

# The Halifax Grammar Schools Admissions Test: English Practice Paper 2017

---

There are 2 sections to the English Test

30 minutes on each section.

## Section A

Name: .....

Candidate Number: .....

## Section A Reading (30 minutes)

You should spend 30 minutes on this section. There are 20 marks available. Read the material provided and answer the questions.

---

### CHAPTER 1 'The Sound of Whales'

Walls of black water rose on either side of the boat as it dropped through a crack in the sea.

In the wheelhouse Fraser Dunbar clung to an old wooden chart table and waited for those walls to collapse and send him to the bottom.

The window rattled and the wind roared through the open doorway. The door banged hard on its hinges. He couldn't close it from where he stood, dared not move in case he slipped straight through the opening and out into the night.

Ben McCaig glanced at him from behind the wheel.

'How are you doing?' he shouted above the wind.

'Fine,' Fraser lied. He had never been out at sea in a storm before. It was thrilling to begin with, but now it was just scary. No one in their right mind would go out in this kind of sea, in this kind of weather, yet Ben was whooping like it was a fairground ride.

'Are you going to be sick again?' he yelled.

Fraser shook his head. 'There's nothing left to puke.'

Ben laughed and spun the wheel.

'My dad's going to kill me,' Fraser shouted.

'Not if this storm kills you first!'

It was a definite possibility and only now did Fraser remember his father's fierce words that very afternoon: 'You must not, under any circumstances, get on that boat again. McCaig is downright reckless and that boat should have been scrapped.'

He'd ignored that advice, had told himself that he was fourteen and didn't take orders from anyone, not even his dad. Now it was both annoying and astonishing that perhaps his father knew best after all. As the boat plunged deeper into the dark sea and his stomach turned to mush he suddenly remembered the list his dad had taken great pleasure in sharing: the top five reasons why people drowned.

Number 5: *water sports accident*. That didn't apply.

Number 4: *alcohol consumption*. Good, he hadn't touch a drop.

Number 3: *Inability to swim*. No problem, he could swim just fine.

Number 2: *Failure to wear life preserver*. Fraser looked behind him at the ancient life jackets hanging on the wheelhouse wall. He could grab one if needed, but if Ben wasn't wearing a life jacket then neither was he.

Number 1: *Water conditions exceed swimming ability*. He swallowed hard as he looked out at the ferocious ocean. He wasn't *that* good a swimmer. Nobody was.

The walls of water were closing in, the little boat was about to be swallowed whole; Fraser let out a cry and hoped that Ben hadn't heard. Then at the last moment the boat rose, grabbing an edge of the swell and riding it slowly, casually almost, out of the watery canyon. Despite its peeling paint and shabby deck, an old island lobster boat like this was built for these wild seas of the northwest of Scotland.

Maybe they were not about to sink after all, Fraser thought. It had seemed certain for a moment there.

With one hand still on the wheel and his legs splayed for balance, Ben reached behind him and grabbed the banging door, pushing it shut and securing the catch. Fraser wiped a hand across his face, tasting salty water.

Ben patted the wheel. 'This old piece of junk might just get us home.' He peered through the window. 'The harbour's around here somewhere.'

The slow swish of a solitary wiper was fighting to keep the wheelhouse window clear. Fraser could see no sign of the lights of Skulavaig.

And then he remembered why they were here in the first place, sailing so late at night. 'Where are the whales?'

Ben rubbed his stubbly chin. 'They will have dived to deeper water .... I hope. It'll be a bit daft if we miss the harbour and hit a whale.' The grin was gone, there was no more whooping. Whales were Ben's life.

It was already a bit daft, Fraser thought, to go sailing into the night with clouds building and the wind picking up, but being with Dr Ben McCaig, professor of marine biology at Aberdeen University, was beyond cool. He'd even given Fraser a job title for the summer: Seasonal Voluntary Assistant Researcher, which really meant 'general dogsbody', but that was OK. It was enough that Ben let him come along and it was something to do over the summer holidays. The island of Nin was not the most exciting of places at the best of times and these were not the best of times on his little island.

Name: .....

