making one point at great length. Keep a sense of momentum: you only have limited time so you must keep moving through the text. Practise weaving the text fluently into your writing and keep the quotations short. Stay in a logical sequence to avoid the disorganised approach which undermined Student 2's answer. Make sure that you have covered the specified section of the text and found as much relevant material as possible.

Putting it into practice

On your own or with a partner, explain what you now know about:

- finding evidence in a text
- using the text in your answer
- organising your answer
- including any necessary explanation
- what makes the difference between a grade B answer and a grade A* answer.

In the future

- Make sure that you practise this type of question with several texts.
- Get used to marking the text quickly and using what you have found.
- Practise the technique of weaving the text into your answer.
- Work towards producing a complete answer in 10–15 minutes.

- to practise selecting relevant evidence
- to develop a secure approach to this type of question.

When answering 'Evidence' questions, you need to work methodically through the text, underline (or highlight) the relevant points and use them neatly in your answer. Now it is your turn to practise this type of question.

Activity 1

Read the extract and answer the question below.

What evidence do CAPS and the RSPCA use to show that marine animals are badly treated in aquariums? (10 marks)

CAMPAIGNERS REVEAL ILL-TREATMENT OF CAPTIVE MARINE CREATURES

By **SEVERIN CARRELL**

Thousands of fish and animals in Britain's aquariums are suffering sickness, distress and physical abuse, a damning report by animal rights campaigners has revealed.

5 The investigation found that dozens of aquariums keep animals such as rays, sharks, puffer fish, crabs and squid that are scarred and deformed, behave abnormally, or are routinely mishandled
10 by staff and visitors.

Video footage released by the Captive Animals' Protection Society (CAPS) [...] shows a starfish which had lost a limb
15 through being manhandled, children throwing diseased crabs into pools, sharks being held out of their pools to be touched, and staff forcing rays to swim out of the water to feed. Rays and sharks
20 in more than 20 aquariums showed abnormal behaviour such as 'surface breaking', where they poke their heads above the water, often because they are 'trained' to feed that way.





Peer/Self-assessment

- 1 Check your answers to Activity 1.
 - Did you find enough clear points?
 - Did you present and organise your answer in the appropriate way?
- 2 Now try to grade your answer to Activity 1 by applying what you learnt in GradeStudio. You will need to be careful and precise in your marking.

You should tick each clearly made and supported point and for a question like this the total number of ticks will produce, or strongly influence, the final mark.



Moving up the grades

A* 9/10 ticks

A 8 ticks

B 7 ticks

C 5/6 ticks

D 4 ticks

THE INDEPENDENT

The society also claims that few aquariums 25
are involved in genuine marine conservation
work, challenging a key marketing claim by
most of the businesses involved. CAPS alleges
that more than 80% of aquarium animals are
caught in the wild and are very rarely used 30
in breeding programmes to save endangered
species.

The allegations [...] are a serious blow to
the reputation of Britain's aquariums, which
are key attractions in many seaside towns. 35
They now attract millions of visitors each
year, and the number of aquariums has leapt
from one in the late 1970s to an estimated
55 today.

The CAPS findings [...] have been backed by 40
the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty
to Animals. Its marine scientific officer, Laila
Sadler [...] said tens of thousands of fish die in
British aquariums each year while thousands
die in transit to them. RSPCA experts, she said, 45
'very frequently' see malnourished and ill fish
at aquariums. Claims that aquariums actively
support marine conservation programmes are
a 'convenient veneer', she added. 'There is a
disposable attitude to these animals [...] we're 50
losing tens of thousands of fish every year in
Britain. The costs to these animals are never,
never exposed in these places.' [...]

The CAPS allegations are likely to shock
many of Britain's marine conservation 55
groups.



My learning objectives ▼

- to learn how to approach 'Explain' questions
- to practise explaining a writer's ideas and perspectives.

'Explain' questions

'Explain' questions require the skill of selecting relevant information, but in Higher Tier more is required than 'search and find'.

- ▶ There is usually a need to provide some explanation to give the answer clarity and coherence.
- ▶ There are often opportunities for inference and overview and the best answers combine those skills with a good selection of supporting detail from the text.

