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Diagnostic Assessment – English

The purpose of the diagnostic and the assessment itself (print version)

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Diagnostic Assessment – English

Diagnostic Overview

General guidance

Welcome to your diagnostic assessment. These tests are designed to help you decide if you are at or near to the current GCSE English language standard pass level (Grade 4).

There are 3 tests, 3 marks schemes which you can use to self-mark your responses, and a range of examples which have been taken from students who achieved a grade 4 at GCSE for you to compare your own responses to.

It is important to take your time working through these materials so that you can apply the marks accurately, using the student examples as a guide. You should also take a look at the full [GCSE English Language papers](#), consider how much time you have to commit to studying and how quickly you need to achieve a GCSE grade. This will help you to select your best option and maximise your chances of success.

There are 3 parts to this diagnostic assessment, and it is recommended that you spend no more than 45 minutes on each part.

Part 1 – Reading fiction

This test includes an extract from a story written in the 19th Century, which has been used in an English Language GCSE exam: *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells.

There are 3 questions to answer on this text: identifying words within the text, finding information, and evaluating the success of the text. These are the style of questions which students answer in Paper 1 of the GCSE English Language exam.

Part 2 – Reading non-fiction

This test includes extracts from 2 non-fiction texts, which have been used in an English Language GCSE exam: *Return to Earth* by Edwin ‘Buzz’ Aldrin and Wayne Warga, and *space:uk* (2016) from the UK Space Agency.

There are 3 questions to answer on these texts: analysing the writers’ use of language and structure, pulling out the similarities between the two texts, and comparing the ideas of perspectives that the writers present in the two texts. These are the style of questions which students answer in Paper 2 of the GCSE English Language exam.

Part 3 – Writing skills

This test is designed to help you assess your knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. There are 4 sections for you to complete. The GCSE English Language exam includes 2 writing tasks – one creative and one transactional – and you will need to be able to write accurately, cohesively, and with a good range of vocabulary and structures.

The purpose of the diagnostic

Deciding on the right path towards an English qualification

The purpose of this diagnostic is to help you work out what the most suitable path for you is. The 14 week course gives you the opportunity to sit the GCSE English Language exam. The Raising Skills: English self-study programme helps develop your English skills for progression onto a GCSE or vocational course.

Completing the diagnostic assessment

You can take all 3 parts of the test at the same time or break the sections up into separate 45 minute sessions.

The amount of answer space gives a rough guide to how much you might be expected to write.

Once you have completed the assessment, use the mark schemes for each question to see how your answer matches up with the requirements of the question and how you have performed against the national average for a student who gained a Level 3 or a Level 4 on the whole qualification. Please keep hold of your answer sheet (or a scan or photo of it) after taking the assessment, and email it to Onlinestudycourse@pearson.com. This will help your tutor to support you if you do enrol on the *Pearson Edexcel GCSE English Online Study Course*.

The Diagnostic

Part 1 – Reading fiction

Read the text provided and answer ALL questions.
You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.

*In this extract the narrator has travelled through time, far into the future, for the first time.
His time machine has turned over as he landed.*

The Time Machine: H.G. Wells

The grey downpour was swept aside and vanished like the trailing garments of a ghost. Above me, in the intense blue of the summer sky, some faint brown shreds of cloud whirled into nothingness. The great buildings about me stood out clear and distinct, shining with the wet of the thunderstorm, and picked out in white by the unmelted
5 hailstones piled along their courses.

I felt naked in a strange world. I felt as perhaps a bird may feel in the clear air, knowing the hawk wings above and will swoop. My fear grew to frenzy. I took a breathing space, set my teeth, and again grappled fiercely, wrist and knee, with the machine. It gave under my desperate onset and turned over. It struck my chin violently. One hand on the saddle,
10 the other on the lever, I stood panting heavily ready to mount again.

But with this recovery of a prompt retreat my courage recovered. I looked more curiously and less fearfully at this world of the remote future. In a circular opening, high up in the wall of the nearer house, I saw a group of figures clad in rich soft robes. They had seen me, and their faces were directed towards me.

15 Then I heard voices approaching me. Coming through the bushes were the heads and shoulders of men running. One of these emerged in a pathway leading straight to the little lawn upon which I stood with my machine. He was a slight creature—perhaps four feet high—clad in a purple tunic, girdled at the waist with a leather belt. Sandals or buskins*—I could not clearly distinguish which—were on his feet; his legs were bare to
20 the knees, and his head was bare. Noticing that, I noticed for the first time how warm the air was.

He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence. I took my hands from the machine.

In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity.
25 He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who were following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue.

There were others coming, and presently a little group of perhaps eight or ten of these exquisite creatures were about me. One of them addressed me. It came into my head,

30 oddly enough, that my voice was too harsh and deep for them. So I shook my head, and, pointing to my ears, shook it again. He came a step forward, hesitated, and then touched my hand. Then I felt other soft little tentacles upon my back and shoulders. They wanted to make sure I was real.