Candidate Number: .....

Section A: Answer all questions in this section using the extract 'The Sound of Whales'. Please write your answers in the spaces provided.

1 Read the passage. List four things that you find out about Fraser.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(4 marks)

2 Look in detail at each example below. Explain how the writer uses language to make the situation sound frightening or exciting.

a) 'Walls of black water rose on either side of the boat'

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(2 marks)

b) 'Ben was whooping like it was a fairground ride'

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(2 marks)

c) 'the little boat was about to be swallowed whole'

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(2 marks)

d) 'The slow swish of the solitary wiper was fighting to keep the wheelhouse window clear'

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

(2 marks)

3 Think about the order in which each of these events happens in the text. List these in the correct order.

a) Fraser thinks about his father's advice	b) Fraser lies to Ben saying he is 'fine' even though he is scared.
c) He thinks about how he has ended up here with Dr Ben McCaig.	d) Ben pushes the door shut and secures it.

- 1) ..... write a), b), c) or d)
- 2) ..... write a), b), c) or d)
- 3) ..... write a), b), c) or d)
- 4) ..... write a), b), c) or d)

(4 marks)



# The Halifax Grammar Schools Admissions Test: English Practice Paper

There are 2 sections to the English Test

30 minutes on each section.

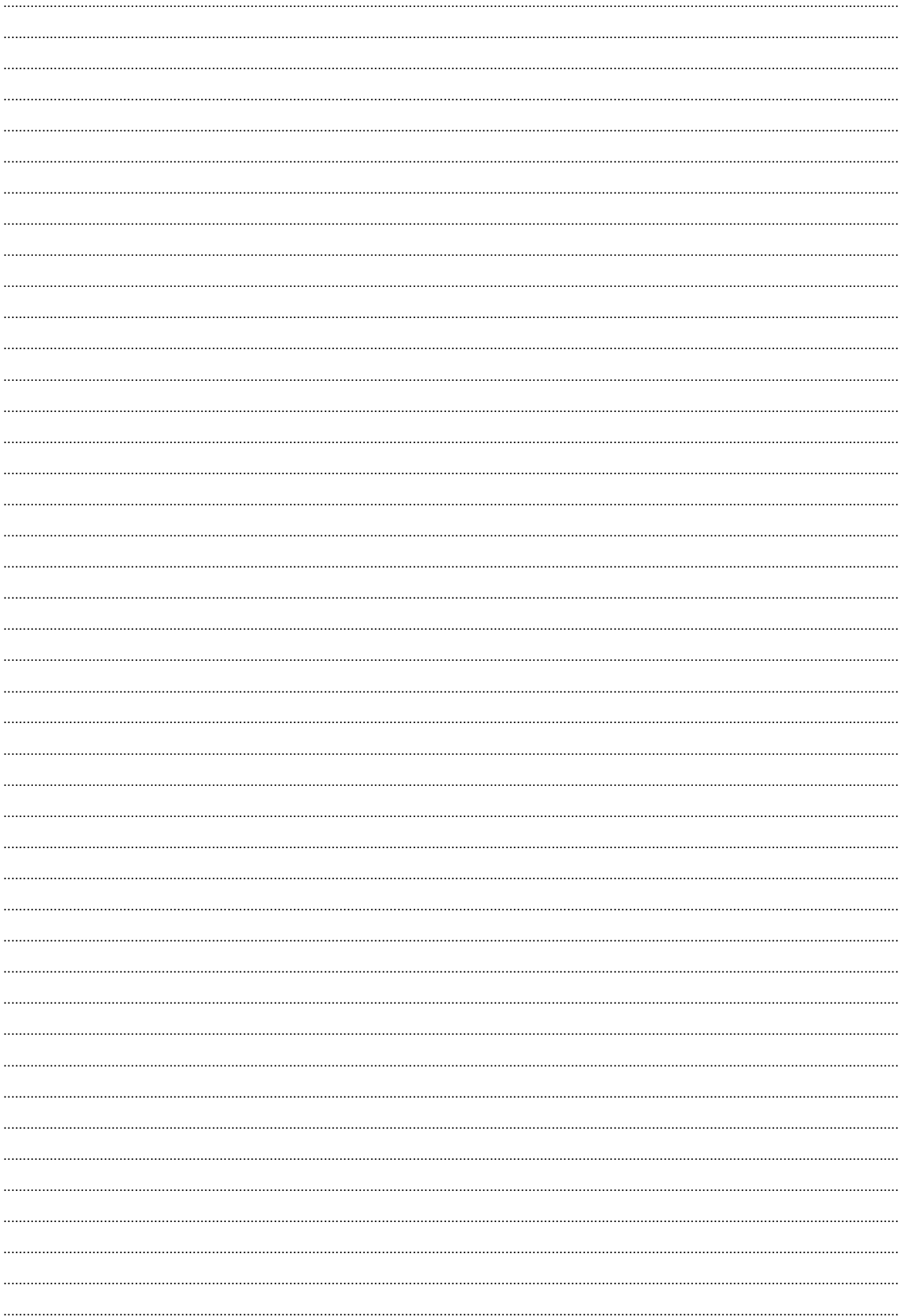
Section B

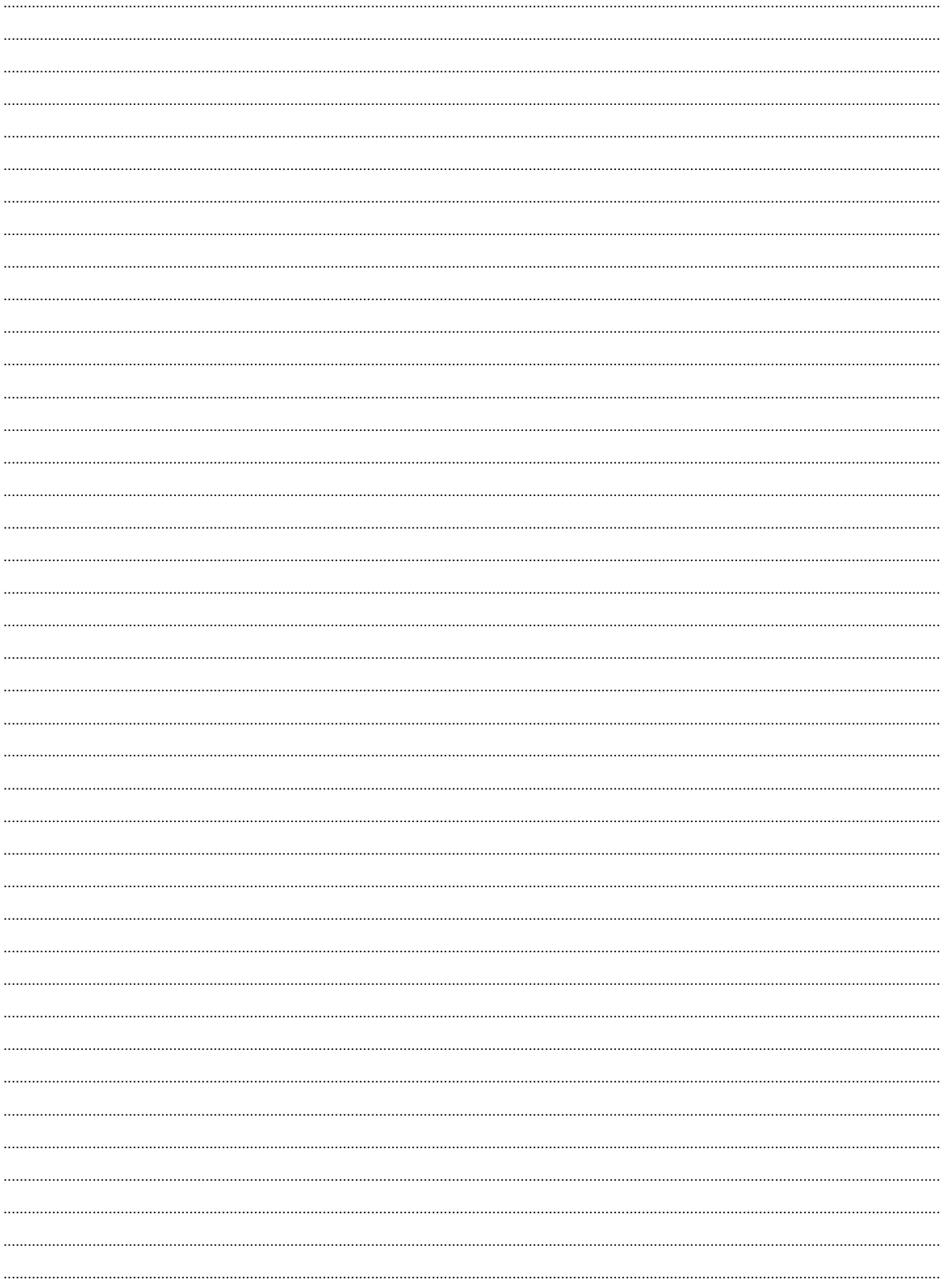
Name: .....

