

11+ PRACTICE PACK

OWL Tuition Test 1a

11+ English Complete Practice Pack

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Owl Tutors 11 + Entrance Examination

English Paper 1 A (Comprehension)

Total marks: 27

Time allowed:
5 minutes reading, then 40 mins writing

Information for parents:

This sample paper has been created for children who are embarking on the 11+ exam. The questions within the paper follow Level 4-5 of the National Curriculum and cover the majority of the KS2 curriculum.

There is a big variation in the level of difficulty amongst different schools' 11+ papers and this paper is designed to reflect the standard level of entry at 11+.

Waterwitch - Chapter 1 - The Storm

The sixteen-ton boat surfed over the gigantic waves. Its metal hull the only strength that prevented the boat from breaking up, yet it was this steel that within minutes of flooding would sink to the ocean floor like a stone slung into a pond. This smallness in the immense ocean, the vulnerability of our situation, that was the major worry.

The Atlantic is a cold and lonely place in a gale.

Safety, the Portuguese coast, was twelve miles off, but it was becoming further away with each wave, we were being driven in the direction of America over three thousand miles to the west with only enough water for two days at the most. The Azores to the Southwest might as well have been the same distance. Both wind and wave drove our vessel westwards, the waves were in command, we had no control.

Clouds hung in stratus layers, rain fell at the wind's whimsy, drops angled to the back of the head or darting, diagonally, onto the deck as another wave of water crashed over the bow. Helplessly we bobbed into the shipping lanes. Waves, rising ten metres high, raised us above the blue boiling water below, we rested on the foaming crest, afforded a glimpse of a ship or a tanker or just grey cloud horizon, before plunging down, sliding along the wave into a deep trough where another wave would splash over the bow as our boat dipped its nose into the bubbling brine. In a heartbeat we were lifted up again on a swell, as it grew higher we floated up like a chair on a Ferris wheel.

Our boat was a heavy 52 foot sailing cruiser, a yacht designed for day sailing in safe seas with the occasional overnight anchorage. The boat was never designed to be buffeted by waves that swamped its own size. The sea rose and fell all around us, an inconstant billows, and we were dwarfed by the swirling swell.

Excerpt from *Waterwitch - Periplus* – by Michael Fitzalan

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Waterwitch-anniversary-Periplus-Michael-Fitzalan/dp/1471647307>

Questions

- 1) Where is the yacht? (1 mark)
- 2) Who do you think the narrator is? (1 mark)
- 3) What two elements are mentioned? (2 marks)
- 4) What is the Atlantic described as? (2 marks)
- 5) The author uses metaphors, alliteration and similes. Choose one example and say why it is effective. (2 marks)
- 6) Can you identify any use of personification in the text and comment on its use? (2 marks)
- 7) What phrase is used at the beginning of the text that makes you feel anxious for the crew? What technique is this? (2 marks)
- 8) Provide a synonym or explanation for the following:
plunging
buffeted
(2 marks)
- 9) How does the author use phrases to build up suspense in this text?
(3 marks)
- 10) Why is the boat unsuitable for being caught in a storm?
(3 marks)
- 11) Carry on the narrative using as much imagery as you can. (5 marks)

Paper Notes: 11+ English Question Booklet (Test 1a)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

Overview

This is **Owl Tutors 11+ English Paper 1A**, a comprehension and creative writing practice paper pitched at the **standard entry level** for selective secondary schools. The paper is built around an extract from Michael Fitzalan's novel *Waterwitch*, a vivid passage describing a yacht caught in a violent Atlantic storm. The questions test a range of **reading comprehension and literary analysis** skills expected of Year 6 pupils preparing for the **GL Assessment 11+ English exam**.

The paper comprises **11 questions worth 27 marks** in total, covering factual retrieval, inference, identification and analysis of literary techniques (simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration), vocabulary work, and a substantial creative writing task. Candidates are given **5 minutes reading time** followed by **40 minutes writing time**, which places a premium on quick comprehension and efficient time management.

This paper suits pupils at **National Curriculum Level 4-5** (upper Key Stage 2) and reflects the typical demands of competitive 11+ exams. The storm-at-sea passage is rich in figurative language and dramatic imagery, providing ample material for close textual analysis. The final creative writing question asks candidates to continue the narrative using their own descriptive techniques, testing not only understanding but the ability to produce high-quality prose under timed conditions.

How this paper is organised

The paper opens with a single **prose extract of approximately 300 words**, presented on page 2 as a self-contained reading stimulus. Candidates are instructed to read this passage during the allocated 5-minute reading period before tackling the questions.