GradeStudio

Examiner tips

Remember for 'Explain' questions:

- Stay in sequence and follow the argument logically.
- Highlight the key points in the text.
- Use short quotations from the text.
- Sometimes you can use two or three pieces of evidence to support one inference.
- Be prepared to develop some of the points from the text.
- Try to use your own words occasionally, but precisely, to show you have understood the main arguments.



Inference skills

What you have to do in this type of question is to show that you have read and understood what a text is saying. There are several levels of understanding in most texts and you need to show that you have grasped the surface meaning but also that you can read between the lines and see the deeper ideas which are implied by what is said. This is called inference and it is a key skill in moving you up the grades.

To detect inference you will probably have to follow an argument. This means that you must stay in sequence to see the direction the writer is taking. You need to use your vocabulary precisely to show that you have understood what you have read and then provide as much textual support as you can in the time available.

Read the brief extract below. It is the opening of an article about Ben Fogle, a television presenter, and James Cracknell, an Olympic gold medallist in rowing. In 2005 they had competed in a race to row across the Atlantic Ocean.

The exam question was as follows:

Explain how women react to Fogle and Cracknell, according to this extract. (10)

Glossary

ardour enthusiasm

Heart-throbs of the High Seas

BY EMMA COWING

‘What lovely boys!’ exclaims a woman in a tweed suit, eyes riveted to a desk on the far side of the main foyer of the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. Another woman totters past on the arm of her teenage son, pouting grumpily. ‘Never mind, Mum,’ he consoles her, ‘maybe you’ll get a kiss next time.’ In the corner, a small gaggle of excited female staff has assembled, just to gaze. The subjects of all this **ardour** are sitting behind a large table signing books, oblivious to the commotion they might be causing. Or maybe they’re just used to it. Because when Ben Fogle and James Cracknell walk into a room [...], ladies swoon. When they appeared on stage earlier to discuss their recent adventure, you could almost hear the rustle as 400 women simultaneously started rooting in their bags for lipstick.

THE SCOTSMAN

Activity 1

- 1 Use a table like the one below to assemble your answer to the exam question. You need to do two things:

- find key quotations from the text that show how the women react (evidence)
- for each quotation, say what point is being made (inferences).

There are three main points to make here, but you should be able to find at least seven pieces of evidence to support your answer. The table has been started for you.

Evidence	Inferences
1 A woman calls them 'lovely boys'	Women are attracted to them
2 Her eyes are 'riveted' to them	
3 A woman is disappointed and 'grumpy' when she does not get a kiss	

When you have completed your table, pull together the evidence and inferences you have made and show that you understand the main points by using some of your own words in your answer.

- 2 Now read the student answers in GradeStudio on pages 24–25. What evidence and inferences has each student used in their answer? Which grade is your work above closest to? How can you improve?

GradeStudio

Check your answers



- Did you find enough evidence from the text?
- Did you manage to say something about the evidence you found?
- Are you sure that you have got the main points clear?



Here are two student responses to the exam activity below about the article on page 22. Read the answers together with the examiner comments, and then check what you have learnt and try putting it into practice.

Explain how women react to Fogle and Cracknell, according to this extract. (10 marks)

C grade answer

Student 1

In the first line a woman exclaims 'What lovely boys!' ✓ This already suggests that the women have reacted well to the men. Further down a young daughter of a woman consoles her and says 'maybe you'll get a kiss next time'. This indicates that women reacted so well that they wanted more than a signed book. ✓ Furthermore, it says that when Ben Fogle and James Cracknell walk into a room 'ladies swoon'. ✓ This also implies that women like the lads. As well as this the fact that '400 women' gather in the same room as the lads, ✓ suggests that they have set an impression on the women. And in the last line it says how the women look for lipstick ✓ tells me that the women have reacted very well to these brave young men.