Candidate Number: .....









## Mark Scheme

### Section A Reading

**1 Any four of these:**

He's never been to sea in a storm before  
 It was exciting  
 Now he is scared  
 At one point, he thinks he might die  
 He is 14  
 Fraser is on ship  
 He sometimes lies/ has lied.  
 He doesn't take orders  
 He gets annoyed  
 Doesn't want to embarrass himself or admit  
 he is scared (don't accept both)  
 Being with Ben is cool/Ben is cool  
 His dad didn't want him to go  
 He thinks his dad will kill him

He is not enjoying it  
 He has been sick  
 He's worried about his father's reaction to him  
 being out on this boat  
 He has not had alcohol before this boat trip  
 Fraser yelled  
 He has ignored his father's advice not to go  
 on the boat  
 He wasn't a good swimmer  
 He realises his father was right/knew best  
 He is with Ben MCAig  
 They are looking for whales  
 He is off the Scottish coast

**Accept any sensible comment about Fraser that is in the text/ we can infer from the text. Do not accept comments about Ben/the boat/that don't relate to Fraser. Watch out not to reward rewording.**

2. NB no mark on any section for saying language makes them excited or frightened ( take care on fairground one!); **no mark for rewording the quote eg 'swallowed because you wouldn't want to be eaten'**

If they don't use terminology but understanding / analysis is clear and well explained - can still get two.

No marks for just "simile" - feature spotting.

One mark for recognising generalised effect of technique – they use a simile which makes you compare the two things.

a) 'walls of black water rose on either side of the boat'

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of language</li> <li>• Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Comments might include: Wall as something solid and hard / metaphor Threatening metaphor Connotations of black as an ominous colour Surrounding boat – idea of enclosing it
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows some understanding of language</li> <li>• Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Some comment on effect of colour black or image of wall of water above boat sides Boat sinking / going down
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comment on language</li> </ul>	They were at sea / frightened/excited

b) 'Ben was whooping like it was a fairground ride'

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of language</li> <li>• Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Comments might include: Verb whooping shows excitement Simile is surprising in this context as it is dangerous / frightening Contrast with Fraser's feelings Image of fairground ride is similar to physical movement of boat – nausea/sickness
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows some understanding of language</li> <li>• Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Some comment on how Ben's excitement is conveyed / use of a simile Excited even though frightened – both same time <b>Ben is enjoying the experience</b>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comment on language</li> </ul>	Ben is excited

c) 'the little boat was about to be swallowed whole'

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of language</li> <li>• Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Comments might include: Diminutive adjective 'little' to reinforce how vulnerable they are Animorphism – terrifying image of sea as a monster swallowing the boat A huge monster that can swallow it in full 'whole' Sense of anticipation 'was about to be'
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows some understanding of language</li> <li>• Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	The boat is small / the sea is like a monster
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comment on language</li> </ul>	The boat is at risk / in danger

d) 'The slow swish of the solitary wiper was fighting to keep the wheelhouse window clear'

