

GCSE 2020  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,  
PRACTICE READING TASK B



# INTRODUCTION TASK B

## Practice reading tasks for English Language GCSE 2020

To prepare for the reading element of your GCSE English Language examinations, we have set out two reading tasks – Task A and Task B. When you have practised both you will have covered the major demands of your 2020 GCSE reading assessment whichever examination board you are entered for in England.

These demands are that during your GCSE, you have the opportunity:

- to read and respond to nineteenth century, twentieth century and twenty-first century texts which are either fiction or non-fiction;
- to compare two of those texts;
- to respond all four reading assessment objectives are covered by the questions set

## Practice reading Task B

This reading task consists of seven questions based on extracts from two non-fiction texts: the first is a twenty-first century text and the second an early twentieth century text.

You will have 1 hour 15 minutes to read the texts and answer the four questions. The questions cover all four reading Assessment Objectives (AO) which will be included in your 2020 GCSE English Language examination. These Assessment Objectives are listed below.

- AO1**
- Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas
  - Select and synthesise evidence from different texts
- AO2** Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views
- AO3** Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts
- AO4** Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references

## How to do your best on reading questions

After each question, you will find set out the AO which the question covers.

If you compare the wording of each of the questions with the wording of the AO below it, you will notice key words in the question are the same as the wording of the particular AO. Learn to recognise the link.

In your GCSE, the question paper will not identify the particular AO but the wording of the question will help you to understand how you are expected to respond to the question. As you consider the question, highlight the key words and refer to them as you write your answer. This will help you to stay focused on meeting the requirements of the question.

Another important point to remember is that each question will indicate how many marks it is worth. So make sure you spend a proportionate amount of time on the questions worth higher marks. For example question 1 is worth 1 mark and question 4 is worth 15 marks.

When you have attempted each of the four questions, compare your response with the mark scheme. Tick where you have responded correctly in your answer.

Consider the mark scheme and identify where you have missed key points. Decide what you could have done to improve your mark.

You will note questions worth more marks have mark schemes divided into levels. Look at the words used in each level. These words describe to the examiner how to classify performance. They also tell you how to improve your performance to get a higher mark.

Finally, remember when you have revised Task A and Task B, you will have covered 50% of your English Language GCSE examination. Time spent preparing now, will mean you understand exactly what is expected of you in your GCSE and so you will be prepared to do your very best in the reading assessments

## TASK B - STIMULUS TEXT 1

*Extract from '127 Hours: Between a Rock and a Hard Place' by Aron Ralston (2004), an American climber.*

*Ralston goes hiking and climbing in a canyon. While climbing down a narrow canyon, a boulder crushed his right hand against the canyon wall. He had not informed anyone of his hiking plans*

Just below the ledge where I'm standing is a stone the size of a large bus tyre, stuck fast in the channel between the walls, a few feet out from the lip. If I can step onto it, then I'll have a nine-foot height to descend, less than that of the first overhang. I'll dangle off the stone, then take a short fall onto the rounded rocks piled on the canyon floor. Stemming across the canyon at the lip of the dropoff, with one foot and one hand on each of the walls, I traverse<sup>(1)</sup> out to the stone. I press my back against the south wall and lock my left knee, which pushes my foot tight against the north wall. With my right foot, I kick at the boulder to test how stuck it is. It's jammed tightly enough to hold my weight. I lower myself from the chimneying<sup>(2)</sup> position and step onto the stone. It supports me but teeters slightly. After confirming that I don't want to chimney down from the stone's height, I squat and grip the rear of the lodged boulder, turning to face back upcanyon. Sliding my belly over the front edge, I can lower myself and hang from my fully extended arms, akin to climbing down from the roof of a house.

As I dangle, I feel the stone respond to my adjusting grip with a scraping quake as my body's weight applies enough torque<sup>(3)</sup> to disturb it from its position. Instantly, I know this is trouble, and instinctively, I let go of the rotating boulder to land on the round rocks below. When I look up, the backlit stone falling toward my head consumes the sky. Fear shoots my hands over my head. I can't move backward or I'll fall over a small ledge. My only hope is to push off the falling rock and get my head out of its way.

The next three seconds play out at a tenth of their normal speed. Time dilates, as if I'm dreaming, and my reactions decelerate. In slow motion: The rock smashes my left hand against the south wall; my eyes register the collision, and I yank my left arm back as the rock ricochets<sup>(4)</sup>; the boulder then crushes my right hand and ensnares my right arm at the wrist, palm in, thumb up, fingers extended; the rock slides another foot down the wall with my arm in tow,



tearing the skin off the lateral side of my forearm. Then silence.

