

(Comments from Cambridge Marker's Report are inserted in blue)

2020 O Level English Paper 2

1. It promises to help students develop skills that will be useful in their future career.

The majority of candidates responded correctly to Question 1, which asked about the wording of the heading and how the text supported the claim it made to provide 'a brighter future'.

2. The photograph illustrates the skill of looking after livestock.

Question 2 required candidates to link one of the photographs with a specific skill listed in the text; it was also usually identified correctly.

3. (i) reference from their school or college
(ii) a letter of consent from their parents or guardians

Almost all candidates also recognised for Question 3 the items which applicants had to bring with them to the interview.

4. The phrase is 'practical experience'

The response to Question 4, which asked about potential applicants' likely reaction to a participant feedback comment, was less certain. The most common wrong answer was my tutor was impressed.

5. -The adjective 'fierce' used on its own, suggests an intense and fiery quality. Hence the day which was described as 'the fiercest day' uses the superlative 'fiercest' which emphasizes how hot the weather was.
-The sky was described as 'ironed flat'. Irons are hot appliances and the idea of the sky being ironed gives readers a vivid visual image of the heat emitted from it.
-The clause 'the clouds had fallen from the edges in the faultless blue above our heads' emphasises that there were no clouds in the sky blocking the people below from the heat from the sun.

The text begins with a description of the walk to the library. The first question in this section, Question 5, focused on **how hot** the weather was that day, and in particular, the way in which the language is used to **emphasise** it. A substantial number of candidates focused instead on the people's behaviour in the heat and therefore did not identify successfully three details describing the weather. Those who identified the correct phrases were usually able to go on to comment on their use.

6. 'faded'

Question 6 asked candidates to give the one word which indicates that the change from shops to offices was gradual, and was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

7. (i) Grace found **comfort** in the library
(sanctuary: protection, safe place)
(ii) Grace felt a sense of **excitement** at the thought of all the books she has not yet read.
(The word 'adventures' is a strong hint that Grace feels excited about reading)

The text now moves on to their arrival at the library, and the next three questions were about Grace's feelings towards the library, and the adults' interactions with her. Question 7 focused on Grace's attitude to the library and the books in it, and candidates were asked what two given phrases suggested. Stronger candidates recognised the **comfort** she finds there, and her **excitement** at the thought of all the books she has not yet read. The vocabulary, especially in Question 7(i), seemed to be a difficulty for weaker candidates.

8a. The tone is **sarcastic**.

(The librarian seemed to be praising Grace for returning the books on time, but it is clear she meant to criticize Grace when she added 'That must be a first'.)

8b. The librarian snapped shut the front cover of each book Grace had returned in a manner that was hard enough to send 'little gusts of air' across the counter.

She also frowned when she handed over the tickets to Grace.

Question 8 turned to considering the librarian and asked first for the tone of her comment and then for the two other things she does to show her dislike of Grace. The majority of candidates answered these straightforward questions correctly.

9a. Mrs Morten thinks that Grace is still a child and expects her to stay in the children's room.

(Ans inferred from what Mrs Morten says, 'But there are some very appropriate books in there for **young ladies of ten.**'))

9b. She wants to read a **variety/wide range** of books, not just children's books.

(broaden- to increase the range of something)

Question 9(a) then considered Mrs Morton's reaction to Grace's behaviour and asked why she thinks Grace is going into the wrong part of the library. Here, the response was more uneven, and a substantial number of candidates merely re-stated where Grace is going, rather than **offering the reason why Mrs Morton thinks it is wrong**. Her reason is easily deducible from what she says. Question 9(b) asked what Grace means by her reply to Mrs Morton. The majority of candidates answered correctly, though again, vocabulary seemed to pose difficulty for weaker candidates.

10. The strange aura/awe of being in a room with books of serious/deep learning.

(clue: 'It was **unfamiliar**: the ripe solid smell of learning' – The word 'unfamiliar' suggest that it is her first time. The colon is used to introduce an explanation of what is 'unfamiliar')

In the text at this point, Grace moves away from Mrs Morton and the librarian and goes on to narrate her exploration of the non-fiction section of the library. Question 10 asked what she experiences for the first time there. To answer correctly, the candidates needed to understand that it is the **first time** that Grace has been in the room with books of learning, and the stronger candidates were able to do so.

11.

What Grace hears		Words or phrases from passage
(i)	Grace hears people talking	'a conversation drifted across'
(ii)	There was a gap in what Grace could hear	'for a moment I lost reception'
(iii)	Grace could no longer hear anything	'disappeared somewhere'

There is now a distraction, as Grace overhears part of a conversation between the librarian and another person and stops to listen to it. In Question 11, candidates were asked to find the three words or phrases from the paragraph that match three given sentences describing what she hears. The majority of candidates were able to follow the sequence and identify the phrases; a number offered them in the wrong order and others included too much detail, showing that they had not isolated the exact phrase required.

12. (a) The atmosphere inside the library was **cold** compared to that outside in the street which was **very hot**.

(clues: '**Gosh**,' said Tilly, and I held on to her books while she **took off her jumper**.')

In the last paragraph, Mrs Morton and the two girls leave the library. Question 12(a) asked about the contrast between the atmosphere inside the library and outside in the street. The candidates were directed to the paragraph, which again **emphasises the heat outside**, making the **contrast** by describing the **sister's actions and words**. A majority of candidates recognised this; a substantial number instead went back to the description of the people at the beginning of the narrative to try to make a contrast which was not there in the text. Question 12(b) asked for the phrase that suggests Mrs Morton is a fearless person, and was answered correctly by almost all candidates.