Examiner comment

Student 1 spots a range of relevant material but it is limited, mainly because it lacks the vocabulary to explain precisely. The suggestion that women 'reacted well' to these 'lovely boys' is weak and the misreading of 'daughter' for 'teenage son' is careless. The next point is well made and it is true that the women seemed to want 'more than a signed book' from the men. The extract tells us that 'ladies swoon' when the men enter a room but it is not enough to say that this implies 'women like the lads.' The point that Fogle and Cracknell can attract an audience of 400 women could have been convincing, but the lack of precision is evident in the weak claim that they have 'set an impression' on women. The final point about the lipstick is made simply and without any depth of understanding. This is a reasonable answer but it lacks the sharpness and coherence to be more than grade C.

A* grade answer

Student 2

Women are obviously very attracted ✓ to Fogle and Cracknell. One woman calls them 'lovely boys' ✓ and her eyes are 'riveted' ✓ to them. Another woman is 'grumpy' and disappointed ✓ because she did not get a kiss and has to be 'consoled' by her son. ✓ They are the centre of attention ✓ and a crowd of female staff are 'excited' ✓ and 'gaze' at them. ✓ The men cause a 'commotion' among their female admirers ✓ who are said to 'swoon' when they walk into a room. ✓ Women want to impress ✓ the two men and an audience of 400 women were 'simultaneously rooting for their lipstick' ✓ when they appeared on stage.

Examiner comment

This answer uses the text well and takes the opportunity to add some explanation and show understanding by making inferences. It is a clear answer and works methodically through the text, gathering credit as it goes along. This answer misses nothing and would gain full marks. Grade A*.



Explain questions: how to go up the grades

To move up the grades you need to show that you have understood what is being said in the text and to keep a clear focus on the question. In this question you were asked to explain 'how women react' to the two young men and you needed to see the main points and use evidence from the text to support your answer.

The first answer does spot a reasonable range of relevant points in the text but it lacks the precise vocabulary to explain carefully what those points are suggesting to the reader.

The second answer shows you clearly how to do it. It is thorough in its use of the text and it uses quotation in short pieces which are woven into the answer without interrupting the sense or the flow. The inferences are clear and precise and the answer scores consistently. Notice that this ability to use quotation and mix it with accurate comment is the key to the A* answer.

Putting it into practice

On your own or with a partner, explain what you now know about:

- using evidence from the text to show you have understood what you have read
- linking the evidence to inferences to show your understanding
- what makes the difference between a grade C answer and a grade A* answer.

In the future

- Make sure you practise this skill using a variety of texts.
- Try to link evidence from the text to inferences.
- Aim to produce complete answers in 10–15 minutes.

My learning objectives ▼

- to practise 'Explain' questions
- to learn how to combine evidence and inference.

Exam practice and assessment

When answering 'Explain' questions, remember to look for the relevant evidence and try to say something to develop the point and show your understanding. Try to be as precise as possible in your choice of words.

Now it is your turn to practise this type of question.

GradeStudio



Examiner tip

This question asks you to explain why the two men took part in the race. Look at each man's reasons in turn. They **may** have had similar reasons but not necessarily, so don't be too quick to say 'They', unless you are absolutely sure the point refers to both men.

Activity 1

Read the extract opposite, which is the next section of the article about Fogle and Cracknell. Use a table like the one below to help you plan your answer. Then write your answer to the question.

Explain why Fogle and Cracknell took part in this race.
(10 marks)

Fogle	Cracknell



THE SCOTSMAN



The pair had spent 49 days rowing the Atlantic in a tiny 20ft-long boat, winning the world's toughest rowing race despite having spent only four months preparing (the average is two years) [...]. Most people, it is fair to say, thought they were mad. [...]

Fogle [...] has presented a number of TV programmes, including *Animal Park* and *Cash in the Attic* [...]. Unlike Cracknell, a professional rower and two-time Olympic gold medallist, he had no real experience in the sport. So why do something so extreme? [...] 'It gives you a huge buzz.'

Later on though, he admits there may have been other reasons driving his decision. 'If

there was a psychologist here I'm sure he'd say it was a symptom of not wanting to be seen as "Ben Fogle, presenter of *Cash in the Attic*," he says. 'There is a lot more to me outside of that little sphere.'