Questions 1 to 10 are **comprehension and analysis tasks** worth between 1 and 3 marks each, totalling 22 marks. Early questions (1-4) focus on straightforward factual retrieval and description. Mid-range questions (5-8) require identification and explanation of literary devices and vocabulary. The more demanding questions (9-10) ask for extended analytical responses about how the author builds suspense and why the boat is unsuitable for the storm.

Question 11 is a creative writing task worth **5 marks**, asking students to continue the narrative using descriptive imagery. This final question carries the highest single-question mark allocation and allows examiners to assess a pupil's ability to produce creative, cohesive prose under exam conditions. The total paper is worth 27 marks, and

the balance between retrieval, analysis and composition reflects typical 11+ English proportions.

Topics covered

- Reading comprehension of descriptive fiction: identifying setting, narrator and physical details from a storm-at-sea narrative
- Literary techniques: recognising and commenting on the effectiveness of similes, metaphors, alliteration and personification in an action passage
- Vocabulary development: providing synonyms and explanations for challenging words such as 'plunging' and 'buffeted'
- Suspense and tension: analysing how an author's choice of phrases, sentence structure and imagery builds dramatic tension in a perilous situation
- Inference and deduction: drawing conclusions about character (narrator identity) and context (boat suitability) from implicit evidence in the text
- Creative writing continuation: producing a narrative sequel that mirrors the style, tone and figurative language of the original extract

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the passage twice during the 5-minute reading period: once for overall meaning and once to underline key imagery and literary devices you can reference in your answers.
- For questions asking about literary techniques, always quote the relevant phrase from the text and explain the specific effect it creates on the reader.
- When identifying similes or metaphors, name the two things being compared and say why the comparison is powerful or appropriate in context.
- Plan your creative writing answer (Question 11) briefly before you start: jot down three or four descriptive images or events to ensure your continuation has structure and variety.
- Practise writing vivid descriptive paragraphs under timed conditions, aiming to use at least two different literary techniques (simile, metaphor, personification, alliteration) in each paragraph.
- Learn a bank of high-level vocabulary for describing extreme weather, emotions and movement, so you can draw on it quickly in the creative task.
- Check the mark allocation for each question and adjust the length of your response accordingly: a 1-mark question needs one clear point, a 3-mark question needs at least two detailed points with evidence.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Quoting large chunks of text without explaining why the device is effective. Examiners want analysis, not just identification.
- Confusing literary terms: calling a simile a metaphor, or labelling any repeated sound as alliteration when it may be assonance or consonance. Precision matters.
- In Question 11, drifting away from the tone and style of the original passage. Your continuation should feel like a plausible next chapter, not an abrupt genre shift.
- Spending too long on low-mark questions (1-2 marks) and leaving insufficient time for the higher-value analytical and creative questions at the end.
- Forgetting to use quotation marks when lifting phrases from the text, which can make your answer unclear and less formal.
- Writing vague comments such as 'the author makes it exciting' without identifying the specific technique or explaining the precise effect on the reader.

Exam technique

Begin by reading the passage carefully during the 5-minute window, underlining or mentally noting phrases that illustrate literary techniques, emotion or key plot details. This preparatory work pays dividends when you encounter questions asking for examples of simile, personification or tension-building.

Work through questions 1 to 10 methodically, spending roughly 1 minute per mark as a guide. For 1-mark questions, a single clear sentence suffices; for 3-mark questions, aim for two or three developed points with supporting quotations. Keep an eye on the clock: you should reach Question 11 with at least 10-12 minutes remaining, as the creative task is worth 5 marks and demands sustained, imaginative writing.

For the creative continuation, spend 1-2 minutes planning a short sequence of events or images that flow logically from the extract. Then write fluently, aiming for varied sentence structures, strong verbs and at least two or three explicit literary devices (a simile, a metaphor, personification of the sea or wind). Leave 2 minutes at the end to reread your entire paper, correcting obvious spelling, punctuation or grammatical slips that could cost marks under the quality-of-writing criteria.

What to revise alongside this paper

Pupils should also revise the full range of **figurative language devices** beyond those named in this paper: onomatopoeia, hyperbole, assonance and pathetic fallacy are common in descriptive fiction and may appear in other 11+ papers. Understanding how these techniques contribute to mood and atmosphere will deepen analytical responses.

Practise close reading of other **action or adventure extracts**, particularly classic and modern fiction featuring the sea, mountains, or extreme weather. Familiarise yourself with the vocabulary and sentence structures authors use to convey danger, isolation and courage. Writers such as Michael Morpurgo, Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Ransome provide rich material for comprehension practice.

Work on **creative writing skills** by writing timed continuations or prequels to published extracts. Focus on matching the narrative voice, maintaining consistent tense and point of view, and embedding literary devices naturally rather than forcing them in. Peer or tutor feedback on these practice pieces will highlight areas for improvement and build confidence for the final creative question on exam day.

