

Bury Church of England
High School



GCSE English Language

OCR Revision Guide

Section A – Reading

Higher Tier

Reading

- Select an article (from a suitably challenging source – not a tabloid newspaper) and summarise it. Remember to use your own words and draw similar points together.
- Go through your mock papers and any feedback on exam questions, and use the skills audit sheet to help you target your revision on the right questions. Your RAG analysis should help with this too.
- Look carefully at the sample answers to the Grizzly Bears exam paper. Compare them to your answers in the mock exams.
- Annotate a magazine advert, exploring the use of presentational devices to help sell the product.
- Look carefully at the past papers you have been provided with. Use them as revision aids.
- Collect together all the information you have on question one and create a single flash card of advice/ top tips to revise how to tackle it.
- Look carefully at all the examples of qu2 you can find from your mock and classwork you have been doing. Create a single flash card.
- Repeat for question 3.
- Select two texts which share a common theme and see if you can create your own exam paper – we tried this in class back in November however you will be much better at this now that you are more familiar with the style of exam questions.



English – The Information and Ideas Exam

Reading Skills: Making a Difference

Use this sheet to audit your skills for the reading section of the Information and Ideas paper.



| Question | What Should I Expect? | What Do They Expect? | My Target/EBI |
|----------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |



The Grizzly Bears Paper

Answer **all** the questions in Section **A** and **one** question in Section **B**.

Section A: Non-Fiction and Media

You are advised to spend about one hour on this section.

Read carefully the two passages *The day I survived a very grizzly bear attack* and *A Walk in the Woods* and then answer questions 1, 2 and 3. The questions will be marked for reading.

1 *The day I survived a very grizzly bear attack*

Using details from the article, **outline concisely**:

- what you learn about black bears
- the different thoughts and feelings Guy Grieve experiences during his encounter with the bear.

Use **your own words** as far as possible.

[12]

2 *The day I survived a very grizzly bear attack*

How does Guy Grieve use language to make the account of his encounter with the bear so terrifying?

In your answer, refer closely to the passage.

[14]

3 *A Walk in the Woods*

How does Bill Bryson make the account of his experience in the woods so entertaining?

In your answer, refer closely to the passage.

[14]

Over the next pages you will find the texts which go with this paper. Have a go at the paper under timed conditions: give yourself 10 minutes reading time plus 60 minutes to write up your answers, referring back to the text as and when you need to. Once finished, you can compare your results to the sample answers in this pack which follow and have been marked by real OCR examiners. Read their comments carefully and see if they would apply to your answers. What have you missed? What would you do differently?

The day I survived a very grizzly bear attack

By Guy Grieve

You never forget a close encounter with a bear. They can approach slowly, sedately, stealthily, but once they are upon you, it is one of the most terrifying experiences you are ever likely to have. Forget the cuddly creature you snuggled up to as a child; the real thing is a 70-stone killing machine which can move with devastating, explosive speed.

A few years ago, I lived alone in a tiny log cabin in the wilderness of Alaska for a book I was writing. During that year, I faced every kind

of danger, from starvation to excruciating cold – but none was as downright terrifying as my encounters with the black and grizzly bears that were the undoubted masters of the dark sub-arctic forests I called home.

Of all the meetings, my first was by far the most frightening. I was bathing in the river after a day chopping wood for the cabin I was building. I had just jumped into the fast-moving water and was happily brushing my teeth when an unexpected movement caught my eye upstream. I pulled myself up on to a tree trunk to take a closer look. And my heart jumped into my mouth.

A huge black bear had waded up to its shoulders into the river and was straining to get a better look at me. I saw it lift its vast head to sniff the air, then – catching a whiff of me – turn and bound out of the water at a surprising pace.

Initially, I felt relieved – until I saw that it was trying to outflank me along the shore, its small, eager eyes fixed on me all the time.