(b) The phrase is 'an intrepid sub-Saharan explorer'.

('intrepid' means fearless. Note that the question requires a phrase instead of a single word.)

13. (i) a familiar journey (clue: 'my mother usually took me to the library')

(ii) managing adults (behaviour and speech that show Grace was managing the adults to get her way: 'Despite her obvious dislike of me, I gave her my biggest smile and she handed over the tickets and frowned' and 'Mrs Morten. I'm ten now.')

(iii) strong curiosity

('I walked through the romances, beyond the detective novels and past the side room full of old newspapers and posters... I reached the non-fiction room.. I had just reached the travel section' – Grace explores many sections of the library, hence showing her strong curiosity)

(iv) a satisfying outcome

(When Mrs Morten asked her whether Grace has chosen the books, she gave a confident and emphatic reply, 'I have' even though she was 'using my chin to steady the tower of books in my arms, and it wasn't easy to speak'. This showed that she was satisfied with the final outcome of being able to borrow books)

Question 13 related to the overall structure of the text. Strong candidates were able to take a step back from the detail and look at what is **generally conveyed** by the indicated paragraphs about **Grace's visit to the library**. Weaker responses either chose options that did not take into account **Grace's viewpoint** as portrayed in the text, or presented them in the **wrong order**.

Text 3

This is a factual article about the appearance and behaviour of penguins. Generally, the questions based on this text were well answered.

14.

Animals	Similarity
(i) Male geese	Large size
(ii) Donkeys	Similar cries

Question 14 asked what two animals jackass penguins are compared to in the first paragraph, and in what ways. Almost all candidates found one correct pairing; the other needed more careful reading of the text.

15. (i) Both the northern great auk and penguins cannot fly. ('another flightless bird')

(ii) Both species stand up straight ('also had an upright posture')

Question 15, candidates needed to put into their own words two reasons why Portuguese sailors thought penguins were similar to another bird, the northern great auk. A majority of candidates found the correct answers but not all of them were successful in finding other ways of expressing them.

16. (i) Early explorers hunted penguins for food , which reduced their numbers

(ii) Pollution, fishing, and other human activities have caused the population of penguin colonies to fall by 8% or more in the last 40 years.

Question 16 was based on two students' opinions about the possible extinction of penguins.

Question 16(a) asked for two examples from the paragraph that support the view that they will soon be extinct. Here the difficulty for the candidates was to sort out where an example ended and the next began so that they offered two separate items. The majority of candidates understood the passage well enough to do so.

16b Magellan penguins can still be found all around the southern coasts of South America, which shows that they are thriving.

(the clue is "surprisingly" which indicates that the conclusion is different from what was expected based on prior information)

And almost all candidates found the example for Question 16(b) to support the alternative opinion that penguins are thriving and quoted it accurately.

17 (i) Their long bodies on short legs and the low positioning of their shoulders make them look disproportionate.

(ii)The bones of their wings are surprisingly flat and thin which make them look like a boomerang when viewed from the side.

(The focus should be on what makes the penguins look awkward/odd

18. The penguin's body comes down to its heels to surround its leg bones, which helps to keep its legs warm.

(The clue is the phrase 'insulate their legs against the cold')

Both Question 17 and Question 18 focused on aspects of the penguins' body shape and structure, described in the text, that make them look awkward on land but help them to keep warm. Candidates responded well to both.

19. Summarise the **appearance** and **behaviour** of penguins on **land** and in the **water** as outlined in the passage.

When penguins are **on land**, they are often seen to...

1. shuffle along in an amusing manner. (behaviour)
2. This is due to their elongated torsos, stocky legs, (appearance)
3. low shoulders, and flat and slender wing bones. (appearance)
4. When they squat to conserve heat around their legs, they look round. (behaviour and appearance)
5. However, they appear lean, tall and graceful when they straighten up. (behaviour and appearance)

(In the water)

6. Penguins usually remain near the water's surface in order to breathe. (behaviour)
 7. They can leap out of water and propel themselves forward. (behaviour)
 8. Although they appear awkward on land, they are swift and deft when diving- (behaviour)
- (80 words)

Question 19 (summary)

The majority of candidates made a reasonable attempt at the summary question, which asked about the appearance and behaviour of penguins on land and in water. There were no irrelevant responses and all candidates worked from paragraphs 4 to 6 as directed. Most candidates wrote close to the 80 words required in complete sentences. Only a few resorted to writing in incomplete sentences, whether in bullet points or in sentences without a verb.

A few candidates found it difficult to understand whether the penguin was sitting, standing or swimming for some parts of the description but for most, this did not provide an insurmountable challenge. Some of the **vocabulary** in the text was quite **specific** and some candidates **struggled** to find suitable **synonyms**. The most successful **did not try to reproduce all the details** of the appearance on land, **combining them to make more general points**, and thus **left themselves enough words to state exactly the later points relating to behaviour in water**. Overall, candidates responded well to this challenge, and there were many **excellent attempts in which the points were made concisely without losing any of the required details**.

On the whole, the accuracy of candidates' writing was good, and spelling and punctuation were largely correct.