Key terms

Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Alliteration, Imagery, Suspense, Narrative voice, Synonym, Inference, Figurative language, Descriptive writing, Tone, Setting, Literary technique, Textual evidence

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Answers

- 1) A settling question: The yacht is in the Atlantic Ocean. (1)
- 2) The narrator is M. Fitzalan or the narrator is one of the crew. (1)
- 3) The two elements that are mentioned are wind and water. (2)
- 4) The Atlantic Ocean is described as cold and lonely. (2)
- 5) Blue boiling water is effective because it makes the sea seem like a cauldron or saucepan; lifted up like a Ferris wheel is effective because it shows how the boat is rising on the waves. Any similar justified answer. (2)
- 6) The phrase 'dipping its nose into the water' makes the boat seem like a swimmer. The phrase 'the waves were in command' suggests that the boat is under the power of the sea. Accept any other phrase with an explanation. (2)
- 7) The phrase 'steel that within minutes of flooding would sink to the ocean floor like a stone slung into a pond' makes the reader feel anxious. This is foreshadowing – warning the reader something may happen, (2)
- 8) Use dictionary definitions or a thesaurus to find the meaning. (2)
- 9) Suspense is built up in the text by the following phrases: 'the vulnerability of situation', 'further away with each wave', 'the waves were in command', any phrases, which show that the boat is being driven further from land and the crew are not in control. (2)
- 10) The boat is unsuitable for being in this storm because: it was heavy; it was designed for day sailing; it was dwarfed by the swirling swell. Anything that refers to the design, size and weight. (3)
- 11) In the continuation award one mark for similes, alliteration, metaphors, senses, onomatopoeia and personification. (5)

Answer-Key Notes: 11+ English Answers (Test 1a)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you mark this paper and learn from each answer.

How to use this answer key

This answer key rewards close reading and precise quotation from the Waterwitch extract. When marking, award the mark only if your child has identified the correct detail or quotation; near-misses in questions 1-4 should score zero, because the information is explicitly stated. For questions 5-7 and 9-11, which ask for explanation or technique, award the mark if the reasoning is sound even if the wording differs from the model answer.

Distinguish between mistakes caused by carelessness (missing a detail that was clearly in the text) and those caused by incomplete understanding of literary terms such as personification or foreshadowing. If your child struggles to name the technique in question 7 but can explain the effect, that suggests vocabulary rather than comprehension needs attention.

Use the worked examples below when a question has been attempted but the mark was lost. They show what the examiner was looking for and how to structure answers that blend quotation with explanation.

Score interpretation

This paper is marked out of 27. A score of 22-27 indicates strong comprehension and confident handling of imagery and narrative technique; your child is reading at or above the expected standard for selective entry. Scores in this band suggest readiness for similar comprehension tasks under timed conditions.

Scores of 16-21 show solid literal understanding but some difficulty explaining why particular phrases are effective or identifying techniques by name. This is typical of children who read widely but have had less formal practice with terms like personification and foreshadowing. Targeted work on literary terminology will lift performance quickly.

Below 16, the pattern of errors matters more than the total. If most marks were lost on questions 1-4, the issue is careful retrieval of detail. If questions 5-11 caused trouble, focus on recognising and explaining figurative language. Question 11, the creative continuation, rewards variety of technique rather than length; five different devices used briefly will score full marks.

Worked examples

Retrieval and language, Q1-4

These questions test whether your child can locate and copy specific details without adding interpretation. The mark scheme is strict: 'cold and lonely' scores both marks in Q4, but 'cold and dangerous' scores only one, because 'dangerous' is inferred rather than stated. Train your child to scan for the exact adjective or phrase the author used, then copy it precisely. Paraphrasing loses marks here.

Q3 : Wind and water

The question asks which two elements are mentioned, and 'element' here means forces of nature. The text states 'Both wind and wave drove our vessel westwards', so wind and water (the wave is made of water) are correct. A child who writes 'wind and waves' should still receive full marks, because wave is a form of water. 'Rain' is mentioned but only as a detail of the wind's behaviour, not as a separate driving force.

Q4 : Cold and lonely

The second paragraph reads 'The Atlantic is a cold and lonely place in a gale.' **Both adjectives must come directly from this sentence.** 'Dangerous' and 'stormy' are reasonable inferences but do not appear in the text, so score zero. This question rewards children who can resist the temptation to show off their vocabulary and instead trust what the author actually wrote.

Imagery and technique, Q5-7

Questions 5 and 6 require your child to quote a figurative phrase and then explain its effect in their own words. The mark scheme gives model answers but states 'any similar justified answer', which means the explanation matters more than choosing the same example. Award the mark if your child identifies a valid simile, metaphor or personification and explains what it helps the reader picture. Question 7 combines quotation with naming a technique (foreshadowing), so both elements must be present.

