



CLASS 9 ENGLISH · 2026-27

Unseen passage and evidence

Comprehension

24

QUESTIONS

30

MINUTES

3

EXERCISES

This belongs to _____ Date _____

WHAT YOU'LL GET GOOD AT

- Answers retrieval questions quickly so time goes to the harder ones
- Answers an inference question in their own words with evidence quoted
- Identifies the writer's attitude from the details chosen
- Works out the meaning of a phrase from its context

Take your time, and have a go at every one. If you get stuck, look at the orange box — Ollie has already done one for you.

Unseen passage and evidence

Comprehension · 24 questions · tick each box as you finish

Exercise 1 of 3 · 8 questions

Read the passage, then answer. PASSAGE: The library in Kottayam had no catalogue. Mr Varghese, who had run it for twenty-six years, kept the whole arrangement in his head and could produce any title within a minute of being asked. Visitors found this charming; the district officer who inspected the library in 1997 did not, and wrote in his report that the system was unsustainable. He was, of course- , correct. When Mr Varghese retired the following year- , the library was closed for four months while two clerks catalogued eleven thousand books, and several dozen were never found at all. The new catalogue is excellent. Borrowing has not returned to what it was.



WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

These four are stated directly and should take about ninety seconds between them. Doing them first is deliberate: retrieval questions are meant to be cheap so that the time goes to the inference ones. A child who is slow here is reading the passage rather than searching it, and that is a habit worth naming.

1) How long had Mr Varghese run the library?

2) What did the district officer write in his report?

3) How long was the library closed after he retired?

4) How many books were catalogued?

5) Who ran the library?

6) Where were the catalogued books kept?

7) What did the officer call the arrangement?

8) What happened to some of the books?

Exercise 2 of 3 · 8 questions None of these is stated. Answer in your own words and quote your evidence. ☐

WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

The third question is the hardest and the most typical of Class 9. The writer never states an opinion, so the answer has to come from what was included: the exactness of 'twenty-six years', the minute it took to find a title, and the choice to end on the fall in borrowing. Attitude questions are always answered from the details a writer chose to put in, and quoting one of those details is what turns an impression into an answer.

1) Was the district officer right? What does the passage suggest?

2) What does the last sentence imply about what was lost?

3) What is the writer's attitude towards Mr Varghese?

4) Why might borrowing have fallen after the catalogue was created?

5) What risk does the passage suggest in a system that exists only in one person's memory?

6) Why does the writer mention the number of books rather than describing them?

7) Does the passage suggest the reorganisation was worthwhile? Give evidence.

8) What kind of reader does the library seem to have served?

Exercise 3 of 3 · 8 questions What does each phrase mean here? Work it out from the passage. ☐

WRITE THE ANSWER

HERE'S ONE DONE FOR YOU

'Unsustainable' is worth working out rather than defining. The passage explains it in what follows: the system collapsed the moment Mr Varghese left. So the word means something that cannot continue in the long run - and here, specifically, something that depended entirely on one person. Vocabulary questions test whether a child reads the sentences around a word, which is exactly the skill the rest of the paper needs.

1) kept the whole arrangement in his head

2) unsustainable

3) were never found at all

4) has not returned to what it was

5) catalogued

6) borrowing

7) arrangement

8) ran the library



All done? How did that feel?

Colour in a star. Three stars means you could teach it to someone else.



Tricky · Getting there · Easy now



Answer key

For grown-ups

Unseen passage and evidence · keep this page back until your child has finished.

1. Read the passage, then answer. PASSAGE: The library in Kottayam had no catalogue. Mr Varghese, who had run it for twenty-six years, kept the whole arrangement in his head and could produce any title within a minute of being asked. Visitors found this charming; the district officer who inspected the library in 1997 did not, and wrote in his report that the system was unsustainable. He was, of course, correct. When Mr Varghese retired the following year, the library was closed for four months while two clerks catalogued eleven thousand books, and several dozen were never found at all. The new catalogue is excellent. Borrowing has not returned to what it was.

- 1) Twenty-six years.
- 2) That the system was unsustainable.
- 3) Four months.
- 4) Eleven thousand.
- 5) Mr Varghese.
- 6) The passage says the arrangement was in his head, so the catalogue was not written down.
- 7) Unsustainable.
- 8) Some were never found at all.

2. None of these is stated. Answer in your own words and quote your evidence.

- 1) Yes in one sense and not in another, and the passage says both. It states plainly that 'he was, of course, correct' about the system being unsustainable - and then shows that replacing it cost four months, several dozen books and a permanent fall in borrowing.
- 2) That something was lost which the catalogue could not replace. The catalogue is described as 'excellent' and borrowing 'has not returned to what it was', so the loss was not one of organisation.
- 3) Sympathetic, though the writer never says so and does not defend the old system. The sympathy is carried by the details chosen - twenty-six years, any title within a minute - and by the fact that the passage ends on what was lost rather than on what was gained.
- 4) Because what people valued was probably Mr Varghese himself - being asked and being answered - rather than the ability to find a book. A catalogue replaced the function and not the reason people came.
- 5) That it cannot outlast that person. Once Mr Varghese was gone, nobody could find what he had known by heart, and some books were lost for good.
- 6) Because a number lets the reader judge the scale of what was lost. A description would have made it about particular books rather than about the failure of the system.
- 7) It is left open, but the evidence leans against it: the library closed, books went missing, and borrowing has not returned to what it was.
- 8) Regular local borrowers who relied on being guided to a book rather than searching a catalogue themselves - which is why his memory worked for so long.

3. What does each phrase mean here? Work it out from the passage.

- 1) Remembered the entire system of where every book was, without writing it down.
- 2) Unable to continue in the long term - here, because it depended entirely on one person.
- 3) Were missing and could not be traced, so were presumably lost when the shelves were reorganised.
- 4) Is still lower than it used to be, and has not recovered.
- 5) Listed in an ordered record so that any book can be found.
- 6) The number of books people take out - a measure of how much the library is used.
- 7) The system by which the books were ordered and found.
- 8) Managed and operated it day to day.

WHILE YOUR CHILD WORKS

- For every inference answer, ask 'which words made you think that?' and have them quoted. The evidence carries the mark.
- Time the retrieval questions. More than two minutes means your child is reading rather than searching.
- Attitude questions are answered from the details the writer chose to include. Point that out once.

**Spotted a gap while marking?**

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