



**Reading**

Comprehension

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Time:

Marks: **50 marks**

Comments:

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Q1.

## *Gaby to the Rescue*



A Siamese cat crouched on a tree branch, peering down at Gaby with brilliant blue eyes. It cried out. The cat was stuck in the tree in front of her house and, as luck would have it, she had on the nicest cardigan she owned. Gaby pulled the cardigan tighter around her. This was her last good school cardigan until who-knows-when her father would have enough money to buy her a new one. The poor cat cried again. Gaby looked back at her small yellow house. If her mother were here, that cat would already be out of the tree and purring – safe and sound, in her mother’s arms.

Mind made up, Gaby pulled off her cardigan and tossed it onto her porch. ‘You’re out of luck, *gato!*’ she yelled. ‘My mom, master tree climber and cat rescuer, isn’t back yet.’ She rolled up the sleeves of her white shirt. ‘But until she is, you’ve got me.’ Gaby grasped the nearest branch and pulled herself up. ‘Gaby to the rescue.’

The cat meowed.

‘*I am* hurrying.’

The last time Gaby had climbed the tree was when she and her best friend, Alma, had challenged the boys to a water-balloon fight last summer. Up high was the perfect spot for a full-blown assault on the boys below. Those guys never had a chance.

Gaby secured her feet and hands and climbed higher, until the cat was within arm’s reach. ‘See? You aren’t the only one who can climb.’ But then she looked down.

Mistake number one.

She knew the universal rule of tree climbing said don't ever, *ever* look down, but she couldn't help it. This was the highest she'd ever climbed. If she fell, she'd definitely end up looking like an Egyptian mummy. Gaby imagined herself bandaged from head to toe and sipping dinner through a straw.

Well, she'd just have to not fall. Simple as that. 'Here, kitty, kitty!' she called out, the same way she had heard her mom call for stray cats hundreds of times. But this was no stray. The cat was too shiny. Too chubby. Around its neck, a rhinestone collar with gold charms sparkled. Someone loved that cat. She reached out toward it. 'Almost got you.' Mistake number two.

The cat arched its back and hissed.

Gaby pulled back, startled. 'Nice teeth.' She resettled on the branch, considering her options.

When Gaby was younger, she had seen her mom climb the same tree many times to rescue a cat. All the way up, her mom had giggled and sweet-talked the cat in Spanish. '*Que bonita eres gatita.* You're so pretty, little cat.' Her mom told her that when dealing with cats you should speak softly and pick them up by the loose skin at the back of their neck, because that's how their mothers carried them. Her mom had always made it look so easy. Once she had the cat nestled against her chest, she would manoeuvre down through the branches, comforting the cat with kisses on the ears and soft words with rolling Spanish *r*'s like purrs.

There were never any arched backs, hisses, or sharp teeth.

Gaby took a deep breath and reached out for the cat again. 'It's okay, little kitty,' she said sweetly. This time the cat latched on to her, digging its claws into her arm and shoulder. 'Ooh, ouch!' She couldn't quite get it by the scruff of the neck like her mom had shown her, but at least she had the animal. That was progress. Now she just had to get down.

Without falling.



**Q2.**

1. A Siamese cat **crouched** on a tree branch, peering down at Gaby with brilliant blue eyes.

Which word is closest in meaning to *crouched*?

Tick **one**.

balanced

squatted

trembled

pounced

1 mark

2. Look at the first paragraph, beginning: *A Siamese cat...*

*Gaby pulled the cardigan tighter around her.*

Why does Gaby do this?

Tick **one**.

She is thinking of wrapping the cat in her cardigan.

She is worried about damaging the cardigan.

She is feeling cold.

She is worried the cardigan will be difficult to climb in.

1 mark

3. In the paragraph beginning: *Mind made up...* Gaby says to the cat, '*You're out of luck...*'

In what way does Gaby think the cat is out of luck?

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1 mark

4. When Gaby pulls herself up on the branch on page 1, the cat meows.

What does Gaby think that the cat is trying to say when it meows?

