GCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Component 2 19th and 21st Century Non-Fiction Reading and Transactional/Persuasive Writing

Time allowed: 2 hours

Additional materials

An answer booklet or lined paper.

Instructions

Use black ink or a black ball-point pen.

Answer all questions in Sections A and B.

Write your answers in the separate answer booklet or on lined paper.

Suggested time

Section A: about 10 minutes reading and 50 minutes answering the questions.

Section B: about 30 minutes for each task, including 5 minutes planning and 25 minutes writing.

Information

Section A: 40 marks. Section B: 40 marks.

The marks available are shown beside each question.

Source A

A contemporary article considers the people and preparation behind RNLI lifeboat rescues.

A lifeboat rescue may begin with a pager sounding while someone is at work, with family or asleep. Across the United Kingdom and Ireland, RNLI crews can be called out at any hour. Most crew members are volunteers. Their readiness is supported by regular training, both on the water and on land. When a request for help arrives, the coastguard contacts the station's operations manager or launch authority; a decision to launch must be made before the crew are paged.

The people who put to sea are only part of that response. Shore crew help to launch and recover the lifeboat and make it ready for another call. Depending on the station, preparations can involve opening doors, clearing a slipway or getting launching equipment ready. Boat crew prepare their protective kit while others prepare the means of departure. The visible movement towards the water depends on work that is less likely to appear in a photograph.

Training gives this divided work a common direction. A volunteer must learn more than the position of a rope or the operation of a piece of equipment. Practice allows people to develop reliable actions, communicate and understand their responsibilities. Exercises on shore and afloat are therefore part of lifesaving, even when nobody is being rescued. The quiet session without a crowd has value because a later emergency may allow little time for explanation. Preparation makes cooperation possible.

None of this removes danger. A lifeboat operates in an environment that cannot be ordered to become calm. Information must be gathered, a crew assembled and a judgement made about the response. Courage is needed, but courage does not mean ignoring everything that could go wrong. A decision has consequences for rescuers as well as for the people waiting for help. The strength of an organised service lies partly in making responsibility something that is shared rather than simply admired.

The launch is the sharp edge of a much longer effort. Behind it lie repeated exercises, checked equipment and tasks completed when the sea has attracted no headlines. A single successful action can catch the eye; the patient work that makes it possible slips out of sight. Yet readiness is not a heroic possession that one person keeps in a pocket. It is a net of dependable actions. Pull away the unnoticed strands and the impressive moment has less to rest on.

Public recognition often prefers a face to a system. One portrait gives a story a centre, while a list of roles can seem less memorable. That does not make individual bravery unimportant. A particular decision may deserve particular praise. But a rescue described only through its most striking figure leaves something out. The person aboard the boat belongs to a larger group of people whose contributions differ in visibility, not necessarily in worth. Recognition

becomes fairer when it can hold both ideas at once.

The work also reaches beyond the station. The RNLI is a charity, and public support helps provide boats, equipment and training. Those resources connect people who may never meet. A donation, a training session and a prepared launching system are different contributions, but all belong to the same practical purpose. The link is not made by applause alone. It has to be maintained through the less spectacular business of supporting people and making sure that a service can continue to respond.

A better account of lifesaving would therefore look at the whole chain, without pretending that every link does the same job. It would notice the person who goes to sea and the person who helps bring the boat back. It would leave room for preparation as well as action, for judgement as well as daring. The most useful tribute to a rescue team is an understanding of what its members make possible together. The boat may leave the shore, but the effort that carries it does not end there.

Source B

In this nineteenth-century biographical account, Grace Darling and her father row towards people stranded after a shipwreck in 1838. A coble is a small fishing boat.

It is said that Grace was the first to seize an oar, and spring into the boat; but her father, who was a brave man, quickly followed, and the two were soon working together in harmony. They scarcely spoke at first, William Darling only giving Grace a few directions with regard to the management of the boat, and then both used their utmost endeavours to propel her towards the desired spot.