Cracknell had only recently won his second gold medal at the Athens Olympics when he bumped into Fogle at a cocktail party. When Fogle – at the time a complete stranger to the Olympian – seized his opportunity and asked if he would be interested in rowing the Atlantic, his answer was an emphatic 'no.' But, over time, the idea grew on him. In the end, his choosing to sign up came, in part, from confusion over his future career. [...]

[...] Cracknell says, 'Stopping sport is an incredibly tough thing. I've had so many brilliant opportunities to do different things since I stopped, but if anyone asks what I'm doing now, nothing sounds as worthwhile as "I'm training for the Olympics." You get away with four years of having everything done for you, working to a routine, being like Peter Pan really – you don't have to grow up.'

Cracknell thought he could use the time away from the e-mail, the mobile and the pressures of everyday life to think things through, and make a final decision on whether or not to go to Beijing.

GradeStudio



Examiner tips

- The key to this question is how well the answer follows an argument. It must have some fluency and make sense.
- Make sure that your answer is as **clear and precise** as you can make it.
- Include as much evidence as you can, but remember to comment where you can.

Activity 2

On page 17 you read the first part of an article by John Ingham on the problem of waste and litter in Britain. Below is the next section of his article, where he argues that the problem is likely to get worse. Read the article and answer the exam question below.

Explain carefully why, according to John Ingham, the problems of rubbish and litter are likely to get worse. (10 marks)

This mountain of waste could become a range of Alpine proportions over the coming years. First, retailers are locked in a bitter struggle to woo customers – and that means glitzy packaging. Second, a series of European Union regulations designed to protect the environment will almost certainly trigger more fly-tipping.

The rules requiring ozone-thinning chemicals to be taken out of fridges have already led to a spate of fridge dumping by owners who fear having to pay for them to be taken away. And we can expect to see more electronic goods sprouting from ditches as EU law will require the toxins they contain to be removed and then the rest recycled. The number of cars dumped – currently 350,000 a year – is also likely to increase. EU law treats old cars as toxic waste and demands they be disposed of by a specialist industrial plant. Car dumping was already on the up because of the collapse of the price in scrap metal. Not so long ago, dealers would pay you to take your old banger away; now they are not interested, or you have to pay them.

For all my suspicions about meddling by the EU, these laws are a good thing. The problem lies in making sure they are enforced. So far, governments have failed.

Take Britain's appalling record on recycling. Last year Britain recycled just 12% of waste. Switzerland, Austria, Holland and Germany recycle about 50% of their





Peer/Self-assessment

Daily Express

waste. Even America, the world's worst polluter, manages about 31%. 55

In Britain we continue to bury our rubbish out of sight and out of mind. 50

If it's not recycled, the rubbish has to be buried or burned. Both options are unattractive. Dangerous 60

chemicals can leak from landfill sites into the water supply and incinerators release all sorts of cancer-causing chemicals into the air. Yet this is the choice facing us unless we are prepared to make changes in our behaviour.



- 1 Check your answers to Activities 1 and 2.
 - Did you use evidence from the text?
 - Did you say something about the evidence you found?
 - Are you sure that you have got the main points clear?
 - Did you follow the text in a clear sequence?
 - Did you keep the quotations short and integrate them into your answer?
 - Did you use your own words to make inferences?
 - Did you think carefully about the words you used?
 - Did you have an overall sense of the writer's argument?

- 2 Now try to grade your answer to Activity 2 using the mark scheme below. You will need to be careful and precise in your marking. Use the mark scheme to help you.

Give a tick for each clear inference and a tick for each piece of relevant evidence. The ticks will guide you to the correct mark but you also need to make a judgement about the quality and coherence of the answer.



Moving up the grades

A

8–10 marks

- ▶ selects and analyses a range of valid points
- ▶ best answers are thorough and coherent with some depth of understanding and overview.

C

5–7 marks

- ▶ spots a range of valid points
- ▶ better answers have a clear focus on the question and a sense of coherence.

D

2–4 marks

- ▶ makes simple comments
- ▶ spots some surface features of the text
- ▶ better answers have a focus on the question.