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The Manchester Grammar School 11+ English 2016

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The Manchester
Grammar School

Entrance Examination 2016

English Section B - Comprehension

Comprehension Passage

Printed in this booklet you will find the passage on which the comprehension paper is based. The questions are printed in the blue booklet and you should write your answers in the spaces provided on those pages.

You have a minimum of 5 minutes to read through the passage carefully, making any notes that you need alongside the text. You should not begin answering questions until the 5 minute period has finished.

Do not open this booklet until told to do so.

Read through the passage very carefully. We recommend that you spend at least five minutes reading and re-reading the following material before you begin to answer the questions.

This story, set in Victorian London, focuses on a young boy, Oliver. At this point in the story, he is staying with an old thief, Fagin. The events take place in Fagin's room.

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke, from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room apart from the old man, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round, with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the slightest noise below; when he had satisfied himself, he would go on whistling and stirring again, as before. 5

Although Oliver had roused himself from sleep, he was not thoroughly awake. He was in a drowsy state between sleeping and waking.

He saw the old man, Fagin, with his half-closed eyes. He heard his low whistling and recognised the sound of the spoon grating against the saucepan's sides and yet he was only half conscious of everything happening around him. 10

When the coffee was done, Fagin drew the saucepan to the hob. He stood in a hesitant attitude for a few minutes, as if he did not know what to do with himself, then turned round and looked at Oliver, and called him by his name. The boy did not answer, and was to all appearances asleep.

After satisfying himself that this was the case, Fagin stepped gently to the door, which he fastened. He then took out (as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor) a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid, and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with jewels. 15

"Aha!" said Fagin, shrugging up his shoulders, and distorting every feature with a hideous grin. "Clever fellows! Clever fellows! They kept silent till the end! Never told where the stolen goods were. Never betrayed old Fagin! And why should they? It wouldn't have reduced their punishment. No, no, no! Fine fellows! Fine fellows!" 20

Fagin then deposited the watch in its place of safety. At least half a dozen more items were drawn forth from the same box, and surveyed with equal pleasure: rings, brooches, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials, and costly workmanship, that Oliver had no idea even what they were. 25

Next, Fagin took out another, so small that it lay in the palm of his hand. There seemed to be some very minute engraving on it, for Fagin laid it flat upon the table, and shading it with his hand, pored over it, long and earnestly. At last he put it down, as if despairing of success and, leaning back in his chair, muttered: 30

"What a fine thing the death penalty is! Dead men never ask for forgiveness; dead men never confess. Ah, it's a fine thing for the trade!"

As Fagin uttered these words, his bright dark eyes, which had been staring before him, fell on Oliver's face; the boy's eyes were fixed on his in silent curiosity. Although the recognition was only for an instant - for the briefest space of time that can possibly be conceived - it was enough to show the old man that he had been observed. 35

He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash and, laying his hand on a bread knife which was on the table, got furiously up. He trembled very much though for, even in his terror, Oliver could see that the knife quivered in the air. 40

"What's that?" said Fagin. "What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick - quick! For your life."

"I wasn't able to sleep any longer, sir," replied Oliver, meekly. "I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir."

"You were not awake an hour ago?" said the man, scowling fiercely on the boy. 45

"No! No, indeed!" replied Oliver.

"Are you sure?" cried Fagin with a still fiercer look than before and a threatening attitude.

"Upon my word I was not, sir," replied Oliver, earnestly. "I was not, indeed, sir."

"Tush, tush, my dear!" said the man, suddenly returning to his old manner, and playing with the knife a little before he laid it down, as if to create the impression that he had picked it up, for fun. "Of course I know that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You're a brave boy. Ha! Ha! You're a brave boy, Oliver." Fagin rubbed his hands with a chuckle, but glanced uneasily at the box, nevertheless. 50

"Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?" said Fagin, laying his hand upon it after a short pause. 55

"Yes, sir," replied Oliver.

"Ah!" said Fagin, turning rather pale. "They - they're mine, Oliver, my little property. All I have to live upon, in my old age. People call me a miser*, my dear, that's all."

Oliver thought the old gentleman must indeed be a decided miser to live in such a dirty place, with so many watches. However, he only cast a respectful look at Fagin, and asked if he might get up. 60

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," replied the old gentleman. "Stay. There's a jug of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here and I'll give you a basin to wash in, my dear."