My disbelief paralyses me temporarily as I stare at the sight of my arm vanishing into an implausibly small gap between the fallen boulder and the canyon wall. Within moments, my nervous system's pain response overcomes the initial shock. Good Christ, my hand. The flaring agony throws me into a panic.

<sup>1</sup> cross

<sup>2</sup> shuffling with your back against one wall and your feet against the other

<sup>3</sup> rotating force

<sup>4</sup> bounces off

## TASK B - STIMULUS TEXT 2

*Extract from 'Return of Shackleton from Weddell Sea' by the American Geographical Society (1916).*

*This is an extract from a journal, the Geographical Review, about Sir Ernest Shackleton's return from his attempt to cross the Antarctic. The journal gives details of his return after his ship, Endurance, sank.*

The daily press of June 1 reported the arrival, on May 31, at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, of Shackleton and five men of his expedition. The practical absence of summer weather had prevented him from carrying out his plan of crossing the Antarctic Continent. When near the land, his vessel, the Endurance, was caught in the ice. It was impossible to release her; nor was it possible to land. From that time on, for eight months, the vessel drifted until she was crushed by the ice and finally sank. That the expedition was ultimately saved from disaster is due to the leader's determination and skill. The following account is based on his cablegram <sup>(5)</sup> to the New York World, published in its issue of June 2.

On December 6, 1914, the expedition left South Georgia. On the 8th, heavy pack ice was encountered off the Sandwich Islands...and Coats Land was sighted on January 10, 1915. Subsequently a new land was discovered, with two hundred miles of coast line and large glaciers discharging into the sea. This was named Caird Coast in honor of James Caird, one of the supporters of the expedition...

...Abnormal weather conditions prevailed. Contrary to all expectations the temperature was below zero (Fahrenheit) in early February. By the end of the month it fell to minus 49 degrees, and the old and the young pack were cemented together. Even the animal life was affected by the severe weather, the seals migrating northward in great numbers.

The Endurance drifted in a southwesterly direction along the coast as far as what is probably the head of Weddell Sea, as indicated by Filchner's discovery in 1912 of the junction here of the main land-mass and the ice barrier...From here the drift took on a northwesterly course.

In June began the menace of ice pressure. During the following months the vessel experienced

a foretaste of her final fate. On several occasions she was lifted bodily out of the ice; at first she stood the strain, but finally the screwing motion of the floes <sup>(6)</sup> caused the ship's sides to open. The end came on October 27. The terrific pressure culminated in tearing out the stern and rudder posts, the main deck breaking upward and icebergs piercing the ship. She finally sank on November 20.

After a futile attempt to proceed, the party camped on the floe after saving all the provisions, equipment, and scientific data. From the place where the Endurance was crushed...the drift continued slowly northward. At the end of the year another attempt was made to go forward. In five days the party advanced only nine miles; the boat, which had to be hauled over the ice, would sink in because of the rotten surface. So the attempt was given up.

<sup>5</sup> a message sent by cable

<sup>6</sup> sheets of floating ice

## TASK B: READING - Q1

You should spend about 1 hour 15 minutes on the **WHOLE** of Section A (Questions 1-7).  
Read Text 1. Then answer Questions 1-3.

### Question 1

From lines 5-13, give two examples that suggest Aron Ralston thinks that he has secured his position well.

**(1 mark)**

## TASK B: READING - Q2

### Question 2

Give **one example** from lines 17–19 of how Aron Ralston **uses language** to show how difficult it was for him as the stone falls. **(2 marks)**



## TASK B: READING - Q3

### Question 3

Analyse how the writer uses **language** and **structure** to interest and engage readers.

**(15 marks)**

## TASK B: READING - Q4

Read Text 2. Then answer Questions 4–7.

### Question 4

From lines 1–8, identify one reason why Shackleton's crossing of the Antarctic failed.

**(1 mark)**

## TASK B: READING - Q5

### Question 5

In this example, from lines 16–17, how does the writer use language to show how difficult the weather conditions were?

**(1 mark)**



## TASK B: READING - Q6

### Question 6

The writer attempts to engage the reader through the description of the expedition.

**Evaluate** how successfully this is achieved.

**(15 marks)**

## TASK B: READING - Q7a

Question 7 is about Text 1 and Text 2. Answer both parts of the question.  
Refer to both texts in your answers. Write your answer in the space provided.

- 7 (a) The two texts show some of the events that happened on expeditions.  
What similarities do the expeditions share in these extracts?  
Use evidence from **both** texts to support your answer.

**(6 marks)**

## TASK B: READING - Q7b

- 7 (b) Compare how the writers of Text 1 and Text 2 present their ideas and perspectives about dangerous experiences **(14 marks)**  
Support your answer with detailed references to the texts.