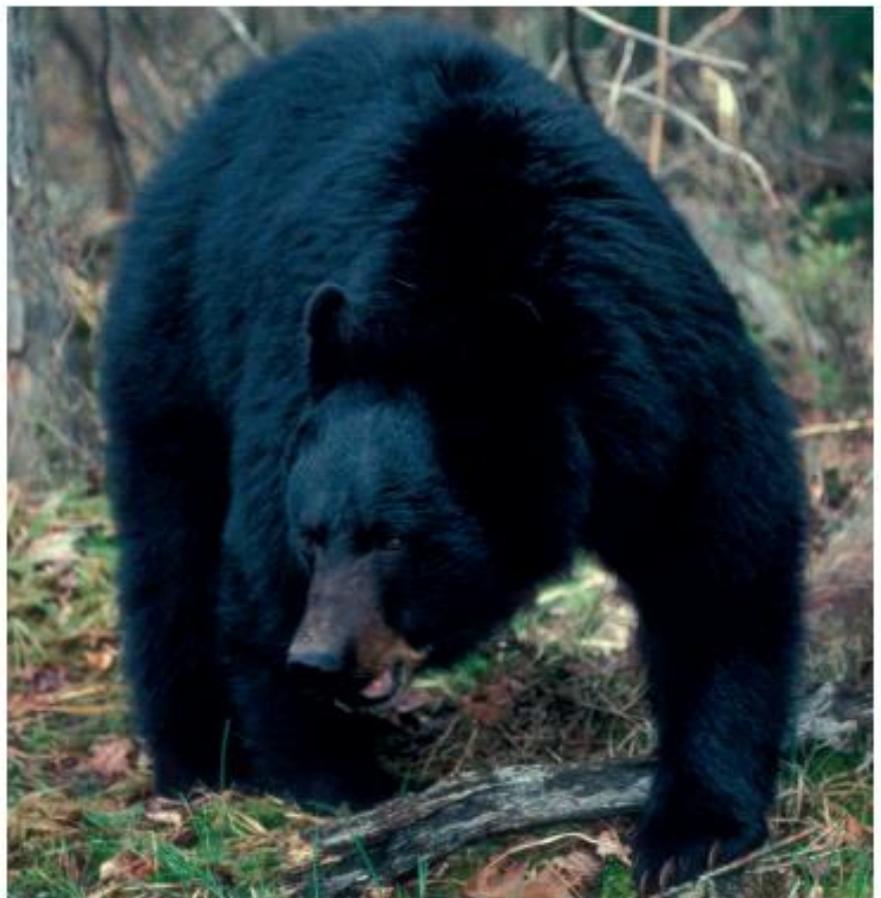
I was lucky enough to have been armed – although my gun was on the shore, far out of reach. Knowing it was my only chance of survival, I crept slowly towards the shore, where my rifle hung from an upturned root.

All the while, the bear kept coming, waving his nose around in search of my scent –

bears' eyesight is very poor, so they rely on smell – but unable to get a really good sniff as I was downwind. This bought me valuable time.

I loaded my rifle with a shivering hand and readied myself for whatever might come – which turned out to be a full-blown attack.

Finally catching a good whiff of me, and deciding I really was prey, this huge killer dropped to all fours and began to bound towards me along the river bank at full tilt.



As long as I live, I will never forget that powerful animal charging towards me.

As long as I live, I will never forget the sight of that powerful animal charging towards me, its nostrils flared and its teeth bared. Like many others, I had made the mistake of assuming that bears are slow and lumbering. I was wrong. This bear moved with the speed and agility of a cat – and I had only a couple of rounds with which to stop him.

Suddenly, however, he veered sideways and disappeared into the scrub – and I lowered the rifle, light-headed with relief. But then I heard crashing within the bush. He was now coming at me through the thick undergrowth.

If a black bear attacks, you should back away as gently as possible. And if that fails, fight back with everything you've got. (None of the advice mentions running – the very notion of outrunning a bear is ludicrous, as they can easily reach 35 miles an hour.)