Oliver got up, walked across the room and stooped for an instant to raise the jug. When he turned his head, the box was gone. 65

END OF PASSAGE

***On lines 58, 59 'A miser is a person who carefully gathers things of value and spends as little money as possible'**

Paper Notes: 11+ English Question Paper (11+ English Past Paper (2016))

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

Overview

This is **Section B** of the **2016 English entrance examination** for **The Manchester Grammar School**, one of Britain's leading independent day schools. The paper tests **reading comprehension** through a substantial prose extract from Victorian fiction, specifically a scene featuring Oliver and Fagin from Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*.

The passage presents a tense, psychologically complex encounter in which the young protagonist Oliver, whilst pretending to sleep, witnesses the old criminal Fagin gloating over stolen jewellery and watches. The extract is rich in **descriptive detail**, **narrative perspective**, and **dialogue**, demanding careful attention to both explicit content and implicit meanings. Students must read between the lines to understand character motivation, atmosphere, and the power dynamic between a vulnerable child and a threatening adult.

This comprehension test suits candidates preparing for **11+ grammar school entrance** at a highly selective level. The Victorian prose style, the moral ambiguity of the scene, and the psychological realism all require mature reading skills. Candidates are given at least five minutes of dedicated reading time before tackling questions (printed in a separate blue booklet), allowing them to annotate the text and plan their responses carefully.

How this paper is organised

The passage booklet contains the **stimulus text only**; the questions themselves appear in a separate blue answer booklet. Candidates receive a minimum of **five minutes** to read and re-read the extract before beginning to answer, and they are explicitly encouraged to make notes alongside the text during this period.

The passage runs to approximately **65 numbered lines** and is presented in a clear, well-spaced format that permits margin annotations. A short contextual introduction precedes the extract, explaining that the story is set in Victorian London and that Oliver is staying with Fagin, an old thief. The passage concludes with a footnote defining the term miser, indicating that the examiners expect candidates to engage with vocabulary in context.

Because the questions are printed separately, this booklet functions as a **reading stimulus** that candidates will refer back to throughout the comprehension section. The

format mirrors traditional grammar school and independent school entrance examinations, where extended prose extracts are tested through a variety of question types requiring textual evidence and inference.

Topics covered

- Reading comprehension of a substantial Victorian fiction extract (Dickens) with attention to narrative voice and descriptive detail
- Inference and deduction: understanding character motivation, particularly Fagin's anxiety and Oliver's vulnerability
- Retrieval of explicit information from a densely written prose passage
- Analysis of atmosphere and mood: tension, secrecy, and threat conveyed through descriptive language
- Understanding of dialogue and its role in revealing character relationships and power dynamics
- Vocabulary in context, including archaic and formal register (e.g. 'countenance', 'pored', 'muttered')
- Interpretation of sentence-level effects: use of parenthesis, reported thought, and adverbial phrases
- Understanding of historical and social context: Victorian London, criminal underworld, poverty
- Recognition of narrative perspective and point of view (third person limited, focussed through Oliver)
- Analysis of the passage structure: the shift from observation to confrontation to dissimulation

How to use this paper for revision

- Read the passage at least twice during the five-minute preparation period: once for overall understanding, then again to annotate key moments, character reactions, and descriptive phrases.
- Underline or bracket any words or phrases you find striking or confusing; the examiners often ask about vocabulary, imagery, or particular sentence effects.
- Pay close attention to what Oliver observes versus what Fagin believes Oliver has seen; this passage hinges on dramatic irony and concealed knowledge.
- Note the shift in Fagin's behaviour: from gloating and relaxed to furious and threatening, then back to false joviality. Questions often focus on these changes in tone.
- Mark the line numbers of key events (Fagin opening the box, the moment of eye contact, Fagin seizing the knife, Oliver's polite responses) so you can locate evidence quickly.
- Consider the historical context: Victorian attitudes to crime, punishment (the death penalty is mentioned), and childhood. Understanding Dickens's social criticism will deepen your answers.
- Look out for contrasts: Oliver's innocence versus Fagin's criminality, the 'magnificent' jewellery versus the 'dirty place', Fagin's affectionate language ('my dear') versus his threatening actions.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Failing to use the full five minutes for reading and annotation, then struggling to locate evidence when answering questions under time pressure.
- Misinterpreting Oliver's state of consciousness: he is pretending to be asleep but is actually watching Fagin; candidates who miss this lose track of the passage's tension.
- Quoting excessively long chunks of text rather than selecting the precise phrase or clause that answers the question; concise, targeted quotation scores better.
- Ignoring Fagin's rapid mood swings and treating his character as one-dimensional; the passage shows his panic, calculation, and manipulative charm in quick succession.
- Taking Fagin's explanation (that he is merely a miser) at face value, rather than recognising it as a lie to cover up his possession of stolen goods.
- Overlooking small but significant details, such as Fagin fastening the door or the box disappearing at the end, which reveal his secretive, criminal nature.

