

English Comprehension: Hard Practice Paper 5 Answers

Q#	Answer	Explanation
1	D	To plod is to walk with slow, heavy, effortful steps. It fits the picture the author is building – a tall, strong, heavy man with a sea-chest being trundled behind him – and it is the opposite of running, creeping or marching.
2	A	The coat is his “soiled blue coat”, and soiled means made dirty. “Tarry” describes his pigtail, “ragged” his hands, “nut-brown” his skin, and “livid” the colour of the sabre cut on his cheek.
3	E	The narrator says “my father kept the inn”, calls the captain “that ... pirate of ours” and remembers being paid a fourpenny piece – so he is the innkeeper’s son, a child at the time. “I remember him as if it were yesterday” shows he is telling it long afterwards, which is why he can say what he only understood later.
4	C	A capstan is the winch that sailors heaved round by pushing on wooden bars, roaring out a song to keep in time. Saying his voice was “tuned and broken” there means the sea made it what it is: high, old and unsteady from long, hard use, not soft, trained or pretended.
5	B	A connoisseur savours a good wine and knows exactly what he is tasting. Setting that elegant word beside a filthy, scarred old seaman calling roughly for rum is deliberately odd, and it is the author’s way of showing that the man takes himself very seriously indeed.
6	E	The word is “situated”, spelled the way it came out of his mouth. Writers use such spellings to put a voice on the page, and the same trick appears in “what you mought call me”. It is the author’s spelling choice, not a mistake by the narrator.
7	A	He throws the money down the instant the subject of his name comes up – “Oh, I see what you’re at-there” – and follows it with “You can tell me when I’ve worked through that.” Money bought silence: it settles the reckoning and ends the conversation, which is exactly what a man in hiding wants.

8	D	A man who "sailed before the mast" was an ordinary hand, and the captain's poor clothes and coarse speech would suggest just that. The narrator says so and then sets it aside: "Here you, matey ... bring up alongside" is the voice of somebody used to being obeyed, and that is what gives him away.
9	C	"Round", "upon" and "with" each show how one thing stands in relation to another, so there are three prepositions. "He" is a pronoun, "hung" the verb, "brass" an adjective, and "All day" tells us when.
10	C	The passage says exactly that: "we thought it was the want of company of his own kind that made him ask this question". The truth comes in the next line - he was desirous to avoid them - and the two together show the family slowly working out that their guest is afraid.
11	B	The bargain is set out in the passage: a silver fourpenny on the first of every month if the boy would keep his "weather-eye open for a seafaring man with one leg" and report him the moment he appeared. The telescope and the sea-chest are the captain's own affair.
12	D	To pay dear for something is to get it at too great a cost, and he says what the cost was: "these abominable fancies", the one-legged man leaping after him over hedge and ditch on stormy nights. He is paid in silver but pays in fear.
13	A	The other four report things that happened and could be checked by anyone who was there. "I really believe" is the narrator's own judgement, and the words that carry it - believe, did us good - are exactly the words another person might disagree with. His father, who thought the inn would be ruined, did disagree.
14	E	The author gives the reason in the same sentence: "it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life". The fright is only enjoyable afterwards, at a safe distance - which is why some of the younger men could call him a "true sea-dog" once he was out of hearing.

15	B	The sentence before it has three men in it - the doctor, the country folk and the captain - so a bare "he" would be unclear. A pair of dashes drops the explanation in and then hands the sentence straight back, which is why the reading voice barely breaks step. A pair of commas or brackets would do the same work.
16	D	The narrator says he was "observing the contrast", and the two pictures are built to be set side by side: powder as white as snow, bright black eyes and pleasant manners against filthy, heavy, bleared and far gone in rum. Putting them together prepares the reader for the clash that follows.
17	C	To be quit of somebody is to be rid of them. The doctor has just said "if you keep on drinking rum", so the way the world will be rid of him is plain enough - and it is a doctor, who has been upstairs with a dying man that afternoon, who is saying it. The threat of the law comes later, at the assizes.
18	A	A beaten dog slinks back and growls under its breath: it has given in but wants the last word. The captain does exactly that - he knuckles under, puts the knife away and sits down again, still grumbling - and the proof that he really was mastered is that he held his peace for many evenings afterwards.
19	E	He chose it for the opposite reason. He asked what inns there were along the coast and picked this one because it was "described as lonely", and when he was told there was very little company he answered, "this is the berth for me." The other four statements are all stated plainly in the passage.
20	C	Every odd thing he does points the same way: he picks a lonely inn, pays gold at once rather than give his name, watches the sea through a telescope all day, asks daily whether any seafaring men have passed, keeps silent whenever a sailor is in the parlour, and pays a boy to watch for one particular man. He bullies everybody in the house, yet he is the one who is frightened.