I certainly wouldn't have outrun my black bear. And so, reluctant to shoot unless it was my only option, I began shouting, making as much noise as possible in an attempt to scare him off.

And up to a point, it worked. He slowed down and then stopped uncertainly, peering at me

myopically from just a few yards away. In that moment we were both making a decision.

He was sizing me up before making a final, probably fatal lunge; I was trying to establish whether I could keep my cool for long enough to fire that vital shot. Neither of us moved.

For minutes. Three, maybe four – it seemed like hours. And then, with a snort, he turned slowly round and lumbered back into the bush. I felt like the most fortunate man alive.

A Walk in the Woods

In his book A Walk in the Woods, Bill Bryson describes his attempt to walk the 2,000 mile long Appalachian Trail in North America. He was accompanied by his old college friend, Stephen Katz, who was not an experienced walker. In this extract he describes a worrying night-time encounter.

It was perfect sleeping weather, cool enough to need a bag, but warm enough to sleep in your underwear, and I was looking forward to a long night's snooze – indeed was enjoying a long night's snooze when, at some indeterminate dark hour, there was a sound nearby that made my eyes fly open. Normally, I slept through everything – through thunderstorms, through Katz's snoring – so something big enough or distinctive enough to wake me was unusual. There was a sound of undergrowth being disturbed – a click of breaking branches, a weighty pushing through low foliage – and then a kind of large, vaguely irritable snuffling noise.

Bear!

I sat bolt upright. Instantly every neuron in my brain was awake and dashing around frantically, like ants when you disturb their nest. I reached instinctively for my knife, then realized I had left it in my pack, just outside the tent. Nocturnal defence had ceased to be a concern after nights of tranquil woodland repose.

There was another noise, quite near.

'Stephen, you awake?' I whispered.

'Yup,' he replied in a weary but normal voice.

'What was that?'

'How the hell should I know?'

'It sounded big.'

'Everything sounds big in the woods.'

This was true. Once a skunk had come plodding through camp and it had sounded like a stegosaurus. There was another heavy rustle and then the sound of lapping at the spring.

It was having a drink, whatever it was.

I shuffled on my knees to the foot of the tent, cautiously unzipped the mesh and peered out, but it was pitch black. As quietly as I could, I brought in my backpack and, with the light of a small torch, searched through it for my knife. When I found it and opened the blade I was appalled at how wimpy it looked. It was a perfectly respectable appliance for, say, buttering pancakes, but patently inadequate for defending oneself against 400 pounds of ravenous fur.

Carefully, very carefully, I climbed from the tent and put on the torch, which cast a distressingly feeble beam. Something about 15 or 20 feet away looked up at me. I couldn't see anything at all of its shape or size – only two shining eyes. It went silent, whatever it was, and stared back at me.

'Stephen,' I whispered at his tent, 'did you pack a knife?'

'No.'

'Have you got anything sharp at all?'

He thought for a moment. 'Nail clippers.'

I made a despairing face. 'Anything a little more vicious than that? Because, you see, there is definitely something out here.'

'It's probably just a skunk.'

'Then it's one big skunk. Its eyes are three feet off the ground.'

'A deer then.'

I nervously threw a stick at the animal, and it didn't move, whatever it was. A deer would have bolted. This thing just blinked once and kept staring.

I reported this to Katz.

'Probably a buck. They're not so timid. Try shouting at it.'

I cautiously shouted at it: 'Hey! You there! Scat!' The creature blinked again, singularly unmoved. 'You shout,' I said.

'Oh, you brute, go away, do!' Katz shouted in merciless imitation. 'Please withdraw at once, you horrid creature.'

I peered and peered, but I couldn't see anything but those two wide-set eyes staring from the near distance like eyes in a cartoon. I couldn't decide whether I wanted to be outside and dead or inside and waiting to be dead. I picked up a stone and tossed it. I think it may have hit it because the animal made a sudden noisy start, and then it emitted a noise – not quite a growl, but near enough. It occurred to me that perhaps I oughtn't to provoke it.

