English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper 1 Answers

Q#	Answer	Explanation
1	A	Lines 1–3 say he was allowed to ride the whole route once a year, on the last evening of the winter term. The winter term tells us when in the year the ride happened, not how often; it was one night out of the twelve months.
2	B	Eleven weeks of looking forward is a strong feeling, and the second half of the sentence says he hid it. The two halves pull against each other on purpose: this is a boy who wants the night badly and will not let anyone see that he does.
3	E	He tells them something true — she does work for the buses — and then lets a false picture form in their heads. Choosing not to correct it is the giveaway: at this point in the passage he is quietly ashamed of what his mother does.
4	C	The first sentence is a small, private boast, and the word ‘either’ ties it back to his silence about his mother’s job. He is hiding two things at once — an embarrassment and a treasure — and at eleven he cannot yet tell them apart.
5	C	The buses are compared to cattle using the word ‘as’, and a comparison made with ‘like’ or ‘as’ is a simile. A metaphor would have said the buses *were* cattle, without the comparing word.
6	B	The sentence just before it says she had never missed the start of a shift in nine years, so never running is not carelessness but the opposite of it. She is never late and never rushed, and that same steadiness is what she later shows towards her passengers.
7	D	Here ‘checked’ describes the chef’s trousers — it tells us their pattern — so it is doing an adjective’s work. The same word is a verb in another sentence (‘she checked the mirror’), which is why the job a word does in its own sentence has to be looked at, not the word on its own.

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8	B	A library is the place where people lower their voices without being asked, so the comparison tells us how quiet the bus was. It also says something about the passengers: thanking a driver in a whisper is the behaviour of people being careful of one another.
9	D	The examples given straight after the colon — night cleaners, a baker going in to work, students still arguing — are all people whose day runs at the wrong hours. His mother knows a surprising number of them by name, so they are certainly not strangers to her.
10	A	'Nothing at all' and 'tremendous seriousness' are deliberately mismatched, and the gap between them is where the humour sits. The narrator is amused by the students rather than troubled by them, which is why nobody on the bus objects.
11	E	She got on with a violin case and a card that would not work, and she tried it four times while the machine refused it each time. The machine was in perfect order — it did exactly what it was built to do — which is part of what made the moment so uncomfortable.
12	A	Shuffling and sighing are the small, wordless noises people make when they are being kept waiting. Not one of them says anything, which makes the pressure on the young woman harder to bear rather than easier.
13	D	Calling the card 'tired' is a small, kind fiction: it moves the blame from the passenger to a piece of plastic, in front of a queue that has just been sighing at her. She pulls away immediately as well, before anybody can say anything more, so the moment is over before it can grow.
14	D	'I am sorry to say' is the grown-up narrator speaking, not the boy sitting on the bus. The whole passage is told by somebody looking back at himself, and this is the moment he admits the criticism was unfair.
15	E	He says he had picked the idea up somewhere, which is an admission that he had never really examined it. That matters, because he is judging his mother by a rule he had absorbed without thinking, and the rest of the passage quietly takes it apart.

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16	B	On any other bus, she says, she would have told the woman to wait for the next one — but on the 41 there is no next one. What is left is a four-mile walk, a taxi she cannot afford, or a bench until six in the morning, and that is why the usual rule cannot fairly be applied.
17	A	Minding your own business is something only a person can do, so handing it to a row of shops gives them a human quality, which is personification. Nothing is compared using 'like' or 'as', so it is not a simile.
18	C	Stopping where there was no stop is what gets the man home; looking straight ahead while he gets his breath back is what spares him being watched while he does it. The second part costs her nothing and is asked of her by nobody, which is exactly why the narrator still remembers it.
19	C	'Cold', 'empty' and 'shining' all describe the noun 'streets', so there are three adjectives. 'Through' is a preposition and 'streets' is the noun being described, so neither of those counts.
20	E	Everything in the passage turns on those words: they explain his mother's decision, they change the way the narrator sees her job, and they are the thing he says he has never forgotten. The violin, the depot and the route are details inside that story rather than the story itself.

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