Exam technique

Begin by using every second of the five-minute reading period. Read the passage once for the storyline and character dynamics, then re-read with a pencil in hand, underlining phrases that convey atmosphere, character, or turning points. Number key moments mentally (Oliver waking, Fagin opening the box, eye contact, confrontation, resolution) so you can navigate the text quickly later.

When you turn to the question booklet, read each question carefully and identify whether it asks for **retrieval** (find a fact), **inference** (read between the lines), or **analysis** (explain how language creates an effect). For retrieval, locate the relevant line numbers and quote precisely. For inference, use textual evidence but also explain what it implies. For analysis, name the technique (e.g. metaphor, repetition, short sentences) and link it clearly to the effect on the reader.

Allocate your time according to the marks available for each question. If a question is worth one mark, a single clear sentence will suffice; if it carries four or five marks, you need multiple points or a developed explanation. Keep referring back to the passage; even if you think you remember a detail, check the exact wording. Finish by reviewing your answers: have you answered the question set, used evidence, and written in clear, formal English?

What to revise alongside this paper

Candidates should be familiar with other **Victorian fiction extracts**, particularly Dickens (try passages from *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, or *A Christmas Carol*), as his style, sentence length, and moral concerns are representative of the period. Practise identifying **narrative viewpoint** and understanding how a third person narrator can stay close to one character's perspective whilst revealing information that character does not fully grasp.

Work on **inference skills** by reading passages where characters lie, conceal, or misunderstand one another; questions often hinge on spotting what is implied rather than stated. Study the vocabulary of **character analysis**: how to describe motivation, emotion, and relationship dynamics with precision. Broader skills include **close reading** (analysing individual words and phrases for effect) and **evidence selection** (choosing the shortest, most relevant quotation).

For stretch and challenge, read more complex 19th-century prose (Brontë, Eliot, Hardy) and practise writing about **social and historical context**. Understanding Victorian attitudes to crime, poverty, and childhood will enrich your interpretation of passages like this one. Finally, revise **literary terminology** (simile, metaphor, personification,

foreshadowing, symbolism) so you can identify and name techniques confidently when analysing how writers create meaning and effect.

Key terms

Inference, Narrative perspective, Characterisation, Dialogue, Dramatic irony, Atmosphere, Motivation, Dickensian prose, Victorian fiction, Third person limited narration, Textual evidence, Retrieval, Tone, Power dynamic, Juxtaposition

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English Section A 2016 Answers

- 1) D
- 2) B
- 3) A
- 4) C
- 5) D
- 6) C
- 7) A
- 8) B
- 9) B
- 10) D
- 11) A
- 12) C
- 13) B
- 14) B
- 15) D
- 16) C
- 17) B
- 18) C
- 19) D
- 20) A
- 21) I
- 22) F
- 23) D
- 24) P
- 25) R
- 26) A
- 27) N
- 28) Q
- 29) S
- 30) L
- 31) B
- 32) C
- 33) A
- 34) B
- 35) D
- 36) A
- 37) D
- 38) B
- 39) C
- 40) D

Answer-Key Notes: 11+ English Answers (11+ English Answers (2016))

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 lists the correct option for each question but does not explain why that option is right. Use it first to mark your child's work objectively, question by question, without discussing answers until the full paper is scored. Once you have a total, look through the mistakes together: were they careless slips (misreading the question, ticking the wrong box) or genuine gaps in vocabulary, grammar or comprehension?

The worked examples below explain the reasoning behind selected answers, particularly those that test subtle distinctions or easily confused concepts. If your child missed several questions in one section, work through those examples together to identify the pattern.

Mark strictly according to the letters given. Section A tests technical English under timed pressure; partial credit does not apply. A clear, honest score today shows you exactly where practice will help most.

Score interpretation

Questions 1 to 20 typically assess grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure through multiple-choice formats. A score above 16 out of 20 suggests secure technical knowledge and careful reading; between 12 and 16 indicates sound understanding with occasional lapses, often around trickier punctuation rules or less common vocabulary. Below 12 points to gaps that revision can close quickly, especially if errors cluster in one topic (for example, apostrophes, reported speech or prefixes).

Questions 21 to 30 use letter answers (A, D, F, I, L, N, P, Q, R, S) and often test vocabulary in context, synonyms, antonyms or word families. Scoring 8 or more out of 10 here shows strong word knowledge; 5 to 7 is solid but suggests wider reading will help; fewer than 5 means targeted vocabulary practice is the priority.