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear understanding of language</li> <li>• Analyses the effects of writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	Comments might include : Sibilance / repeated 's' / 'sh' sounds to contrast against the roaring of the wind The wiper is no match for the sea as it is 'solitary' ( adjective ) Metaphor of 'fighting' shows us the struggle of the boat against the natural elements/nature/the sea
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows some understanding of language</li> <li>• Attempts to comment on the writer's choice of language</li> </ul>	There is only one wiper and it is slow in contrast with the sea water. It is hard / a struggle for it to keep the window clear, so they can't see well
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No comment on language</li> </ul>	The weather is bad

3 BADC or BACD each has to be in correction number position not just right order (**take care with this as some candidates have done unusual things here!**)

4 **No marks for making generic comments that could apply to the opening of any novel**

Mark	Skills descriptors	Content descriptors
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judicious selection of examples – at least three features discussed.</li> <li>Analyse the effect of structural features</li> </ul>	<p>Could consider the following ( 3 to 5 examples needed ) :</p> <p>1 The opening – high drama, stormy setting at sea , instant sense of danger/threat from the elements, anticipation of impending doom/death ( continues throughout )</p> <p>2 How we are introduced to each character - Fraser is desperate verb 'clung', Fraser is scared but doesn't want to show it ' Lied' and has been sick. Contrast with Ben who is 'whooping and described as 'reckless'</p> <p>3 The order in which we are given information – we are told that Fraser's father thinks Ben is 'reckless' and assume he is a child until we find out that he is a professor at the end Made to seem hopeless but then the boat rides out of the danger 'maybe they were not about to sink after all'</p> <p>4 The use of the list – humour moves to serious/ idea of danger; counts down to most serious. 'nobody was' shows us just how tough it would be swimming here</p> <p>5 The ending – unanswered questions raised about why these are not the best of times; 'little' island sounds vulnerable but for different reasons now; <b>you don't know if they will survive/ what will happen to the boat</b></p>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selects two features.</li> <li>Clearly explains the effects of them.</li> <li>3 features identified but not explained</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies one feature</li> <li>Explains this feature</li> <li>2 features identified but not explained</li> </ul>	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifies one or more feature with no explanation</li> </ul>	
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No comment on structure</li> </ul>	The writer has organised this to make it interesting

## Section B Writing

### Content and Organisation

NB – 2 well developed paragraphs giving  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a side is ‘sustained’. Candidates who fulfil half the criteria in a band get the lower mark eg 11 in lower level 4; all criteria fulfilled is full marks for that level eg 12 in lower level 4.

Convincing for an 11 year old

<p><b>Level 4</b> 11-14 marks Content is <b>convincing</b> and <b>crafted</b>; Organisation is <b>structured, developed, complex</b> and <b>varied</b></p>	<p>Upper Level 4 13-14 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is <b>convincing</b> and compelling throughout</li> <li>• Tone style and register <b>assuredly matched</b> to purpose, form and audience; manipulative, subtle and increasingly abstract</li> <li>• <b>Extensive</b> and <b>ambitious vocabulary</b> with sustained crafting of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly <b>structured</b> and <b>developed</b> writing, incorporating a range of integrated and complex ideas</li> <li>• Fluently <b>linked paragraphs</b> with seamlessly integrated discourse markers</li> <li>• Varied and inventive use of structural features</li> </ul>
	<p>Lower Level 4 11-12 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is <b>convincing</b></li> <li>• Tone, style and register <b>consistently match</b> purpose, form and audience</li> <li>• <b>Extensive vocabulary</b> with evidence of conscious crafting of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structured</b> and <b>developed</b> writing with a range of engaging complex ideas</li> <li>• Consistently <b>coherent use of paragraphs</b> with integrated discourse markers</li> <li>• Varied and effective structural features</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3</b> 7-10 marks Content is <b>clear</b> and <b>chosen for effect</b> Organisation is <b>engaging connected</b></p>	<p>Upper Level 3 9-10 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is consistently <b>clear and effective</b></li> <li>• Tone, style and register <b>matched</b> to purpose, form and audience</li> <li>• Increasingly <b>sophisticated vocabulary</b> and phrasing , chosen for effect with a range of appropriate linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is engaging with a range of <b>detailed connected</b> ideas</li> <li>• <b>Coherent paragraphs</b> with integrated discourse markers</li> <li>• Effective use of structural features</li> </ul>
	<p>Lower Level 3 7-8 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is <b>clear</b></li> <li>• Tone, style and register <b>generally matched</b> to purpose, form and audience</li> <li>• <b>Vocabulary clearly chosen for effect</b> and successful use of linguistic devices</li> </ul>