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1 mark

5. Why had Gaby climbed the tree the previous summer?

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1 mark

6. *Gaby secured her feet and hands and climbed higher...*

What does *secured her feet and hands* mean?

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1 mark

7. Gaby thinks she makes two mistakes while trying to rescue the cat.

What is the **first** mistake that Gaby makes while trying to rescue the cat?

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1 mark

8. Look at the paragraph beginning: *She knew the universal rule...*

What does the word *universal* tell you about the rule?

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1 mark

9. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Well, she'd just have to not fall...*

*The cat was too shiny. Too chubby.*

What conclusion does Gaby draw from this?

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1 mark

10. Look at page 2.

What are **three** ways the cat shows it does not enjoy Gaby trying to rescue it?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

11. *She resettled on the branch, considering her options.*

What does *considering her options* mean in this sentence?

Tick **one**.

thinking about what to do

changing her mind

looking at it from the cat's point of view

wishing her mother was there

1 mark

12. Look at page 2.

Give **one** piece of advice that Gaby's mother gives her for dealing with cats.

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1 mark

13. Gaby uses the Spanish word *gato* for cat.

Who else in the story speaks Spanish?

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1 mark

14. Number the following events 1–5 to show the order in which they happened.

The first one has been done for you.

Gaby breaks the universal rule of tree climbing.

Gaby notices the cat.

Gaby tries to pick up the cat.

Gaby remembers the water-balloon fight.

Gaby takes her cardigan off.



1 mark

Q3.

# Swimming the English Channel

from Dover in England to Calais in France

## The first Channel swimmer

On a foggy August afternoon in 1875, a lone swimmer dived from Admiralty Pier in Dover into the cold waters of the English Channel. Nearly twenty-two hours later, the exhausted man staggered onto French soil at Calais and became an instant hero. Captain Matthew Webb had become the first person to swim across the English Channel.

Twenty-seven-year-old Webb was a merchant seaman from Shropshire. He had always been a powerful swimmer and, hearing of J.B. Thompson's failed attempt to swim the Channel in 1872, he was inspired to give up his job and train as a long-distance swimmer. Webb's first attempt had to be abandoned due to bad weather, but he returned to the icy Channel waters two weeks later.

Many of the hardships that Matthew Webb had to deal with during his pioneering swim are still faced by modern-day Channel swimmers. In fact, some of his methods for dealing with these hardships are still used today. Webb coated himself in oil for protection against the cold and jellyfish stings. He was also accompanied by boats so his friends could protect and feed him. It must be said, however, that the ale, brandy and beef tea they supplied are not standard for today's cross-Channel swimmers!



**Captain Matthew Webb**



## Frequently asked questions

### **Q: How cold is the water?**

**A:** The water temperature can range from 12°C to 18°C. Most people would consider water below 20°C too cold for swimming.

### **Q: How far is it from England to France?**

**A:** The direct distance from Dover to Cape Gris Nez near Calais is approximately 21 miles, but a swimmer always swims further than that due to the movement of tides.

### **Q: How long does it take to swim across the Channel?**

**A:** How fast do you swim? The faster you are, the more direct your swim will be. A slower swimmer will not only take longer but will have to swim further because of the tides and currents. Swimmers also have to plan stops for feeding. The fastest recorded crossing is 7 hours; the slowest is nearly 29 hours. An average swimmer doing two miles per hour would be in the water for up to 16 hours, but a stronger swimmer may take only 10 hours.

### **Q: Will you succeed if you train hard?**

**A:** Preparation for a Channel swim involves months of training in very cold ocean water. But even this does not guarantee success. Fewer people have swum the English Channel than have climbed Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain! Some hazards of the swim include hypothermia (dangerous loss of body heat), seasickness and jellyfish. Unforeseen obstacles like rubbish floating in the sea can also cause problems no matter how hard you train.

### **Q: Why do people swim the English Channel?**

**A:** That isn't a question with a single answer! The motivations for such a venture are as varied as the swimmers. Some people do it for glory, some to raise money for charity, but most do it to challenge themselves and for the satisfaction of being one of a select few to achieve this feat.

