

11+ English Skills Practice Paper 2

1 hour 10 minutes

Instructions:

You have 1 hour and 10 minutes to attempt all questions

Spend 10 minutes reading the text and underlining

Spend 30 minutes on Section A – 40 marks

Spend 30 minutes on Section B – 40 Marks

11+

Date:

Score:



20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

Near seven o'clock we finally surveyed the bank of shellfish, where pearl oysters reproduce by the millions. These valuable mollusks stick to rocks, where they're strongly attached by a mass of brown filaments that forbids their moving about. In this respect oysters are inferior even to mussels, to whom nature has not denied all talent for locomotion.

The shellfish *Meleagrina*, that womb for pearls whose valves are nearly equal in size, has the shape of a round shell with thick walls and a very rough exterior. Some of these shells were furrowed with flaky, greenish bands that radiated down from the top. These were the young oysters. The others had rugged black surfaces, measured up to fifteen centimeters in width, and were ten or more years old.

Captain Nemo pointed to this prodigious heap of shellfish, and I saw that these mines were genuinely inexhaustible, since nature's creative powers are greater than man's destructive instincts. True to those instincts, Ned Land greedily stuffed the finest of these mollusks into a net he carried at his side.

But we couldn't stop. We had to follow the captain, who headed down trails seemingly known only to himself. The seafloor rose noticeably, and when I lifted my arms, sometimes they would pass above the surface of the sea. Then the level of the oysterbank would lower unpredictably. Often we went around tall, pointed rocks rising like pyramids. In their dark crevices huge crustaceans, aiming their long legs like heavy artillery, watched us with unblinking eyes, while underfoot there crept millipedes, bloodworms, aricia worms, and annelid worms, whose antennas and tubular tentacles were incredibly long.

Just then a huge cave opened up in our path, hollowed from a picturesque pile of rocks whose smooth heights were completely hung with underwater flora. At first this cave looked pitch-black to me. Inside, the sun's rays seemed to diminish by degrees. Their hazy transparency was nothing more than drowned light.

Captain Nemo went in. We followed him. My eyes soon grew accustomed to this comparative gloom. I distinguished the unpredictably contoured springings of a vault, supported by natural pillars firmly based on a granite foundation, like the weighty columns of Tuscan architecture. Why had our incomprehensible guide taken us into the depths of this underwater crypt? I would soon find out.

After going down a fairly steep slope, our feet trod the floor of a sort of circular pit. There Captain Nemo stopped, and his hand indicated an object that I hadn't yet noticed.

It was an oyster of extraordinary dimensions, a titanic giant clam, a holy-water font that could have held a whole lake, a basin more than two meters wide, hence even bigger than the one adorning the Nautilus's lounge.

I approached this phenomenal mollusk. Its mass of filaments attached it to a table of granite, and there it grew by itself in the midst of the cave's calm waters. I estimated the weight of this giant clam at 300 kilograms. Hence such an oyster held fifteen kilos of meat, and you'd need the stomach of King Gargantua to eat a couple dozen.

CONTINUED...

Captain Nemo was obviously familiar with this bivalve's existence. This wasn't the first time he'd paid it a visit, and I thought his sole reason for leading us to this locality was to show us a natural curiosity. I was mistaken. Captain Nemo had an explicit personal interest in checking on the current condition of this giant clam.

The mollusk's two valves were partly open. The captain approached and stuck his dagger vertically between the shells to discourage any ideas about closing; then with his hands he raised the fringed, membrane-filled tunic that made up the animal's mantle.

There, between its leaflike folds, I saw a loose pearl as big as a coconut. Its globular shape, perfect clarity, and wonderful orient made it a jewel of incalculable value. Carried away by curiosity, I stretched out my hand to take it, weigh it, fondle it! But the captain stopped me, signalled no, removed his dagger in one swift motion, and let the two valves snap shut.

I then understood Captain Nemo's intent. By leaving the pearl buried beneath the giant clam's mantle, he allowed it to grow imperceptibly. With each passing year the mollusk's secretions added new concentric layers. The captain alone was familiar with the cave where this wonderful fruit of nature was "ripening"; he alone reared it, so to speak, in order to transfer it one day to his dearly beloved museum. Perhaps, following the examples of oyster farmers in China and India, he had even predetermined the creation of this pearl by sticking under the mollusk's folds some piece of glass or metal that was gradually covered with mother-of-pearl. In any case, comparing this pearl to others I already knew about, and to those shimmering in the captain's collection, I estimated that it was worth at least £10,000,000. It was a superb natural curiosity rather than a luxurious piece of jewelry, because I don't know of any female ear that could handle it.

Our visit to this opulent giant clam came to an end. Captain Nemo left the cave, and we climbed back up the bank of shellfish in the midst of these clear waters not yet disturbed by divers at work.

Adapted from 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea by Jules Verne, which is available in the Public Domain.

Questions

1. Why does the narrator say that “oysters are inferior to mussels”? Use your own words to explain your answer.

(2 marks)

2. In your own words, describe some of the common features of Meleagrina.

(3 marks)

3. In the third paragraph, how do Ned Land’s actions reflect what the narrator was saying about mankind? How did this affect the supply of shellfish? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

(4 marks)

4. In the fourth paragraph the narrator describes two different things with the use of similes. Right them down, then replace both with a new simile of your own, that also offers an appropriate description.

(8 marks)

SIMILE 1:

MY NEW SIMILE:

SIMILE 2:

MY NEW SIMILE:

5. The words in bold are taken from the passage. Use them in a new sentence that shows you understand what the word means and that you can use it correctly.

“picturesque”

(2 marks)

“phenomenal”

(2 marks)

‘familiar’

(2 marks)

‘luxurious’

(2 marks)

6. What was it that Captain Nemo led them towards in the cave? Why was it so extraordinary? Highlight words and phrases from the passage that the narrator uses to show how unusual it was.

(6 marks)

7. What did the narrator want to do with the clam? How did Captain Nemo react to this and why do you think that was?

(3 marks)

SECTION B: WRITING

(40 marks)

You are advised to spend 30 minutes on section B.

You must take care to plan, check and correct your work.

Presentation and accuracy of spelling and punctuation will be assessed in the marking of this section.

Answer ONE of the following two questions:

Either:

- (1) Write a story based on the theme of betrayal. Try to make your writing as vivid and interesting as you can.

(40 marks)

Or:

- (2) Continue the story from the passage in Section A. Imagine that something happens to the clam. Try to make your writing as vivid and interesting as you can.

(40 marks)

CHOSEN TITLE:

STORY:
