

Reading Sample Answers

Reading Text 1 - The 16 Year Old DJ:

"I just couldn't wait for the invigilator to end the exam so I could be on my way to the airport," says Harrison McDonald. Like many other 16-year-olds, he was sitting his GCSE exams this summer - unlike the others he was flying off afterwards to DJ in front of 100,000 people at a gig in Paris. Once his chemistry test finished, he picked up his luggage from the back of the exam hall and headed straight to the airport. "It was like chalk and cheese," he says. "Starting the day off in a dead silent, tense hall where you could hear a pin drop to barely hearing myself think over the bass during the festival".

He has been DJing since the age of 11 after a clip of him went viral and plays gigs regularly in his home city of Liverpool and abroad. Nerves don't affect him before gigs: "I thrive off the people there. I guess the only thing that may concern me is picking the right song but it's great when it fills the dance floor".

Despite an intense schedule with bookings each week, he doesn't feel the pressure. "Due to gigs being on the weekend, balancing is never really an issue". He makes an effort to prioritise education alongside his DJ career: "I think it's important to make the time to revise especially when I have various gigs within exam season". Being able to get that balance right is something he puts down to support from his school and his family. "I have to be thankful to my school who set up a club called 'revise till 5' which meant that I had the opportunity to get quality revision in right after school, which then gives me the time to prepare for gigs." Harrison says he tries to ensure he has time to be "a normal teenager" and meets up with friends, especially in the exam season. "It gives your mind something else to think about instead of covalent bonds," he says, referring to his chemistry studies.

His musical journey began as he was starting secondary school when his father bought him some equipment: "I am very grateful that my dad has provided me a platform to do what I love. I owe it all to my dad really, he got me lessons and pushed me to become the best I can. I'm very appreciative of what he has done for me." His advice to young people would be "just do it, as many people contemplate pursuing something and never do. Becoming a DJ has given me so many fantastic opportunities."

He's spending the rest of the summer in Ibiza on various residencies, and in September will launch a radio show from Dubai, which he is particularly excited about. "I have never had to speak in any of my gigs so I can't wait to be able to interact with my audience," he says. As a Liverpool football fan, he says his dream goal would be the chance to play for the players: "I think within the dressing room there are some good characters who would be dancing to my funky house beats".

Like his peers he has to wait until August for GCSE results. So how does he feel about what lies ahead? "After an exam, I have to try and never think about it again. I'll never see the paper again and what's done is done. I shouldn't worry because the outcome will still be the same."



Questions and Answers:

1. The word 'tense' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. indicating the time at which an action happened;

b. causing feelings of nervousness and worry;

c. a temporary, outdoor structure;

d. made of thick (usually waterproof) material.

2. The word 'clip' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. a short part of a video;

b. a download;

c. a musical track;

d. a newspaper cutting.

3. The word 'thrive' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. to borrow money with no intention of paying it back;

b. to stop feeling nervous;

c. to feel energised;

d. to dislike.

4. The word 'contemplate' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. want to;

b. follow;

c. consider;

d. disregard.

5. How long has Harrison been DJing for?

a. for 5 years;

b. since he was 16;

c. once his exam finished;

d. since the summer.

6. Which club helps him with his schoolwork?

a. Liverpool football club;

b. maths club;

c. chemistry club;

d. revise till 5.



7. Who helped Harrison become a DJ?

a. his mum;

b. his dad;

c. an older DJ;

d. a teacher.

8. What is Harrison doing this summer?

a. his GCSE exams;

b. DJing;

c. going to Ibiza;

d. all of the above.

9. "it's great when it fills the dance floor" means:

a. it's great when everyone dances to his song;

b. it's great when the music is played loudly;

c. it's great when everyone can hear his song;

d. it's great when he makes a lot of money from DJing.

10. "It was like chalk and cheese" means:

a. it was two things he didn't like;

b. it was two things he liked;

c. it was two very different things;

d. it was two very similar things.

11. "where you could hear a pin drop" means:

a. it was somewhere very quiet;

b. it was somewhere very noisy;

c. it was somewhere very clean;

d. it was somewhere very dirty.

12. According to the text, which of the following is NOT true:

a. Harrison has been studying chemistry;

b. Harrison will host a radio show;

c. Harrison comes from Liverpool;

d. Harrison feels anxious before gigs.



13. Which sentence below is closest in meaning to "It gives your mind something else to think about instead of covalent bonds," he says, referring to his chemistry studies."

a. he needs to do a lot of revision for his chemistry exam;

b. it's good to take a break from revision;

c. he needs to revise other subjects, not just chemistry;

d. he needs to keep his mind occupied.

14. According to the text, which is false about the DJ?

a. He's balancing his school work with his DJ career;

b. He's thankful to his school;

c. He's not spending time with his friends;

d. All of the above

15. According to the text, which is true about the DJ?

a. He plays gigs abroad;

b. He speaks in his gigs;

c. He has finished all his exams

d. He plays to large crowds.



Reading Text 2 – Frans Beuse:

Frans Beuse sits at his kitchen table, examining what looks like an array of rocks. Using a slim, sharpened blade he scrapes each in turn, producing five mounds of powder: bright white, deep caramel, tarry black. Lighting a candle, he holds a thick needle into the flame, then into the powder, which smokes and bubbles into glossy liquid. Beuse leans forward and draws a thin tendril of smoke into his left nostril. “Sweet and ambery,” he says.