'What are you doing, Bryson? Just leave it alone and it will go away.'

'How can you be so calm?'

'What do you want me to do? You're hysterical enough for both of us.'

'I think I have a right to be a trifle alarmed, pardon me. I'm in the woods, in the middle of nowhere, in the dark, staring at a bear, with a guy who has nothing to defend himself with but a pair of nail clippers. Let me ask you this. If it is a bear and it comes for you, what are you going to do – give it a pedicure?'

'I'll cross that bridge when I come to it,' Katz said implacably.

Sample Answer: Question One

Black bears are not lumbering, clumsy and cuddly animals as is often suggested by children's cuddly toys, or the popular notion that bears are slow and lazy. In fact, they can move very quickly with great agility, at speeds up to 35 miles per hour. Bears are very powerful, they weigh up to 70 stone and use their weight to produce explosive speed. Black bears are dominant predators which use their good sense of smell to track down prey, and use the landscape to pursue and trap their target. Bears can move stealthily and quietly through their habitat to ambush prey, and intelligently calculate the way in which to capture their prey.

Guy Grieve was terrified by the encounter which left him feeling lucky to be alive as he was pursued by a huge bear. His fear of the bear was so intense the other challenges he faced whilst living in the Alaskan wilderness such as lack of food and plummeting temperatures did not compare. He encountered bears on numerous occasions, they are a constant threat. He was so scared by his first encounter he felt he must use his weapons, and his body reacted to his fear in his increased heart rate and shaking hands. His bear encounter was an experience he will never forget for the rest of his life as he was so afraid and affected by the bear.

Clear overview

[A680 Script Commentaries \(The examiner says. . .\)](#)

Q1. This shows very secure understanding of the text by giving a very good (but not full) range of points covering both parts of the question. Understanding of the task is less secure. There is a stretch of excess material in the second section where focus is lost and the candidate digresses to other challenges faced by Grieve and other brief encounters. Point 6 is repeated ('terrified' and 'so scared').

This answer got 9 out of 12 marks.

Sample Answer: Question Two

Guy Grieve lived in the Alaskan wilderness for a year for a period of writing, during which time he encountered a number of bears, his first encounter with a black bear is described as by far his "most frightening" experience and he goes on to emphasise this.

The opening line "you never forget a close encounter with a bear" is attention grabbing and suggests to the reader the enormity of the situation, that this was an experience he could not forget. His use of alliterative tricolon "slowly, sedately, stealthily" in his description of the approach of the bear makes them seem dangerous, whilst the sibilance of the words portrays them as sinister. He further uses their movement to evoke fear in the reader in his reference to the speed of the bear as "devastating... wouldn't have out run it", whilst his use of statistic "easily reach 35 miles an hour" provides hard evidence to support his claim.

Grieves' description of the appearance of the bear "nostrils flared and teeth bare" present an intimidating and frightening image for the reader. His contrast of "cuddly creature" and "70 stone killing machine" highlights the misconception many have of a slow, lumbering animal. Rather than the frightening, powerful predator it is.

Moreover, Grieve suggests his experience with the bear was more frightening than his near death experiences from "starvation to excruciating cold", emphasising how terrifying it was. He names the bears "undoubted masters of the dark", this dominant, predatory imagery highlights the danger to the reader. Grieve describes the bear as seemingly intelligent as it adapts its pursuit of him as Grieve tried to escape "trying to outflank me... sizing me up", this adds to the dramatic impact of the account, the bear is not only extremely powerful physically, but has some thought process in its method of attack

Grieve uses the description of the response of his body to emphasise the terrifying nature of the encounter: "my heart jumped into my mouth... shivering... light headed with relief", whilst his movement to retrieve a weapon suggests how close and real the danger was.