There was nothing in this at all alarming. Indeed, there was something in these pretty
35 little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease. And besides, they looked so frail that I could fancy myself flinging the whole dozen of them about like nine-pins**. But I made a sudden motion to warn them when I saw their little pink hands feeling at the Time Machine. Happily then, when it was not too late, I thought of a danger I had hitherto forgotten, and reaching over the bars of the machine
40 I unscrewed the little levers that would set it in motion, and put these in my pocket. Then I turned again to see what I could do in the way of communication.

*buskins** - calf-high or knee-high boots which lace up the leg and are open-toed

*nine-pins*** - skittles knocked down in a bowling game

Answer ALL questions about the above text.
You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.

1. From lines 1-3, identify a word or phrase which describes the colour of the clouds.

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(Total for Question 1 = 1 mark)

2. From lines 6-10, give **two** ways in which the writer shows that the narrator is worried.
You may use your own words or quotations from the text.

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(Total for Question 2 = 2 marks)

3. In this extract, there is an attempt to show the narrator's experiences of a future world.
Evaluate how successfully this is achieved.

Support your views with detailed reference to the text. (15 marks)

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(Total for Question 3 = 15 marks)

TOTAL FOR PART 1 = 18 MARKS

Part 2 – Reading non-fiction

Read the texts provided and answer ALL questions.
You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.

TEXT 1

Extract from 'Return to Earth' by Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin and Wayne Warga (1973).

This is an edited extract from an autobiography written by the American astronaut 'Buzz' Aldrin. Aldrin is writing about the return to earth of Apollo 11, the first spacecraft to land humans on the Moon.

We floated down through a bank of clouds as big and lush as the ocean they covered. The change was impressive. I had become so accustomed to seeing the starkness of space, where there is no haze and where definitions are quite sharp, that the sensation of looking out on a hazy early morning on earth was a welcome change. I could see the ocean below, and as I looked at it, I sniffed to smell it. Not yet.

The sensation caused by the change of scenery pales beside the sensation of getting used to the fact of weight. For a number of minutes, movement is an effort. Arms, which had floated before, now hung heavily and had to be willed to movement. Legs, which are about as necessary to space travel as an appendix is to a body, stirred to activity by threatening not to function at all.

We landed with all the grace of an old freight elevator. Air Boss* had announced to us that the wave height was between three and four feet, but it looked more like thirteen or fourteen. And it felt like it too. Our chutes, tilting in the wind, brought us in at one angle, and the moon, governor of the tides, sent a wave our way from an opposing angle. With an enormous thwack, as jarring as it was noisy, we landed. Before the impact, my hand rested on circuit breakers which, when pushed in, would enable Mike to jettison** our chutes. After impact, my hand was jammed painfully down beside me. All of us grunted in distress; I grabbed the circuit breakers and Mike jettisoned the chutes.

The *Apollo* spacecraft is a marvel of engineering. It is totally life-supporting, a miniplanet containing all facilities necessary for maintaining life. It also floats, whether right side up or upside down. There is no way to determine which way you'll end up after landing, especially in a good wind and a delayed chute jettison.

It brings a smile now, but at the time, it wasn't quite so amusing. There we were, officially taking our position in the history books of mankind, floating upside down in the Pacific Ocean. It was July 24, 1969. The water was dark green and unfriendly, but its mist seeping in smelled good.

We bobbed around for seven minutes, the amount of time it takes the float-bag motors to pump air into the float-bags – three little balloons – which would turn us upright.

30 "Air Boss, *Apollo 11*. Everyone okay inside. Our checklist is complete. Awaiting swimmers,"
Neil radioed.

Air Boss came right on and told us three swimmers were already in the water, and our flotation collar would be attached in less than two minutes.

35 It was over. No exclamations, no slaps on the back. No handshakes. All that would come later, at least the handshakes. We sat in silence, three men alone together with their private thoughts.

*Air Boss** – nickname given to the Naval Air Force

*jettison*** – release or discard

TEXT 2

Extract from 'space:uk' (2016) from the UK Space Agency.

This edited extract is taken from Issue 46 of a magazine offering the latest space sector news.

This issue reports on the return to earth of British astronaut Tim Peake.

British European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Tim Peake's Principia expedition to the International Space Station (ISS) came to an end on 18 June, with the landing of his spacecraft in Kazakhstan.

5 "Incredible!" said Tim Peake, describing his descent to Earth in a spacecraft after 186 days on the ISS. Some astronauts have likened the experience to going over Niagara Falls in a flaming barrel. Peake, however, described it as: "The best ride I've been on, ever."

Down to Earth

Peake's return flight to Earth was one of the most dangerous parts of his mission. Strapped in next to Russian commander Yuri Malenchenko and NASA astronaut Tim
10 Kopra, the crew had undocked from the ISS some three and a half hours earlier. After moving slowly from the ISS, they fired thrusters to take them out of orbit on a trajectory* towards Earth.

