

11+ PRACTICE PACK

OWL Tuition Test 2a

11+ English Complete Practice Pack

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Owl Tutors 11 + Entrance Examination

English Paper 2 A (Comprehension)

Total marks: 25

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+.

The Story of Gellert

On a cold winter's day Prince Louis gathered his huntsmen together in the courtyard of his huge castle in the depths of Dovey forest. Above them, the sky was a grey curtain. The thick walls loomed over the men and horses as they prepared themselves for the hunt. Men checked their bows strings were tight and their arrow tips as sharp as the point of a sword. The wind howled through the corridors like a wolf barking at the moon. Horses' hooves clattered over the cobblestones and hounds barked. There was a smell of dew in the air.

"Where is Gellert?" asked the prince, looking around for his favourite hunting dog.

"I have not seen him this morning," replied his bodyguard, shifting uncomfortably in his saddle, his horse was anxious to leave, snorting loudly.

Feeling annoyed because Gellert was such a good hunter, the prince decided that he could not delay departure any longer. The hunting party left the castle, clattering over the drawbridge and onto the spongy grass beyond. Wisps of morning mist snaked through the trees like lost souls and the bare branches creaked in the wind. The horses' hooves drummed on the winter earth. The prince was leading his men, dressed for war, in a suit of silver scales as shiny as fish.

The huntsmen did not see a boar or a deer that day; they did not catch anything. When it got darker on that disappointing day, the prince and his men headed back to the castle. Riders, archers, horses and hounds were exhausted. They were empty-handed but relieved to be back where the fires would warm their frozen bones and some gruel would help soothe the hunger that gnawed at their stomachs.

While they were taking their mounts to the stable, Gellert slunk out to meet him. The prince's favourite hound looked sad, his tail was pointing down and his ears were drooping, he cowered along the cobblestones, his belly brushing the ground. Then, the prince noticed that there was blood around his mouth.

Suddenly, he remembered his young son who had been sleeping in his room.

The prince ran like the wind. He charged up the stairs to find the nursery was a complete mess, the cot had been overturned, the curtains had been torn, and a chair had crashed to the floor.

"You killed my son!" shouted the prince in a terrible rage, turning his anger on the dog that had followed him up the stairs.

Without thinking, he drew his sword and with one swift movement, he stabbed Gellert in the heart. That was when he heard a gurgling sound from behind one of the ripped

curtains. Running over, the prince pulled back the drape to discover his young son who was playing happily with some wooden building blocks. Next to his son was the cold, stiff body of a wolf.

The prince realised what had really happened. The wolf had come in looking for food and, Gellert, the faithful hound, had killed the wolf and saved his son.

If only he had heeded the king's advice: "Look before you leap."

Questions and answer follow.

By Michael Fitzalan

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Questions:

- 1) Where is the castle? (2 marks)
- 2) Why was the prince angry? (2 marks)
- 3) In your own words, describe the weather (3 marks)
- 4) What noises are referred to in the text or list the uses of onomatopoeia in this passage? (3 marks)
- 5) What techniques are used in the short paragraph: 'Suddenly, he remembered his young son who had been sleeping in his room'? (4 marks)
- 6) Pick out a simile and say why it makes the writing more vivid (2 marks)
- 7) How is Gellert's distress described? (3 marks)
- 8) When did the prince realise his son was safe? (2 marks)
- 9) What type of story is this? (1 mark)
- 10) The prince was advised to 'Look before you leap'. Write some advice of your own, which it would be sensible to adhere to (1 mark)
- 11) How does the passage make you feel? Please, explain your feelings (2 marks)

Paper Notes: 11+ English Question Booklet (Test 2a)

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

Overview

This is an **Owl Tutors** practice paper for **11+ English**, designed to reflect the standard level of entry for **GL Assessment** style exams. The paper presents a single narrative passage, *The Story of Gellert*, a medieval tale of tragic misunderstanding, followed by eleven comprehension questions testing a range of reading and analytical skills.

The passage is richly descriptive, employing **similes**, **onomatopoeia**, and atmospheric imagery to create a vivid historical setting. Questions require students to retrieve information, infer meaning, identify literary techniques, and respond personally to the text. The paper tests both literal comprehension and the ability to analyse how language choices affect meaning and mood.

Suited to students preparing for **selective school entry at Year 7**, the paper follows **Level 4-5 of the National Curriculum** and covers the majority of the KS2 curriculum. The mix of retrieval, inference, analysis, and creative tasks mirrors the variety found in genuine 11+ entrance exams, making it a valuable resource for honing both accuracy and exam technique under timed conditions.