Grieve suggests he will never forget the sight of the bear "as long as I live", as if the image of the bear is haunting him, highlighting his fear. His concluding line "most fortunate man alive" suggests how close to death he felt he was, emphasising to the reader the dangerous situation.

In conclusion, Grieve uses the movement and appearance of the "huge killer" bear to evoke fear in the reader, whilst his own reaction to the bear, and the impact it has had on the rest of his life suggests it was a life-changing experience, and an unforgettable, "terrifying" encounter.

Wide range of points and judgements supported convincingly.

A680 Script Commentaries (The examiner says. . .)

Q2. The response offers a wide range of points and demonstrates thoughtful appreciation of the piece. Use of reference is particularly effective: quotation is appropriate and well-integrated. Comment is firmly linked to the question and demonstrates understanding of the writer's purpose. The candidate considers how the writer uses information and analyses in some detail how the use of language shapes reader response. There is less attention to structure. Although there is some discussion of the opening and the ending there is little sense of how the extract is shaped by the build-up of tension (drama followed by relief).

His answer was awarded 12 out of 14 marks.

Sample Answer: Question Three

"A Walk in the Woods" tells the story of Bill Bryson, the author, and his friend Stephen Katz as they attempted a 2000 mile train through North America. Bryson is a famous author, his comedic book is popular and he uses his writing prowess to entertain the reader.

The contrast in the men's reaction to the unexpected noises outside the tent highlights the normal relationship they have, this is relatable to readers. Bryson is more concerned, his reaction is considered hyperbolic by Katz "you're hysterical enough for the both of us". Katz appears to be more interested in going to sleep, dismissing the activity as that of a skunk or a deer, rather than a bear as suggested by Bryson.

The event is presented in a comical way, this entertains readers and keeps the extract light and funny rather than portraying the fear of Bryson. The amusing imagery of Bryson approaching "400 pounds of ravenous fur" with a "wimpy" knife used for buttering pancakes entertains readers. The ineptitude of their equipment to face the bear produces further amusement, a torch "which cast a distressingly feeble beam" and the only sharp object in their possession, nail clippers produces imagery of a huge bear being quashed by the two inexperienced men with a pocket torch and nail clippers, an unlikely and amusing scenario.

Katz's mocking of Bryson's reaction to the animal adds further amusement "oh you brute, go away do!", his tone is a "merciless imitation". This, and the dialogue between the men, adds personality to the piece and is amusing and entertaining "what are you going to do, give it a pedicure?"

Bryson uses hyperbole to add effect to the scene, describing a skunk as sounding "like a stegosaurus" whilst his assumption that the animal was a bear, and that it would kill them "waiting to be dead" is hyperbolic in itself. Bryson appears genuinely concerned, trying to determine what the animal is and trying to deter it, all whilst in his underwear, a further more amusing image.

Bryson personalises his account, small references to occurrences such as "Katz's snoring" is easily relatable to by readers, adding to its entertaining effect. Bryson's use of personal pronoun "sleep in your underwear" and his

informal "snooze" includes the reader in his experience, presenting him as personable, relatable and therefore more entertaining. His initial panic "my brain was awake and dashing around frantically like ants when you disturb their nest" is relatable, and his almost childlike description "it sounded big" is amusing to readers.

In conclusion, Bryson uses the comedic imagery of the situation and dialogue between the men to amuse the readers. His personable, relatable account appeals to readers, and makes the extract more entertaining to read.

Very effective use of appropriate supportive references.

A680 Script Commentaries (The examiner says . . .)

Q3. The candidate shows very clear understanding how Bryson's use of language shapes our response to the situation. Understanding of the relationship between Bryson and Katz and the humour that comes from their contrasting reactions is perceptive. Not all points are firmly delivered and this does keep the answer below the top mark. The candidate's sense that 'it's relatable' (used four times) is a weakness.

This response was awarded **13 marks out of 14.**