Comprehension

The Storm at the Swamp Bridge



Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: ____ / 24

The keyword method

Do not read the whole passage first. The passage is a place to **find** answers, not a story to read before you know what you are looking for. Use these five steps on every question.

1	**Read the question** Read it slowly. What is it really asking: who, what, when, why, how many, or what does it mean?
2	**Mark the keywords** Underline the two or three words that point to the answer: names, numbers, unusual nouns, action words. Ignore small words such as the, a, was.
3	**Hunt in the passage** Run your finger down the passage looking for your keywords. The paragraph numbers help you find them quickly.
4	**Read around it** Read the sentence before and the sentence after the keyword. Sometimes the answer is right there. Sometimes the reason is nearby.
5	**Choose and check** Pick the option that matches the passage. Then check each wrong option and say why it is wrong. Beware of options that use the right words in the wrong place.

Three kinds of question

Find it fast	The answer is written in the passage. Keywords take you straight to it. Questions 1 to 9.
Think it through	The answer is hinted at. Find the keyword, then read the lines around it and work out what the writer means. Questions 10 to 16.
Language	Figures of speech and parts of speech. Find the quoted word, then ask: what is it doing in the sentence? Questions 17 to 24.

Worked example 1

Step 1 and 2. Question and keywords

How many lanterns did Fiona hang along the porch railing?

A five
B seven
C twelve
D forty

Step 3 and 4. Hunt in paragraph 1 and read around it

The swamp was quiet that evening, except for the croaking of frogs and the soft hiss of the kettle. Shrek had been dragging a huge oak log up the muddy bank since dawn, and his boots squelched with every step. Fiona stood on the porch of their cottage, carefully hanging seven glowing lanterns along the railing for the party she had planned.

Step 5. Choose and check

The answer is **B. seven**. Paragraph 1 says she hung seven glowing lanterns. Twelve is the number of waffles and forty is the minutes until the guests arrive.

Worked example 2

Step 1 and 2. Question and keywords

Why was the cake 'a little squashed'? Choose the answer best supported by the passage.

A The log fell on it.
B Donkey sat on it.
C Puss dropped it.
D Gingy had held it tightly against his chest while crossing.

Step 3 and 4. Hunt in paragraph 7 and read around it

Paragraph 7: The cake, a little squashed but still delicious, was passed around the table...

Look back, paragraph 6: Gingy followed, hugging the cake tin tightly against his chest.

Step 5. Choose and check

The answer is **D. Gingy had held it tightly against his chest while crossing.**. Keyword 'squashed' is in paragraph 7, but the reason is back in paragraph 6: Gingy hugged the cake tin tightly against his chest. Good readers look before and after the keyword.

The Storm at the Swamp Bridge

Passage

1 The swamp was quiet that evening, except for the croaking of frogs and the soft hiss of the kettle. Shrek had been dragging a huge oak log up the muddy bank since dawn, and his boots squelched with every step. Fiona stood on the porch of their cottage, carefully hanging seven glowing lanterns along the railing for the party she had planned.

2 "Everyone will be here by sunset," she told Donkey, who was bouncing about like a spring on legs. "Puss is bringing his fiddle, and Gingy has promised to bake the cake." Donkey grinned so widely that his teeth gleamed. "Does this party have waffles?" he asked hopefully. Fiona laughed. "Twelve of them, Donkey. Now please stop jumping on the porch before you break it."

3 Just then the sky changed. Dark clouds piled up over the hills like grey mountains, and the wind began to howl through the trees. Thunder boomed, and the lanterns swung wildly on their hooks. "That is no ordinary storm," Shrek muttered, wiping his muddy hands on his trousers. "The river will rise before nightfall."

4 Fiona sprinted to the old wooden bridge, the only path across the river to their cottage, and gasped. The water, swollen by the rain, was roaring below, and two of the planks had already been swept away. "Our friends will be here in forty minutes," she cried. "They will never get across!"

5 Shrek studied the gap in silence. Then, without a word, he heaved the enormous oak log onto his shoulder and carried it down to the bridge. He laid it carefully across the broken space, and Fiona wound a thick rope around it, pulling every knot tight. "Strong enough?" she asked. "Strong enough for an army," Shrek replied, "though I would not call it pretty."

6 Meanwhile, Donkey, who was very scared of the rushing water, held up the brightest lantern at the far end and shouted directions as the guests appeared, one by one, out of the gloom. Puss crossed first, light on his paws, his fiddle held high above his head. Gingy followed, hugging the cake tin tightly against his chest. Last came an old toad named Mrs Bumble, who walked slowly, step by step, and made it safely.

