English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper 4 Answers

Q#	Answer	Explanation
1	C	In the first verse “sea” rhymes with “be” and “motion” with “ocean”; in the second, “shock” rhymes with “Rock” and “fell” with “Bell”. The rhymes come in pairs, one pair after the other, and the poet keeps to that pattern for all seventeen verses.
2	A	To stir is to move, and the poet says there is none, in the air or in the water. The three lines that follow prove it: the sails receive no motion, the keel is steady, and the waves rise and fall so little that they cannot even swing the Bell.
3	D	The Bell floats on a buoy and “over the waves its warning rung”, and the next verse says exactly when it is needed: when the Rock is hidden by the swell, the mariners hear the Bell and know the danger is there. Nothing in the poem connects it with prayers, with the harbour or with the weather.
4	B	Perilous means full of peril, that is, likely to do great harm. The Rock happens to be hidden, and far from land as well, which is what makes two of the other answers tempting; but neither of those is what the word itself means. It is the threat to the ship that the mariners are being warned about.
5	E	To bless someone in this sense is to call down good upon them out of gratitude. The sailors never meet the Abbot; hearing his Bell in the swell is enough to make them thankful. That is also what makes Sir Ralph’s later boast — that the next man to come will not bless him — such a spiteful one.
6	A	The verse spends three lines building up his good humour — whistling, singing, mirthful to excess — and then the word “But” turns the whole picture over. His cheerfulness is real enough, but it is not innocent, and the very next verse shows what it makes him do.

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7	C	"Quoth" is an old form of "said", and it always comes before the speaker rather than after. Both times it introduces words that Sir Ralph speaks aloud to his men, and the second of them is a boast rather than a question, so "asked" will not do.
8	E	He says why himself as he orders out the boat: "And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok." When the Bell has gone down he gloats that the next man to come to the Rock will not bless the Abbot. He carries nothing away and gains nothing at all, which is what makes the act pure mischief.
9	B	Said aloud, "gurgling" makes something very like the noise of water closing over the Bell, and a word chosen for that reason is called onomatopoeia. It does not rhyme with "around" in the following line, and it does not repeat the opening sound of any word near it.
10	D	The order runs: the boat is rowed out, the Bell is cut away, the bubbles burst above it, Sir Ralph then robs at sea for many a day, and only once he has grown rich does he turn back towards Scotland. Turning for home is the last of the five, and it is what carries him back to the Rock.
11	A	Plunder is property taken by force, and he has spent many a day scouring the sea for it. His title tells the same story, since a rover of this kind is a pirate. The Bell was cut loose and sank on the spot, so there was never anything for him to sell.
12	E	The Bell mattered only when the Rock could not be seen, and the haze takes away everything else the sailors might steer by: they cannot see the sun, and by evening they see no land either. The poet has quietly arranged the one night on which Sir Ralph's own act will cost him most.
13	C	A crewman speaks first — "Canst hear," said one — and asks about the broken roar. The reply comes from the man standing on the deck in charge of the ship, who has just been speaking in the verse before about the rising moon. The poet gives Sir Ralph the wish on purpose, because he is the one person in the world who cannot have it granted.

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14	D	Sir Ralph cut the Bell away to plague the Abbot, never thinking that he might come this way again himself. When a person is caught out by his own doing in this way, we call it irony. He is asking for the one help in the world that he alone has made impossible.
15	B	Repeating a sound at the start of nearby words is alliteration, and here it is put to work: the "sh" of "shivering shock" hisses like water and breaks like timber. It falls at the loudest moment in the whole poem, so it can hardly be there to make anything sleepy or quiet.
16	E	The poem began in the past — the ship was still, the Abbot had placed the Bell — and here it slips into the present: the waves rush, the ship is sinking. Bringing the worst moment into the present tense is a way of making the reader watch it happen rather than hear about it afterwards.
17	A	A knell is the slow tolling of a bell for someone who has died. The poet saves it for his very last word, so that the Bell Sir Ralph silenced seems to sound once more — this time for him.
18	B	The poet writes "as if", and those two words matter: he never says the Devil is there. The Bell was cut away and sank long before. What a drowning man hears is his ship breaking apart, and it is his dying fear — and his memory of what he did — that turns the noise into the Bell tolling for him.
19	D	Sir Ralph sets a trap for strangers he will never meet, and it is he who is caught in it. "Look before you leap" is the tempting answer, because he certainly acts without thinking; but it misses the heart of the poem, which is that the harm comes back to the very man who did it.
20	C	The one thing the Abbot does in the poem is fix a Bell for sailors he will never meet, and every mariner blesses him for it; the one thing Sir Ralph does is cut it away, for no gain whatever. The poem never tells us the Abbot's age or his wealth, and it is Sir Ralph, not the Abbot, whose words we actually hear.

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