How this paper is organised

The paper is organised around a single prose passage of approximately 500 words, followed by **11 questions** totalling **25 marks**. Students are given **5 minutes reading time** followed by **40 minutes writing time**, meaning the entire exam lasts 45 minutes. Questions are numbered sequentially and vary in mark allocation from 1 to 4 marks each, signalling the expected depth of response.

The format is free-response throughout, with no multiple-choice questions. Lower-mark questions often require single-word or single-sentence answers (for example, retrieval of a location or identification of a simile), while higher-mark questions demand fuller explanations, particularly when analysing literary techniques or describing personal responses.

Mark allocations are clearly stated in brackets after each question, guiding students on how much detail to provide. The passage itself is printed in full at the start of the booklet, allowing students to annotate and refer back as they work through the comprehension tasks. The layout is clean and uncluttered, with ample white space for responses, typical of **Owl Tutors** standardised practice materials.

Topics covered

- Retrieval of explicit information from a narrative text, such as setting details and character motivations
- Inference and deduction, particularly understanding character emotions and actions that are shown rather than stated
- Paraphrasing and expressing ideas in the student's own words, for example when describing weather or atmosphere
- Identification and analysis of onomatopoeia and sound imagery within descriptive prose
- Recognition and explanation of similes, including evaluating their effect on the reader and the vividness of the writing
- Analysis of narrative techniques, such as sentence structure, paragraph placement, and pacing used to build tension or signal key moments
- Understanding of body language and how physical descriptions convey a character's emotional state
- Classification of story types and recognition of narrative traditions, such as fables or moral tales
- Creation of original advice or proverbs, demonstrating understanding of the text's moral message
- Personal response to literature, articulating emotional reactions and justifying them with reference to the text

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the passage twice during the 5-minute reading time: once for the overall story and once to underline key descriptive phrases and character actions.
- Pay close attention to the mark allocation for each question. A 1-mark question needs a concise answer, while a 4-mark question requires multiple points or detailed explanation.
- When asked to use your own words, avoid copying phrases directly from the text. Rephrase the meaning to demonstrate understanding.
- For questions about literary techniques, always name the technique clearly and quote or closely reference the example from the text.
- Practise identifying similes, metaphors, and onomatopoeia in a range of texts so you can spot them quickly under exam conditions.
- When asked how a passage makes you feel, give a specific emotion and link it to a detail in the story, such as a character's fate or a vivid description.
- Use the full 40 minutes. If you finish early, reread your answers to check for spelling, punctuation, and clarity, especially in longer responses.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Copying whole sentences from the passage when asked to use 'your own words', which loses marks even if the content is correct.
- Writing too much for low-mark questions and running out of time for higher-mark questions that require extended analysis.
- Identifying a simile or other technique but failing to explain its effect, leaving the answer incomplete for questions that ask 'why' it makes the writing vivid.
- Overlooking the mark scheme's weighting. Students often give a single example for a 3-mark question when three distinct points or examples are needed.
- Giving a personal response without justification. Saying 'It made me sad' is insufficient; students must explain what in the text caused that feeling.
- Misreading questions that ask 'when' or 'where', providing a quotation that describes an event rather than pinpointing the specific moment or location.

Exam technique

Begin by using the **5-minute reading time** effectively. Read the passage once to understand the plot, then skim the questions so you know what to look for on a second

read. Underline or make brief margin notes next to relevant sections of the text. This preparation saves time during the writing phase and helps you locate evidence quickly.

Tackle questions in order, as they often follow the sequence of the passage. Spend roughly one minute per mark, so a 2-mark question should take about 2 minutes and a 4-mark question about 4 minutes. If a question stumps you, move on and return to it at the end rather than losing time. Always write something for every question, as a blank answer guarantees no marks, but a partial or reasoned attempt may earn credit.

For analytical questions (such as identifying techniques or explaining effects), use the **Point-Evidence-Explanation** structure. State the technique, quote or closely reference the text, then explain the impact on the reader or the vividness of the description.

Check your spelling and punctuation in the final few minutes, particularly in any creative or extended answers, as clarity and accuracy contribute to the overall impression and may influence marking in borderline cases.

What to revise alongside this paper

Students working through this paper should also practise identifying and analysing **metaphors**, **personification**, and **alliteration**, as these techniques frequently appear alongside similes in 11+ comprehension passages. Broader work on narrative structure, including **story openings**, **climax**, and **resolution**, will deepen understanding of how authors build tension and deliver moral lessons, both central to The Story of Gellert.

