

Reading Comprehension: The Night Ferry

An original short story with retrieval, inference, language, structure and evaluation questions.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____

Learning objective: I can retrieve, infer and analyse the writer's use of language and structure.

✓ I can retrieve information ✓ I can infer with evidence ✓ I can analyse language and structure

The Night Ferry

The last ferry of the night left the harbour at ten. Nadia stood at the rail, watching the town lights shrink to a line of sparks. Her grandfather had made this crossing every week for forty years, and now, for the first time, she was making it without him.

The wind had been rising all evening. By the time the island's lighthouse winked into view, the sea had begun to heave like something breathing in its sleep. Spray stung her face. Most passengers had gone inside, where the lounge smelled of wet coats and vending-machine coffee, but Nadia stayed where she was. Grandad always said you should face the water you were crossing.

Halfway across, the engines changed their note – a deep, uneven cough – and then stopped. In the sudden quiet she could hear the waves slapping the hull and, somewhere below, a man shouting. The ferry swung slowly sideways to the swell.

Nadia's heart hammered. She gripped the cold rail and made herself count the flashes of the lighthouse: one, two, three, then darkness. One, two, three. It was a rhythm she knew. Grandad had taught it to her when she was six, sitting on his knee in the wheelhouse of his fishing boat.

After eleven long minutes, the engines grumbled back into life. A cheer drifted out from the lounge. Nadia let go of the rail and found that her hands were shaking, but she was smiling. She had faced the water, and she had not looked away.

An original story written for The Teacher Vault.

1 Retrieval Circle the correct answer.

- 1 What time did the ferry leave?
☐ (A) eight o'clock ☐ (B) ten o'clock ☐ (C) eleven o'clock
- 2 How long did the engines stop for?
☐ (A) three minutes ☐ (B) six minutes ☐ (C) eleven minutes

2 Vocabulary

- 3 Find and copy a word from paragraph 2 that means 'rise and fall heavily'. [1 mark]

Reading Comprehension: The Night Ferry

3 Inference and language

- 4 Why is this crossing different for Nadia? Give evidence. [2 marks]

- 5 ‘the sea had begun to heave like something breathing in its sleep’. What is the effect of this simile? [3 marks]

- 6 Why does Nadia stay outside when most passengers go in? [2 marks]

- 7 Find **two** sounds the writer uses to build tension in paragraph 3. [2 marks]

4 Structure and evaluation

- 8 Why does the writer include the memory of Grandad in paragraph 4? [2 marks]

- 9 How does the final sentence link back to the start of the story? [2 marks]

- 10 ‘The ending is satisfying.’ How far do you agree? Use evidence. [3 marks]

Answer Key

Reading Comprehension: The Night Ferry

Question	Answers
1 Retrieval	1 B (ten o'clock); 2 C (eleven minutes)
2 Vocabulary	3. heave
3 Inference and language	4. Her grandfather is not with her for the first time – 'now, for the first time, she was making it without him' (suggesting he has died or can no longer travel). 5. It makes the sea seem alive, huge and powerful; 'in its sleep' suggests it could wake and become dangerous, creating tension. 6. She remembers her grandfather's advice to 'face the water you were crossing'; she wants to be brave and feel close to him. 7. the engines' 'deep, uneven cough'; the sudden quiet; waves 'slapping the hull'; a man shouting.
4 Structure and evaluation	8. It shows how she calms herself; it links back to the opening, deepens the reader's sympathy and explains why the lighthouse rhythm matters. 9. It echoes Grandad's advice to 'face the water' – showing she has followed it and grown in confidence; a circular structure. 10. Personal response supported by evidence, e.g. agree – the tension is resolved ('engines grumbled back into life') and Nadia has changed ('smiling', 'had not looked away').

Teaching note: the story is original. Accept any well-supported interpretation, especially for the questions on inference and evaluation.