	<p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is engaging with a range of <b>connected</b> ideas</li> <li>• Usually <b>coherent paragraphs</b> with range of discourse markers</li> <li>• Usually effective use of structural features</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2</b> 3-6 marks Writing is <b>controlled</b> Organisation is <b>linked/relevant</b> and <b>paragraphed</b></p>	<p>Upper Level 2 5-6 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication is <b>mostly successful</b></li> <li>• Sustained attempt to match purpose, form and audience; some <b>control</b> of register</li> <li>• <b>Conscious</b> use of vocabulary with some use of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing variety of <b>linked</b> and <b>relevant</b> ideas</li> <li>• Some use of <b>paragraphs</b> and some use of discourse markers</li> <li>• Some use of structural features</li> </ul>
	<p>Lower Level 2 3-4marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates with <b>some success</b></li> <li>• <b>Attempts to match</b> purpose, form and audience; attempts to control register</li> <li>• <b>Begins to vary vocabulary</b> with some use of linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Some linked</b> and relevant ideas</li> <li>• <b>Attempt to write in paragraphs</b> with some discourse markers, not always appropriate</li> <li>• <b>Attempts</b> to use structural features</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 1</b> 1-2 marks Content is <b>simple</b>; Organisation is <b>simple</b> and <b>limited</b></p>	<p>Higher Level 1 2 marks</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Simple</b> success in communication of ideas</li> <li>• <b>Simple awareness</b> of purpose, form and audience; limited control of register</li> <li>• <b>Simple vocabulary</b>; simple linguistic devices</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One or two relevant ideas</b>, simply linked</li> <li>• <b>Random paragraph</b> structure</li> <li>• Evidence of simple structural features</li> </ul>
	<p>Lower Level 1 1mark</p> <p>Content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicates <b>some meaning</b></li> <li>• <b>Occasional sense</b> of purpose, form and/or audience</li> <li>• <b>Simple</b> vocabulary</li> </ul> <p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One or two unlinked ideas</b></li> <li>• No paragraphs</li> <li>• Limited or no evidence of structural features</li> </ul>
No marks	Candidates will not have offered any meaningful writing to assess Nothing to reward

## Technical Accuracy

Students should not lose more than 1 mark for spelling in levels 3 or 4 here.

<b>Level 4</b> 5-6 marks	Sentence demarcation is consistently secure and consistently accurate • Wide range of punctuation is used with a high level of accuracy • Uses a full range of appropriate sentence forms for effect • Uses Standard English consistently and appropriately with secure control of complex grammatical structures • High level of accuracy in spelling, including ambitious vocabulary • Extensive and ambitious use of vocabulary
<b>Level 3</b> 3-4 marks	• Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and mostly accurate • Range of punctuation is used, mostly with success ( full stop , comma + two other forms ) • Uses a variety of sentence forms for effect • Mostly uses Standard English appropriately with mostly controlled grammatical structures • Generally accurate spelling, including complex and irregular words • Increasingly sophisticated use of vocabulary
<b>Level 2</b> 2 marks	• Sentence demarcation is mostly secure and sometimes accurate • Some control of a range of punctuation ( evidence of commas and full stops used with general accuracy ) • Attempts a variety of sentence forms • Some use of Standard English with some control of agreement • Some accurate spelling of more complex words
<b>Level 1</b> 1 mark	Occasional use of sentence demarcation • Some evidence of conscious punctuation • Simple range of sentence forms • Occasional use of Standard English with limited control of agreement • Accurate basic spelling • Simple use of vocabulary
<b>Level 0</b> No marks	Candidates' spelling, punctuation etc. is sufficiently poor to prevent understanding or meaning.