

Reading Year 10 — Practice Paper 1 — Answers & Explanations

For a parent, tutor, or the student to mark the exam paper against.

What the River Kept

1. C. Looking implies knowing what you are after, and the dredge took whatever was there

The narrator explains the distinction directly: "Looking implied you knew what you were after", whereas the dredge simply raised whatever the riverbed happened to hold.

2. A. conveying the sheer accumulated randomness of what came up

The clipped, unconnected fragments imitate objects arriving one after another with no relationship to each other, which is the point being made about the riverbed.

3. D. To undercut the one glamorous item in the list and keep the tone unromantic

The coin is the only find with any romance to it, and the clause immediately withdraws that romance — which keeps the passage from turning the work into an adventure.

4. B. give the fact the weight the list denied it

Everything before it is a run of objects in a single paragraph. Isolating this line refuses to let a human being sit in that list, and the pause forces the reader to register it.

5. B. That the story was really about the wallet, not the body

The narrator says he "understood partway through that he was not telling me a story about a body. He was telling me a story about a wallet."

6. D. That thirty years of heavy objects mattered less than one small surviving thing

The paragraph sets three decades of hauled-up weight against four inches of card, and it is the card he could still describe forty years later.

7. A. It suggests that efficiency has removed the act of noticing

The new system raises everything the old one did, but "nothing is looked at on the way past" — so what is lost is not material but attention, and with it the stories that attention produced.

8. C. Restrained and reflective

The narrator withholds emotion — even the body is reported plainly — and works instead by turning the memory over. He resists sentiment while clearly finding the memory significant.

The Tyranny of the Reasonable Voice

9. D. It costs the speaker nothing and buys a great deal of credibility

The writer says the concession "costs them nothing and purchases a great deal", presenting it as a tactic rather than as honesty.

10. B. It removes the person who did the thing

The examples given — "mistakes were made, concerns have been raised" — report events with no actor, "so that no one is ever the person who did it".

11. C. Because objecting to the label appears to confirm it

The writer explains that "the more strongly you object to being called emotional, the more emotional you appear" — the accusation is constructed so that resisting it counts as evidence for it.

12. A. Because a lie would be easier to identify and answer

The danger the writer is describing lies precisely in a performance built from true sentences: there is nothing false to point at, yet the conclusion is still unsupported.

13. A. That composure is easiest for whoever has least at stake

The writer uses the pair to show the two speakers "are not equally free to be measured", so calmness reflects position rather than the strength of the case.

14. C. That anger is not an argument either

The writer states "I am not arguing for shouting. Anger is not an argument either", which narrows the claim and makes it harder to dismiss as a defence of outbursts.

15. B. Rewriting both speakers' claims flatly and comparing them

The final paragraph asks the reader to strip each speaker's claims of concessions and passive constructions and set the flattened versions side by side.

16. D. That we credit manner as though it were reasoning, and manner favours the powerful

The writer states the claim as "narrower" than a condemnation: we "routinely credit a manner as though it were a reason, and the manner is cheapest for whoever has the most power in the room."

Salvage

17. C. The subject had become painful without ever being discussed

Nothing is ever stated, but the wordless tarpaulin replacements, the mother's displaced complaint and the father's silence all indicate a subject the family avoids rather than one that was banned.

18. A. He has neither finished with the boat nor let it go

The upkeep is regular and deliberate, so he has not abandoned it; but it is silent and changes nothing, so he has not resumed it either.

19. D. the real grievance is about the boat's hold on the family, not the sailing

A complaint repeated "often" about a single outing thirty years ago is disproportionate to the outing, which is why the narrator reads it as a substitute for an unspoken objection.

20. B. Nothing had run in the boat for twenty years

The text gives the reason directly: the smell surprised her "because nothing had run in it for twenty years".

21. B. It shows the boat was left mid-preparation, as though work would resume

A pencil left in place is the posture of an interrupted task rather than a finished one, which is what makes the abandonment poignant.

22. D. To suggest the work was achievable, which makes stopping harder to explain

Twenty-two items with eleven done is an ordinary, finishable job. The refusal to call it long removes the easy explanation that the task was simply too big.

23. A. She recognises the silence as something the family maintains together

Her silence is matched by his — "her father did not ask where she had been" — and they sit through a programme neither is watching, which shows the avoidance is mutual rather than one-sided.

24. C. Knowing the exact point he gave up would make the loss too specific

While the stopping point is unknown it stays an abstraction. Naming the item would fix the moment her father stopped believing he would sail, and that is what she chooses not to hold.

The Museum of Objects Nobody Wanted

25. D. To show how difficult access was, and so how rarely the room is seen

The detail follows immediately from "It is not open to the public", and the specific number conveys persistence against a closed door without the writer having to claim it.

26. B. Each shelf shows everything a single year failed to reclaim

The writer explains the "strange effect" directly: a shelf holds not a category but a cross-section of one twelve-month period.

27. C. What she does — keeping, arranging and knowing a collection — is curatorship in everything but name

The aside distinguishes the official label from the reality: she has kept and arranged a collection for nineteen years, which is the work whether or not the job description says so.

28. A. Almost everything in it was replaced, so it records survivable losses

She argues that the umbrella, the phone and even the ring were each followed by the owner going on, so the room holds "four thousand things that turned out to be survivable" rather than four thousand losses.

29. A. He did not ask, and is unsure whether that was tact or a failure

The writer states plainly that "I did not ask", then leaves the judgement open between "the most tactful thing I did that year or the worst piece of journalism".

30. C. It preserves the weight of those objects by refusing to turn them into anecdotes

Every other object in the piece has been listed and slightly flattened by being listed. Withholding these keeps them from the same treatment, which is why the writer can call the silence tactful.

31. B. The room was created by nineteen years of nobody choosing to discard anything

The final sentence explains it: "the accumulated result of not deciding is a museum" — no one chose to found it, and it exists anyway.

32. D. A description that opens out into a reflection on how the room came to be

The writer moves from the room's contents, to the curator's view of them, to a closing observation about the absence of any decision — widening from object to meaning.

Short texts

33. B. Pathos

Pathos refers to a persuasive appeal to the audience's emotions, as distinct from logos (logic) and ethos (credibility).

34. A. It may be deliberately delaying a definitive conclusion

A decade of studies all reaching the same inconclusive result suggests the delay may be intentional rather than accidental.

35. A. It exposes a contradiction between the senator's words and actions

Stating a promise of transparency immediately before describing closed meetings highlights the contradiction between word and deed.

36. B. Theme

The theme is the central message or insight a text conveys about life or human experience.

37. C. Rhetorical techniques and bias

Analysing a biased text involves identifying the rhetorical strategies used to persuade.

38. B. Critical, balanced thinking

Comparing opposing viewpoints builds critical thinking by weighing different perspectives.

39. D. The narrator's credibility is compromised, so their account may be biased or false

An unreliable narrator gives an account readers should question, due to bias, limited knowledge, or dishonesty.