Revising classic fables and folk tales (such as those by Aesop or Grimm) provides useful context for recognising story types and moral messages, a skill tested in question 9. Understanding how **dialogue** and **direct speech** contribute to character development will also support analysis of the prince's emotional journey and his tragic mistake.

For students aiming at more selective schools, extending vocabulary around emotions and character motivation is valuable, as is practice in writing balanced, justified personal responses. Reading a variety of narrative styles, from historical fiction to modern retellings, builds the flexibility needed to engage confidently with unfamiliar texts under exam conditions.

Key terms

Simile, Onomatopoeia, Inference, Retrieval, Narrative tension, Descriptive imagery, Atmosphere, Body language, Moral tale, Paraphrase, Literary technique, Personal response, Vivid writing, Setting

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Answers

- 1) The castle is in Dovey Forest (settling question). (Only one mark for 'it' – specific details for two marks).
- 2) The prince was angry because he had to go hunting without his favourite hunting dog, Gellert.
- 3) The weather is overcast, damp and windy.
- 4) The examples of onomatopoeia are: clattering, howling and barking. There are many more including gurgling.
- 5) The writer puts this paragraph on its own to emphasise the words; accept to make them stand out. The writer is foreshadowing; the writer is warning the reader that something dreadful might happen.
- 6) 'Wisps of morning mist snaked through the trees like lost souls' gives the story an eerie, ghostly or spooky atmosphere.
- 7) Any reference to: sad, tail pointing down, ears drooping, he cowering or belly brushing the ground.
- 8) The prince heard the baby gurgling and that was when he realised his son was safe.
- 9) This story is a folk tale, a fable, a story with a moral.
- 10) Any sensible suggestion.
- 11) An answer that shows reflection or understanding or the story.

Answer-Key Notes: 11+ English Answers (Test 2a)

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 mark scheme rewards precise textual evidence and thoughtful interpretation. When marking, award full credit only where the answer demonstrates careful reading; for instance, Question 1 explicitly requires 'Dovey Forest' rather than the pronoun 'it'. Questions 7 and 10 are open-response, so judge whether the child has engaged with the text rather than hunting for a single 'right' answer.

Distinguish between rushed errors (missing a detail that the child probably understood) and genuine comprehension gaps (failing to grasp what foreshadowing means in Question 5). If your child scores poorly on inference questions (5, 6, 11) but well on retrieval (1, 2, 8), the issue is interpretive skill, not carelessness.

Use the worked examples below when an answer surprises you or when your child disputes the mark. The reasoning often hinges on a single word or phrase in the passage that is easy to overlook under time pressure.

Score interpretation

This paper carries 25 marks and tests a mixture of retrieval (Questions 1, 2, 8), language analysis (3, 4, 6), inference (5, 7), and personal response (9, 10, 11). A score of 20 or above suggests strong comprehension and the ability to quote evidence accurately; the child is ready for similar-length comprehensions at 11+ standard. Between 15 and 19 marks indicates solid understanding with occasional lapses in precision (perhaps losing marks on Question 1 for vague answers, or on Question 5 for incomplete explanations of technique). These students benefit from practice in 'quoting to prove'.

Scores of 10 to 14 often reflect difficulty with inference and terminology: the child may retrieve facts successfully but struggle to explain why the writer isolates a paragraph or how a simile creates atmosphere. Focused work on literary devices and authorial intent will help. Below 10 marks suggests the text's vocabulary or length may have been overwhelming; consider starting with shorter passages and building stamina, and check that unfamiliar words (foreshadowing, onomatopoeia) are explicitly taught before the next attempt.

Remember that Questions 10 and 11 are designed to be accessible to all, so if marks are lost here it usually signals rushing or misreading the instruction rather than lack of ability.

Worked examples

Retrieval and detail, Q1–2, Q8

Precision earns the marks. Question 1 penalises pronouns; 'it' scores one mark but 'Dovey Forest' scores two because the instruction asks 'Where is the castle?' Question 2 rewards the full reason ('he had to go hunting without his favourite hunting dog, Gellert'), not just 'Gellert was missing'. Question 8 hinges on the word 'gurgling', which signals the exact moment of realisation. Vague paraphrases lose marks even when the idea is broadly correct.

Q1 : Dovey Forest (or 'in the depths of Dovey forest')

The text states the castle is 'in the depths of Dovey forest'. Answering 'it' or 'the forest' is too vague and scores only one mark because **the question asks for a specific location**. Examiners want evidence that the child has read carefully enough to name the place, not simply point at it with a pronoun.