Q5 : 'Blue boiling water' or 'lifted up like a Ferris wheel'

The first phrase is a metaphor: **it makes the sea seem like a cauldron or saucepan**, which emphasises violent, churning movement and heat (even though the Atlantic is cold). The second is a simile comparing the boat's rise on the waves to a fairground ride, which conveys the helpless, stomach-dropping sensation of being lifted beyond your control. Either example scores full marks if the explanation shows why the comparison is effective.

Q7 : 'Steel that within minutes of flooding would sink to the ocean floor like a stone slung into a pond'

This simile describes how fast the boat would sink, but the question asks about technique. **The answer must name foreshadowing**, the device of hinting at future danger to build anxiety. The phrase makes the reader imagine the crew drowning, even though it has not happened yet. A child who quotes correctly but writes 'simile' instead of 'foreshadowing' scores only one mark out of two.

Vocabulary, Q8

The mark scheme says 'use dictionary definitions or a thesaurus', which means this question is self-assessed at home. *Plunging* means dropping or diving suddenly downwards; *buffeted* means repeatedly struck or pushed about by wind or waves. Award one mark per word if your child's synonym or explanation captures the sense of violent or sudden movement. 'Falling' for plunging is acceptable; 'going down' is too vague.

Q8 : Plunging: dropping suddenly / diving down. Buffeted: battered / struck repeatedly / knocked about.

Both words describe forceful, uncontrolled movement. 'Plunging' emphasises the speed and direction (downwards into the trough of a wave), while 'buffeted' emphasises being hit from different directions. A weaker answer such as 'plunging means moving' or 'buffeted means hitting' is too general and scores zero, because it does not capture the violence implied by the context.

Suspense and suitability, Q9-10

Question 9 asks how the author builds suspense, so your child must quote phrases and explain what they suggest about danger or loss of control. The mark scheme lists examples but says 'any phrases which show that the boat is being driven further from land and the crew are not in control', which means alternative quotations are acceptable if well explained. Question 10 is factual retrieval across the whole text; three separate reasons (heavy, designed for day sailing, dwarfed by waves) are needed for all three marks.

Q9 : 'The vulnerability of our situation', 'further away with each wave', 'the waves were in command'

Suspense comes from the sense that the crew cannot save themselves.

'Vulnerability' tells us they are at risk; 'further away with each wave' shows the danger increasing over time; 'the waves were in command' uses personification to emphasise human powerlessness. Award marks for any phrases that convey growing danger or loss of control, provided the explanation links them to suspense rather than simply describing the storm.

Q10 : It was heavy; designed for day sailing; dwarfed by the swirling swell.

The final paragraph explains that the yacht was 'designed for day sailing in safe seas' and 'never designed to be buffeted by waves that swamped its own size'. **Three distinct points are needed for three marks.** Weight matters because steel sinks fast if flooded (mentioned earlier). Size matters because the boat is dwarfed, meaning overwhelmed. Design matters because day sailing implies calm conditions and nearby harbours. A child who gives only two reasons, even with detail, scores two marks.

Creative continuation, Q11

This question awards one mark for each of five techniques: simile, alliteration, metaphor, use of senses, onomatopoeia and personification. Length does not matter; a single sentence can contain multiple devices. Markers look for variety rather than repetition, so three similes and no other technique would score only one mark. Encourage your child to plan briefly which five devices they will use before writing, then underline or label them in the margin to make marking easier.

Q11 : Award one mark each for simile, alliteration, metaphor, senses, onomatopoeia, personification (maximum 5).

A strong answer might read: 'The wind howled like a wounded animal (simile), slashing and slicing the rigging (alliteration). Salt spray stung my eyes (sense of touch/taste). The deck was a skating rink of seawater (metaphor). Waves crashed and boomed against the hull (onomatopoeia), and the ocean reached up with greedy fingers (personification).' Each device earns one mark even if used only once. A continuation that tells an exciting story but uses no imagery scores zero.

Next steps

If your child scored below 18, revisit the Waterwitch extract together and practise picking out one example each of simile, metaphor and personification, then explaining

in a sentence why each is effective. Use a highlighter to mark figurative language in any story or article your child reads this week, and discuss what picture it creates in the reader's mind. For vocabulary work, keep a notebook of five unfamiliar words per week with definitions and example sentences.

If the score was 20 or above, focus on timed practice with similar extracts under exam conditions, because accuracy under pressure is the remaining challenge. For question 11, experiment with planning a range of techniques before writing, rather than hoping they appear naturally in the flow of composition. If full marks were achieved, try comprehension passages from a different genre (argument, biography, reportage) to ensure the same skills transfer beyond narrative fiction.

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