7 Soon everyone was inside the warm cottage while rain danced on the roof. The cake, a little squashed but still delicious, was passed around the table, and Donkey ate his waffles. Fiona looked at the sturdy log through the window and smiled. "Any bridge is worth building," she whispered, "if there are good friends waiting on the other side." Shrek squeezed her hand and said nothing, which, for Shrek, meant he agreed completely.

Section A: Find it fast

9 questions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____

1. How many lanterns did Fiona hang along the porch railing?

A five
B seven
C twelve
D forty

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

2. What had Shrek been doing since dawn?

A dragging a huge oak log up the bank
B building a bridge
C baking a cake
D hanging lanterns

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

3. Who promised to bake the cake?

A Puss
B Donkey
C Fiona
D Gingy

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

4. What was Puss bringing to the party?

A a drum
B a cake
C a fiddle
D waffles

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

5. How many waffles did Fiona promise Donkey?

A seven
B twelve
C forty
D two

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

6. How long was it until the friends would arrive when Fiona found the damaged bridge?

A twenty minutes
B forty minutes
C one hour
D by sunset

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

7. What had happened to two planks of the bridge?

A They had been swept away by the river.
B They had been burnt in a fire.
C They had been stolen.
D They had been removed by Shrek.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

8. Who held up the brightest lantern at the far end of the bridge?

A Puss
B Donkey
C Gingy
D Fiona

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

9. Who crossed the log bridge first?

A Gingy
B Mrs Bumble
C Donkey
D Puss

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

Section B: Think it through

7 questions

10. In paragraph 4, the word 'swollen' in 'The water, swollen by the rain' means:

A very small

B frozen

C bigger and fuller than usual

D dirty

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

11. In paragraph 4, the word 'sprinted' means:

A ran very fast

B walked slowly

C jumped high

D crept quietly

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

12. Shrek says the log is 'strong enough for an army, though I would not call it pretty.' What does this suggest about the log bridge?

A It is weak and ugly.

B It is not beautiful but it is very strong.

C It is beautiful and weak.

D It is not finished.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

13. Why was the cake 'a little squashed'? Choose the answer best supported by the passage.

A The log fell on it.

B Donkey sat on it.

C Puss dropped it.

D Gingy had held it tightly against his chest while crossing.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

14. Donkey was very scared of the rushing water. Which detail shows he still helped his friends?

A He grinned widely at the party.

B He ate his waffles.

C He held up the brightest lantern and shouted directions.

D He jumped on the porch.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

15. The writer says Shrek 'said nothing, which, for Shrek, meant he agreed completely.' What does this tell us?

A Shrek shows his feelings through actions more than words.

B Shrek was too tired to speak.

C Shrek did not like what Fiona said.

D Shrek had not heard Fiona.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

16. Fiona whispers, 'Any bridge is worth building if there are good friends waiting on the other side.' What is the main message of the story?

A Storms are dangerous.

B Friendship is worth working hard for.

C Logs make the best bridges.

D Parties need cake.

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

Section C: Language

8 questions

17. 'Dark clouds piled up over the hills like grey mountains.' This is an example of:

A a metaphor
B personification
C alliteration
D a simile

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

18. 'Rain danced on the roof.' This is an example of:

A a simile
B a metaphor
C personification
D alliteration

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

19. The word 'squelched' in 'his boots squelched with every step' is an example of:

A onomatopoeia
B simile
C metaphor
D personification

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

20. 'Strong enough for an army' is an example of:

A a simile
B hyperbole
C onomatopoeia
D alliteration

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

21. In paragraph 1, the word 'carefully' in 'carefully hanging seven glowing lanterns' is a(n):

A noun
B adjective
C preposition
D adverb

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

22. In 'the old wooden bridge', the word 'wooden' is a(n):

A adverb
B verb
C adjective
D pronoun

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

23. In 'Dark clouds piled up over the hills', the word 'over' is a:

A preposition
B conjunction
C noun
D verb

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

24. In 'Shrek studied the gap in silence', the word 'studied' is a:

A noun
B verb
C adjective
D adverb

Keywords I marked: _____ Paragraph: _____ Answer: _____

Review

Section	Questions	Marks	My score
A Find it fast	1 to 9	9	
B Think it through	10 to 16	7	
C Language	17 to 24	8	
Total		**24**	

Questions I got wrong

For each one, write the keyword you should have marked and the paragraph where the answer was hiding.

Q	Keyword I should have marked	Paragraph