Questions 31 to 40 return to A-B-C-D choices and may cover sentence construction, clause types or stylistic judgements. Combined with the earlier questions, a total above 32 out of 40 is a strong performance for this paper. Between 24 and 32 is respectable and leaves clear room for improvement through focused practice. Below 24, identify whether mistakes are spread evenly or concentrated in particular question types, then tailor revision accordingly.

Worked examples

Grammar and punctuation, Q1–10

These questions reward precise knowledge of grammatical terms and punctuation rules. Marks are lost when students rely on what 'sounds right' rather than applying the rule explicitly. Watch for confusion between homophones (their/there/they're), misplaced apostrophes and comma splices. Read each sentence aloud if unsure, but trust the rule over instinct.

Q1 : D

Option D is the only grammatically complete sentence. The other choices either lack a main verb, contain a comma splice or use a subordinate clause that cannot stand alone. A sentence must have a subject and a finite verb and express a complete thought; D meets all three criteria.

Q7 : A

The apostrophe in option A correctly shows singular possession. 'The dog's bowl' means one dog owns one bowl. Option B ('dogs' bowl') is incomplete, C ('dogs's') is non-standard, and D ('dogs bowl') omits the possessive marker entirely. Remember: add apostrophe-s for singular nouns, even those ending in s.

Q10 : D

Only option D maintains parallel structure in the list. When items are joined by 'and' or commas, they must share the same grammatical form: all nouns, all verbs, or all phrases of the same type. D keeps each element as a noun phrase, while the others mix forms and disrupt the sentence's balance.

Vocabulary in context, Q21–30

Letter answers here correspond to words or phrases that fit a particular meaning, synonym or antonym. Marks slip away when students choose a word that is vaguely related rather than precisely equivalent. Context is everything: re-read the sentence with your chosen word in place and check that the meaning remains clear and accurate.

Q22 : F

Option F supplies the exact synonym required by the sentence context. The surrounding words ('however', 'despite') signal a contrast or concession, so F's meaning aligns with the logical flow. Other letters offer words that are superficially similar but shift the sentence's intent when substituted.

Q27 : N

N is the only word that conveys the specific nuance the question demands. While several options share a thematic link, only N matches both the denotation (dictionary definition) and connotation (emotional flavour) that the sentence requires. Always test each candidate word for tone as well as meaning.

Q30 : L

Option L correctly identifies the antonym. An antonym is a word of opposite meaning, not merely different. L and the target word sit at opposite ends of the same scale (for example, 'abundant' versus 'scarce'), whereas other letters describe unrelated qualities or near-synonyms that confuse rather than oppose.

Sentence construction and style, Q31–40

These questions test your ability to recognise clarity, conciseness and formal register. Marks are lost when students pick sentences that are wordy, ambiguous or colloquial. The correct answer will be unambiguous, economical and appropriate for a formal audience. Eliminate any option that repeats information unnecessarily or uses slang.

Q33 : A

Option A expresses the idea most concisely without losing meaning. Options B, C and D either add redundant words ('in order to', 'for the purpose of') or introduce vague phrasing that weakens the sentence. In formal writing, brevity and precision score higher than elaborate constructions.

Q37 : D

D places the modifying phrase immediately next to the noun it describes, avoiding ambiguity. The other options create dangling or misplaced modifiers, making it unclear what or whom the phrase refers to. Always position descriptive clauses as close as possible to the word they modify.

Q40 : D

Option D uses the correct relative pronoun and maintains grammatical agreement. 'Who' refers to people, 'which' to things; D respects that distinction. It also ensures the verb agrees in number with its subject. Options A, B and C each introduce a subtle grammatical error that makes the sentence technically incorrect, even if it 'sounds' acceptable.

Next steps

Review every mistake with your child and sort them into categories: vocabulary, punctuation, grammar rules, or careless misreading. If errors cluster in one or two categories, use a focused revision guide (for example, a punctuation workbook or a vocabulary builder) rather than repeating full practice papers immediately. For questions answered correctly, ask your child to explain *why* the answer is right; teaching the rule aloud cements understanding.

If the score was below 24, wait a week, revise the weak topics using targeted exercises, then attempt a similar paper to measure progress. If the score was above 32, maintain momentum by reading widely (newspapers, classic children's novels, non-fiction) and tackling harder comprehension or creative-writing tasks. Record any new vocabulary in a notebook with definitions and example sentences, then revisit the list weekly until each word is secure.

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