The process has an illicit air, but the substance Beuse is handling is not a drug. It is ambergris, a form of whale dung, exceedingly rare and valuable, sought after by perfumers and gathered by secretive harvesters among the flotsam of New Zealand’s stormy coastlines. Frans Beuse and his wife, Adrienne, are among the country’s largest dealers. It’s a trade known for its secrecy. Ambergris-gatherers are fiercely – even violently – protective of their patches. Now, the centuries-old trade is being reshaped by human influence: as climate change alters weather patterns and ocean currents, patterns of ambergris distribution are shifting too.

“Nothing else really smells like ambergris, except sperm whales,” says Kane Fleury, a curator at Otago Museum. “There’s this sweet sort of odour associated with them,” he says, “a real nasal-filling marine mammal essence, fatty and odorous and quite heady.” That scent penetrates ambergris, which forms in the whale’s digestive tract to protect it from damage by the sharp edges of squid beaks and ocean debris. It endures as it is tossed by tides, bleached by the sun and parched by salt. “Every piece as it rolls around is curing, getting smaller and denser and drier on the inside until it’ll be white or almost white all the way through, when there’s no moisture left,” says Adrienne. That process takes hundreds of years.

When mature, ambergris is valued by perfumers for its properties as a fixative, as well as its own fragrance, which can range from deep, animal musk, to a sweeter dark caramel, or light and powdery in the higher grades. Higher-quality ambergris is worth more than \$27 a gram. Because it can occur in huge chunks, collectors have reported finds worth as much as £1.5m. The money at stake can make the hunt for ambergris fraught and occasionally dangerous.

As the climate crisis changes ocean landscapes, local collectors worry that ambergris finds could become rarer still. Heating of the oceans is bringing about changes in the winds and currents that bring it to beaches. As the oceans heat, some currents speed up, while others slow or even collapse completely.

“Some years back, we started getting reports more and more frequently of coastal changes happening that collectors and their parents and grandparents hadn’t seen before,” Adrienne says. “Changes in the wildlife that was being seen, changes in coastal currents.” Beuse has witnessed those shifts becoming more pronounced. “The climate and the weather were changing. The winter pattern that we relied on, to bring the best ambergris – that period of winter westerly winds and storms – was contracting.” It worries her. “We’re totally dependent on natural factors,” she says.

One of the distinctive attributes of ambergris has always been its formation around squid beaks. These days, it increasingly forms around plastic. It’s a shift that ambergris collectors are acutely aware of. “These people, they notice every nook and cranny on the beach,” Beuse says. “There was talk around the ambergris community long before it was a main headline in the media, that something’s going on with mother nature.”



Questions and Answers:

1. The word 'array' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. Range;

b. Basket;

c. Large bag;

d. Box.

2. The word 'glossy' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. Runny;

b. Thick;

c. Dull;

d. Shiny.

3. The word 'flotsam' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. Sand and other fine material found by the sea;

b. Stuff floating on the sea;

c. Shells;

d. Rubbish / remains.

4. The word 'debris' in the text is closest in meaning to:

a. Sand and other fine material found by the sea;

b. Stuff floating on the sea;

c. Shells;

d. Rubbish / remains.

5. According to the text, the process of examining ambergris makes it look like what?

a. Amber;

b. An array of rocks;

c. Drugs;

d. Smoke.

6. According to the text, ambergris comes from what?

a. Perfume;

b. Whales;

c. New Zealand;

d. Dealers.



7. According to Kane Fleury, what's the only thing that smells like ambergris?

Sperm whales

8. Kane Fleury works at Christchurch museum.

FALSE - Otago Museum

9. Trading in ambergris is very secretive

TRUE

10. Complete the following sentence with three words only:

The process of forming ambergris takes _____.

Hundreds of years

11. Which sentence below most accurately summarises the main message of the whole text?:

- a. Ambergris is a unique substance that is very much sought after because of its unusual perfume;
- b. Frans and Adrienne Beuse are the largest dealers of ambergris in New Zealand and know a lot about it;
- c. Ambergris is very valuable and the collectors are very secretive about where they find it;
- d. Ambergris is an unusual and valuable substance, becoming harder to find due to climate change.

12. Complete the following sentence with two words only:

Ambergris collectors are totally dependent on _____.

Natural factors

13. According to the text, is the following statement true or false?: ambergris forms around plastic.

TRUE

14. According to the text, is the following statement true or false?: Mainstream media alerted the ambergris collectors to coastal changes.

FALSE

15. According to Adrienne, what happens to ambergris as it cures?

- a. It decreases in size;
- b. It becomes denser;
- c. It loses moisture;
- d. All of the above.



16. Which sentence below best expresses the meaning of the sentence: "Ambergris-gatherers are fiercely – even violently – protective of their patches"?

a. Ambergris-gatherers may fight to protect the areas where they collect it.

b. Ambergris-gatherers may fight to protect their homes.

c. Ambergris-gatherers may fight to protect their trade.

d. Ambergris-gatherers may fight to protect their reputation.