



## 11+ English: Comprehension Practice

**Original JDScience material. Not an official GL, CEM, CSSE or independent-school paper. Do not copy third-party exam questions.**

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions in full sentences unless a single word is enough. Use evidence from the text when you are asked to explain.

**Suggested time:** 30 minutes · **Questions:** 13

### THE PASSAGE

On the last Saturday in March, Nia walked the harbour wall at Clockwork Bay with a paper bag of warm currant buns. The tide was sliding out, leaving a dark shine on the stones, and the gulls argued over nothing in particular.

Grandad waited by the old tide clock, a tall iron case with a cracked glass face. The clock did not tell ordinary time. Its single hand was meant to show whether the water was rising or falling, so fishermen could judge the harbour mouth. For three winters it had stuck at “half-ebb”, which was no use to anyone.

“Today we listen,” Grandad said, tapping the case. “Clocks are shy when they have been ignored.”

Nia thought clocks were metal and glass, not shy, but she kept that to herself. She held the torch while he loosened screws that had gone orange with rust. Inside, a brass wheel sat as still as a held breath. A thread of seaweed had wound through the teeth, dry as string.

They worked slowly. Nia named each tool as Grandad asked for it, proud that she remembered the difference between the two smallest screwdrivers. When the seaweed came free, Grandad oiled the wheel and they waited. Nothing moved.

A boy from the chandlery paused with a crate of rope. “That clock’s only good for gulls to sit on,” he said, not unkindly.

Nia felt heat in her cheeks. She looked at the harbour, then at the little weight on a chain that Grandad had not yet hung. “We haven’t finished,” she said.

They hung the weight. Grandad wound the mechanism twice, carefully, as if the clock might take offence. For a moment there was only the slap of water against the wall. Then, inside the iron case, something ticked. It was not loud. It was more like a polite cough. The hand shivered, then crept from half-ebb toward low water.

Nia did not cheer. She watched the hand take its first honest step in years, and she thought of all the quiet jobs that keep a place working: oil, patience, the right screwdriver, and someone willing to stand in a cold wind with currant buns going stale in a paper bag.

Grandad closed the glass. “Tomorrow it will still need us,” he said. “Things worth keeping usually do.”

They sat on the wall and split the last bun. Below them the harbour mouth widened, brown and bright, and the tide clock, at last, agreed.

Read the passage, then answer questions 1 to 12.

1. Where does Nia walk at the beginning of the passage?

- |     |                                                                                               |     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 2.  | What is unusual about the tide clock compared with an ordinary clock?                         | [1] |
| 3.  | For how long has the clock been stuck, and at what setting?                                   | [1] |
| 4.  | Find and copy a simile used to describe the brass wheel.                                      | [1] |
| 5.  | What two things have stopped the clock from working properly? Use evidence.                   | [1] |
| 6.  | How does Nia feel when the boy from the chandlery speaks, and how do you know?                | [1] |
| 7.  | What does Nia's reply "We haven't finished" suggest about her character?                      | [1] |
| 8.  | "It was more like a polite cough." What does this suggest about the first tick?               | [1] |
| 9.  | Look at the paragraph beginning "Nia did not cheer." What is the main idea of this paragraph? | [1] |
| 10. | What does Grandad mean by "Tomorrow it will still need us"?                                   | [1] |
| 11. | Give two ways the writer makes the setting feel real and specific.                            | [1] |
| 12. | Do you think the ending is hopeful? Explain using two pieces of evidence.                     | [1] |

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## Answers and short explanations

Check your work only after you have finished. Equivalent wording is accepted where the meaning is the same.

1. **Answer:** Along the harbour wall at Clockwork Bay.  
**Why:** The opening sentence places her on the harbour wall at Clockwork Bay.
2. **Answer:** It does not tell ordinary time; its hand shows whether the tide is rising or falling.  
**Why:** The narrator explains that the single hand is meant to show rising or falling water.
3. **Answer:** For three winters, at half-ebb.  
**Why:** The text says it had stuck at “half-ebb” for three winters.
4. **Answer:** as still as a held breath  
**Why:** The wheel “sat as still as a held breath”.
5. **Answer:** Rusted screws and seaweed wound through the teeth of the brass wheel.  
**Why:** Screws had gone orange with rust, and seaweed was wound through the teeth.
6. **Answer:** Embarrassed or stung — she feels heat in her cheeks.  
**Why:** “Nia felt heat in her cheeks” shows embarrassment after his comment.
7. **Answer:** She is determined / not easily put off / proud of the work still to do.  
**Why:** She answers the boy by pointing out the job is incomplete, showing grit rather than giving up.
8. **Answer:** It was quiet, small and almost hesitant, not a loud dramatic sound.  
**Why:** A polite cough is restrained; the clock starts modestly.
9. **Answer:** That useful work is often quiet and patient, not showy.  
**Why:** She thinks of oil, patience, the right tool and standing in the cold — everyday effort that keeps a place working.
10. **Answer:** The clock (or anything worth keeping) will need ongoing care, not a one-off fix.  
**Why:** He says things worth keeping usually still need people.
11. **Answer:** Named place Clockwork Bay; sensory details such as currant buns, rust, slap of water, gulls, harbour mouth.  
**Why:** Precise names and senses (smell/taste of buns, orange rust, sound of water) build a real harbour.
12. **Answer:** Yes: the hand takes an “honest step” and “the tide clock, at last, agreed.” (Accept a thoughtful no if well evidenced.)  
**Why:** The mechanism moves and the clock matches the tide; Grandad’s warning adds realism but the last image is agreement.