### **Safe to swim?**

The French and UK coastguards are responsible for search and rescue operations in the English Channel. The French authorities outlawed swimming from France to England in 1993 for safety

### **Celebrity swimmer**

The author, comedian and actor, David Walliams, says that he was never sporty at school but he did enjoy



reasons. Then in 2010 the deputy director of the French coastguard, Jean-Christophe Burvingt, said he was in favour of a complete ban on swimming in either direction. He pointed out that the swim uses the same stretch of water as 500 vessels each day. Critics compare the swim to crossing a motorway on foot; supporters say the swim is well regulated and comparatively safe.

swimming.

While preparing for his Channel swim, Walliams didn't miss a single training session in nine months. He knew that more than 90 per cent of people who attempt the swim fail. Walliams took 10 hours and 34 minutes to cross the Channel. His swim raised more than £1 million in donations for the charity Sport Relief.

#### Q4.

1. *Nearly twenty-two hours later, the exhausted man staggered onto French soil at Calais and became an instant hero.*

**Find and copy two** different words from the sentence above that show how tired Matthew Webb was.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

2. What event made Matthew Webb want to swim the English Channel?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

3. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Twenty-seven-year-old Webb...*

**Find and copy one** word from this paragraph that is closest in meaning to 'motivated'.

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

4. Using information from the text, put a tick in the correct box to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Matthew Webb's first attempt to swim the English Channel was not successful.		
The first successful swim of the English Channel was in 1872.		
J.B. Thompson and Matthew Webb swam the English Channel in 1875.		
Matthew Webb took twenty hours to swim the English Channel.		

2 marks

5. Name **two** of the hardships that Matthew Webb faced in swimming the English Channel and explain how he dealt with them.

1. Hardship: \_\_\_\_\_

How he dealt with it: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Hardship: \_\_\_\_\_

How he dealt with it: \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

6. **Find** and **copy** a group of words that tells you that the drinks of ale, brandy and beef tea given to Matthew Webb would be considered unusual today.

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

7. Why do slow Channel swimmers swim further than faster swimmers?

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

8. Look at the section headed: **Frequently asked questions**.

How long did the fastest swim across the Channel take?

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

9. Look at the section headed: **Frequently asked questions.**

Put a tick in the correct box to show whether each of the following statements is a **fact** or an **opinion**.

	Fact	Opinion
The temperature of the water in the Channel can range from 12°C to 18°C.		
Water with a temperature of 18°C is too cold to swim in.		
The direct distance across the Channel is approximately 21 miles.		
Faster swimmers do not swim as many miles across the Channel.		

2 marks

10. In what year did the French authorities make it illegal for people to swim from France to England?

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

11. Look at the section headed: **Safe to swim?**

**Find** and **copy one** word which shows that swimming the Channel is illegal in France.

\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

12. David Walliams was determined to be successful in his attempt to swim the English Channel.

Give **one** piece of evidence from the text which shows this.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

13. Which of the following would be the most suitable summary of the whole text?

Tick **one**.