One moment we must linger to look at the heroic girl as she sits firmly in the boat, with a steady light in her eyes, lips firmly compressed, and strong brave heart. Could we have seen Grace Darling in more attractive guise? The thunderous waves were leaping and foaming around the little boat; the dark clouds were lowering, and the winds blowing furiously. The afrighted sea-birds looked at them, and screamed shrilly as they saw the boat rocked to and fro, now leaping on the top of a wave that tossed it high, and now sinking down, down, as if it were going to the very bottom of the deep. But Grace was not afraid. She scarcely thought of the danger; for her heart and sympathy were with those who were on the rock. Long before she got to them, her imagination pictured the patient faces, full of pain, which would grow bright when they saw her; and as she thought of them, her arm gained new strength, and she went on again more energetically than before. Was she, indeed, a girl? Had she sisters, who cried out if a pain touched them, and who were always helplessly appealing to men for help? Did she know what fear was? Yes; she knew that she would always be afraid of her own thoughts, if she did not what she could to rescue the shipwrecked strangers.

On they went, over the stormy waters, every minute being nearer their goal. The foam dashed in the face of the intrepid girl, and the salt water made her eyes smart; but she did not relax her efforts, but kept nobly and steadily at her work. Her father could not but admire her courage; and the sight of it gave him even more determination to succeed.

"Are you getting tired, my girl?" he asked presently.

"Not very, father. We shall do it," she replied.

"Yes, I really hope we shall. There they are, poor wretches, glad enough to see us, I know. It is a good thing it is an ebb tide. If it had not been, we could not have passed between the islands. It will be flowing when we come back; and if there are no sailors to help us, we may as well make up our minds to stay on the rocks with the others, for we shall not be able to get home again."

"Do not let us meet trouble half-way, father; the sailors will be able to help us."

They pulled hard a little longer, and then contrived to reach the rock on which the sufferers were waiting.

"Pray, take care, Grace."

"All right, father. Do not be afraid. I will not risk all by my mismanagement."

"If the coble is beaten against the rocks, she will be smashed to pieces."

"I will take care, father. Cannot you land now? See, there is a chance. Now, father!"

With a tremendous effort, Darling got on the rock, and immediately Grace rowed the boat back so as to keep her afloat on the water, and free of the dangerous reefs.

SECTION A: 40 marks

Answer all the following questions.

1 1 Read Source A.

a) Who contacts the station's operations manager or launch authority when help is needed? [1]

b) Give one job done by shore crew. [1]

c) What kind of organisation is the RNLI? [1]

[3 marks]

1 2 The writer of Source A wants readers to value the less visible work behind lifeboat rescues. How does the writer try to achieve this? Comment on what is said, the use of language, tone and structure, and other ways the writer makes this work seem important. Support your comments with references to the text, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.

[10 marks]

1 3 Read Source B.

a) Who is said to be the first to seize an oar? [1]

b) Why does William Darling say the ebb tide is helpful? [1]

c) What does Grace do immediately after her father gets onto the rock? [1]

[3 marks]

1 4 A reader said: "Source B presents Grace's courage as much more than simply being unafraid." To what extent do you agree? Comment on what is said and how it is said. Support your views with references to the text.

[10 marks]

1 5 Using information from both sources, explain briefly how rescuers work with other people to make a rescue possible. Make clear which source you are referring to.

[4 marks]

1 6 Both texts are about people involved in rescues at sea. Compare the writers' views of what makes rescuers admirable and how the writers make those views clear to readers. Use references from both texts and make clear which text you are discussing.

[10 marks]

SECTION B: 40 marks

Answer both questions.

Aim to write about 300-400 words for each task. Think about the purpose and audience.

For each task, 12 marks are for communication and organisation; 8 marks are for vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling.

2 1 Your local council is deciding how to recognise people who make an important contribution to the community. Write a letter to the council giving your views about which kinds of contribution deserve recognition and how they should be recognised. Write your letter. Aim to write about 300-400 words.

[20 marks]

2 2 Write a review for a school or college magazine of one of the following: a film, a book, a television programme, or a podcast that you think other students should know about. Write your review. Aim to write about 300-400 words.

[20 marks]

Exam Stash, Lifeboat rescues (2026).

Eva Hope, Grace Darling, Heroine of the Farne Islands (1875).