Q8 : When he heard the baby gurgling

The passage reads, 'That was when he heard a gurgling sound... his young son who was playing happily.' **The gurgling is the turning point** that tells the prince his son is alive. Answers like 'when he saw his son' miss the mark because the question asks *when* he realised, and the sound comes before the sight.

Language and technique, Q3–4, Q6

Question 3 ('describe the weather in your own words') tests paraphrase, not copying. 'Grey curtain', 'dew', 'wind howled' and 'cold winter's day' must be translated into overcast, damp, windy. **Question 4 rewards recognition of sound words** (onomatopoeia): clattering, howling, barking, gurgling, snorting all qualify. Question 6 asks for a simile and its effect; naming the device without explaining atmosphere scores only one mark.

Q3 : Overcast, damp and windy

'The sky was a grey curtain' means overcast; 'smell of dew' and the hunting party returning with 'frozen bones' indicate damp and cold; 'wind howled through the corridors' confirms windy. **Copying 'grey curtain' or 'dew' verbatim will lose marks** because the instruction says 'in your own words'. Each weather element is worth one mark, so partial answers still score.

Q6 : 'Wisps of morning mist snaked through the trees like lost souls' – gives an eerie, ghostly or spooky atmosphere

The simile compares mist to 'lost souls', which immediately evokes the supernatural.

Saying it makes the writing 'more vivid' is too vague; the mark scheme wants the specific mood (eerie, ghostly, spooky). Always link the device to its effect on the reader: how does it make us feel, not just what it describes.

Inference and interpretation, Q5, Q7, Q9

Question 5 (worth four marks) expects two layers of explanation: the paragraph is isolated to emphasise the words, *and* it functions as foreshadowing to warn the reader. Both ideas are needed for full marks. Question 7 asks how Gellert's distress is shown, so **list observable details** (tail down, ears drooping, cowering, belly brushing ground) rather than the emotion ('he was sad'). Question 9 tests genre vocabulary.

Q5 : To emphasise the words / make them stand out; the writer is foreshadowing / warning the reader that something dreadful might happen

A one-sentence paragraph breaks the rhythm and draws the eye. **Structural effect (emphasis) and narrative purpose (foreshadowing) together earn all four marks.** Saying only 'to make it dramatic' captures the idea but misses the technical term. If your child writes 'to build tension', credit that as foreshadowing under a different name.

Q7 : Tail pointing down, ears drooping, cowering, belly brushing the ground (any three)

The passage describes Gellert's body language in detail. **Quoting or paraphrasing physical signs scores marks**; writing 'he looked sad' on its own does not, because the question asks *how* distress is described, not what emotion he felt. Each observable detail is worth one mark, so three examples secure full credit.

Personal response, Q10–11

These questions have no single correct answer. Question 10 asks for sensible advice (parallel to 'Look before you leap'); accept any proverb or practical suggestion. Question 11 ('How does the passage make you feel?') rewards **reflection and evidence**: 'sad because the prince killed Gellert by mistake' scores; 'good' on its own does not. Markers want to see that the child has thought about the story, not recited a formula.

Q10 : Any sensible suggestion (e.g. 'Think before you act', 'Don't judge by appearances', 'Check the facts first')

The moral of Gellert's story is about hasty judgement. **Credit any advice that could prevent a similar mistake**, whether it is a well-known proverb or the child's own wording. The mark rewards thoughtfulness, not perfect phrasing, so 'Make sure you know the full story' is just as valid as a traditional saying.

Q11 : E.g. 'Sad, because Gellert was loyal and the prince killed him unfairly' or 'Shocked, because I thought Gellert had hurt the baby but he was actually the hero'

Feeling plus reason is the formula for two marks. 'I felt sad' (one mark) becomes full marks when the child adds 'because the dog died protecting the baby'. Examiners want evidence that the child has engaged with the story's tragedy or twist, so any sincere response tied to the text will score.

Next steps

After marking, sit with your child and revisit any question where the answer was close but not quite precise enough. For example, if Question 1 said 'the forest' instead of 'Dovey Forest', practise finding and copying exact names from a paragraph. If Question 5 mentioned emphasis but not foreshadowing, explain that literary technique questions often expect two ideas (what the writer does and why). **Make a short list of three things to remember** for the next comprehension: quote the text, name the technique, explain the effect.

If the score is high (20 or above), challenge your child with longer extracts or passages that mix narrative with argument, since this paper is purely story-based. If the score is middling, focus on one skill at a time: spend a week on retrieval, then a week on inference, rather than mixing everything. Retake this paper in a month if the first attempt was under timed conditions and the score was below 15; often a second reading with less pressure reveals whether the issue was comprehension or time management.

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