The Life of David Walliams

A Sporting Challenge

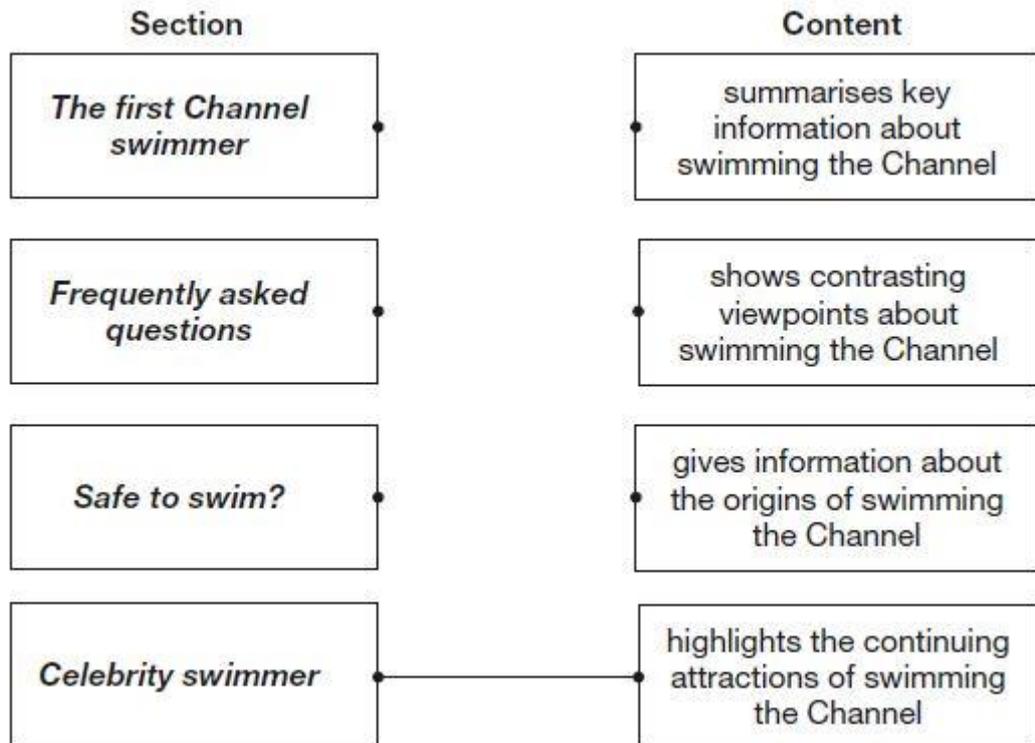
Sailing the Channel

Training for Survival

1 mark

14. Draw lines to match each section to its main content.

One has been done for you.



1 mark

Q5.

*Michael is a young fisherman. He often takes out his boat, the 'Louisa May', for a day of fishing.*

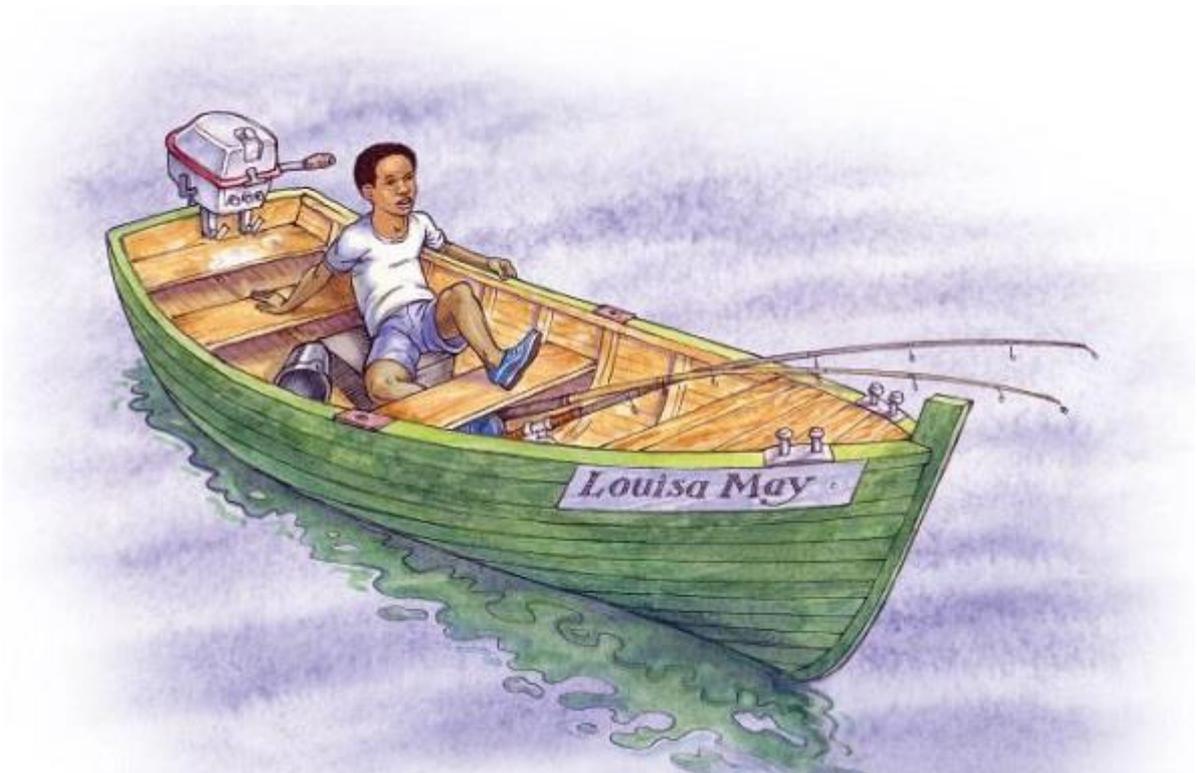
## An Encounter at Sea

It was hot. Really hot. There wasn't the slightest breeze to cool the skin or make even a baby-finger crease on the surface of the sea. The *Louisa May* floated like a toy sitting on a glass table.

For the first time in over a week, Michael hadn't seen a dolphin all day. He was two miles offshore now, motoring along his daily survey course. The *Louisa May* pulled the reflection of the sky and the island into pleats behind her, and the *putt-putt* of her engine was lost in the big, quiet stillness of the afternoon.

Michael shut off the outboard motor and stopped. He leaned over the side to scoop up a bucket of seawater to cool himself, and looked down. Long fingers of sunlight slanted into the clear water, shifting slightly in arcs of radiating lines, and were swallowed up at last into the perfect blueness of the depths.

He poured the water over himself, savouring the delicious coolness.





*Pppffffffwwwraa!* The sound came from close behind him, and made him spin round so fast he lost his balance and fell into the bottom of the boat.

*Pppffffff* – shorter and louder, even closer.

Michael picked himself up and looked over the side.

A black shape, much, much bigger than the biggest dolphin, showed about five metres from the boat. It was like a polished rock. On its rounded side was a slit like a flattened S, bigger than a man's two clenched fists, with a raised lip around it. As Michael watched, astonished, not understanding what he was seeing, the lips pinched together, the hole closed, and the black shape sank rapidly beneath the sluicing water.

A whale! Its dark head and blowhole! That's what he had seen.

*Pppffffffwwwraa!*

Now it had surfaced on the other side of the boat. This second surfacing was hardly less shocking than the first, although Michael just managed to stay on his feet and cross the boat this time.

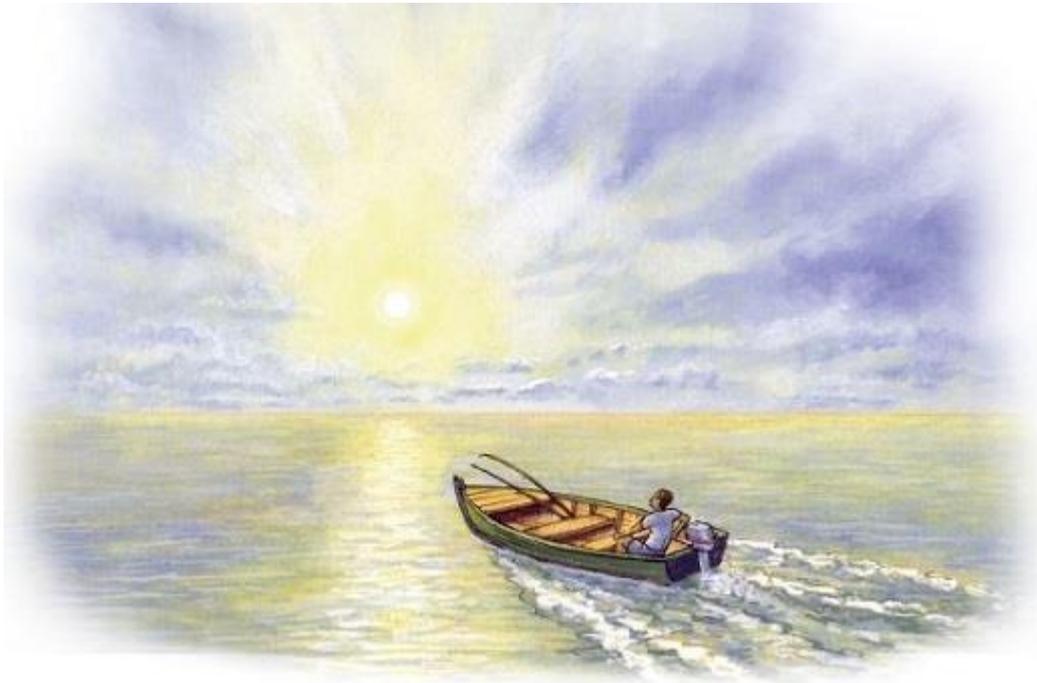
Carefully, Michael leaned over to look: on one side of the boat lay the whale's tapering tail; on the other side, the head with its scarred lines lay like a piece of huge, dark wreckage. This close, Michael could see that big sections of skin had peeled off in straight lines, giving the whale's head a patchwork look in greys and blacks. Closest of all to the boat, only just submerged, was the whale's eye. Michael looked right into it, and the whale looked back. It was so very, very close. He leaned out further and further, stretching his hand slowly towards it. The whale didn't draw away.

He reached down, until his fingertips touched the crease of skin that gave the whale a kind of eyebrow. It was cool and smooth, like a carved stone covered in a finely stretched coat of rubber.

And as his fingertips touched the whale, he looked into its eye. It was impossible to say what colour it was: dark but with rays of brightness. It was like a window into a whole galaxy, with stars and planets, comets and supernovae moving inside.

Effortlessly, as if movement and thought were the same thing, the whale submerged out of reach of Michael's hand. There was a last shushing sigh as the flipper caressed the boat one more time, and then they were separate again.

The setting sun made a path over the sea, bathing Michael in golden light. He felt as if he were lit up inside too. He had touched a whale and looked into its eye! Like a sleeper waking from a dream, he looked around, dazed.



**Q6.**

1. *...like a toy sitting on a glass table.*

What does this description suggest about the boat?

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1 mark

2. Look at page 1.

What was unusual for Michael about this day?

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1 mark

3. *...the 'putt-putt' of her engine was lost in the big, quiet stillness of the afternoon.*

Choose the best words to match the description above. Circle both of your choices.

The boat was 

chugging
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smoking
---------

racing
--------

roaring
---------

1 mark

along on the 

cold sea.
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bubbling ripples.
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smooth waters.
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rocking tide.
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1 mark

4. Look at page 1.

**Find and copy two different** words that show Michael enjoyed the feeling of the cool water.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

1 mark

5. Look at page 2.

How is the whale made to seem mysterious?

Explain **two** ways, giving evidence from the text to support your answer.

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3 marks

6. When Michael touched the whale it felt smooth.

(a) According to the text on page 2, why might he have expected it to feel smooth?

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1 mark

(b) According to the text on page 3, why might he **not** have expected it to feel smooth?

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1 mark

7. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Carefully, Michael leaned...*

Where was the whale?

Tick **one**.

in front of the boat

at the side of the boat

under the boat

five metres from the boat

1 mark

8. Look at the paragraph beginning: *Carefully, Michael leaned...*

What does this paragraph tell you about Michael's character?

Explain **two** features of his character, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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3 marks

9. The whale did not seem to be alarmed by meeting Michael. How can you tell this from its actions?

Give **two** ways.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2 marks

10. *Like a sleeper waking from a dream, he looked around, dazed.*

This tells us that at the end of the story Michael felt that...

Tick **one**.

he wanted the experience to continue.

he had experienced something similar before.

the experience was unreal.

the experience was worrying.

1 mark

11. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

	True	False
Michael was in an unfamiliar area of sea when he saw the whale.		
The boat was still motoring forwards when the whale appeared.		
The whale felt warm and soft when Michael touched it.		
Michael could not name the colour of the whale's eye.		

1 mark