The spacecraft entered the atmosphere at some 28,000 km/h. The craft's heat shield is tilted towards the direction of re-entry so that it can handle temperatures of up to
15 1600°C generated by friction as it pushes through atmospheric gases. This is a bumpy and uncomfortable ride for the astronauts – who are forced back into their seats by g-forces of four to five times Earth's gravity.

Ten kilometres above the ground, the spacecraft has already slowed considerably and parachutes open for the final descent to Earth. Just before it hits the Earth, retrorockets
20 fire to reduce the impact speed to 5 km/h. This is still quite a jolt for the astronauts on board, who have spent six months in a weightless environment.

After being helped out of the spacecraft, the British astronaut's joy at being back on Earth was clear. "The smells of Earth are so strong," he said. "It's wonderful to be back in the fresh air."

25 Dripping with sweat in his spacesuit, he told waiting reporters he was looking forward to seeing his family and was hoping for "a pizza and cold beer". He was, though, going to miss the view of the Earth from space and couldn't wait to go back.

After being checked out by doctors, Peake boarded a flight to the European Astronaut Centre at Cologne in Germany where he was re-united with his family.

30 Although Peake's time in space is over (for now at least), this is by no means the end of his mission. The astronaut will spend the coming months taking part in debriefs about the flight. He will also undergo medical tests and rehabilitation training to see how his body has been affected by his time in space.

35 It can take astronauts up to a year to regain their full fitness after six months in
microgravity. Studies into the effects of spaceflight are crucial if humans are ever to
venture further from Earth on long duration missions to destinations such as Mars.

Meet the media

Three days after landing, a refreshed-looking Peake appeared in front of a packed press
conference in Cologne to be greeted by cheers from friends, colleagues and the media.

40 "I would do it again in a heartbeat," Peake said of his mission.

*trajectory** – route

Sources:

Text 1: Return to Earth, Buzz Aldrin and Wayne Warga, 1973; Open Road Media. (Kindle Edition).

Text 2: space:uk, Issue 46 2016; UK Space Agency www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-space-agency, Crown Copyright, URN UKSA/15/9.

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copyright material. Pearson Education Ltd. will, if notified, be happy to rectify any errors or
omissions and include any such rectifications in future editions.

Answer ALL questions about the above texts.
You should spend about 45 minutes on this section.

Question 1 is about text 1 only.

1. Analyse how the writer uses language and structure to interest and engage the reader.
Support your views with detailed reference to the text. (15 marks)

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(Total for Question 1 = 15 marks)

Question 2 is about Text 1 and Text 2. Answer both parts of the question. Refer to both texts in your answer.

2. (a) The two texts show the experiences of astronauts returning to earth.

What similarities do these experiences share in the extracts?

Use evidence from both texts to support your answer.

(6 marks)

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(Total for Question 2 = 20 marks)
TOTAL FOR PART 2 = 35 MARKS

Part 3 – Writing skills

These tests are designed to test your knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. You should aim to take no more than 45 minutes on this test.

Section A – Spelling

Question 1: Pick the right word

Fill in the gaps using the correctly spelled words from the list below. (4 marks)

bought **though** **thorough**
brought **through** **through**

- a. To get to the terrace, you need to walk down the corridor and _____ the second door on the left.
- b. My sister is still not talking to me, even _____ I apologised for using her make up.
- c. She _____ some cupcakes at the supermarket for everyone in the office.
- d. I was _____ up in London, but I live in Liverpool.

Question 2: Pick the right word

Tick (✓) **one** column in each row to complete the following sentences with either 'accept', 'expect' or 'except'. (4 marks)

	accept	expect	except
After the interview, I wanted to _____ the job straightaway.			
I did not _____ you to arrive so early.			
They all enjoyed the film _____ for Sam.			
I _____ that I made a mistake.			

Question 3: Choose the right prefix

Complete each of these root words with the correct prefix. Fill in the gaps using the prefixes in the list below. (1 mark)

dis inter sub pre

Lucy _____merged her hands in the soapy water to wash them.

Question 4: Choose the right suffix

Fills in the gaps using the correct suffix from the lists below to complete the words in the paragraph. (1 mark)

ly ley ally rly

I have over 100 different comic books and read them regular_____.

Section B – Punctuation

Question 1: Capital letters

Tick (✓) one column in each row to show whether the type of noun should be capitalised or be lowercase. Choose **one** option for each. (4 marks)

	Capitalised	Lowercase
Names and titles of people		
Countries, counties, cities and towns		
Seasons of the year		
Months of the year		

Question 2: Apostrophes

Fill in the gaps using the options from the lists below to complete the paragraph on guide dogs. (4 marks)

What do guide dog **(a)** _____ do?

They are responsible for all aspects of a **(b)** _____ training. Each puppy receives at least 24 **(c)** _____ training. After training, they assess the **(d)** _____ and help match each dog to the correct owner.

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------|------------------------|
| a. | trainer's | trainers |
| b. | guide dog's | guide dogs' |
| c. | month's | months' |
| d. | dogs abilities | dogs' abilities |

Question 3: Commas

Which set of sentences uses commas correctly? Tick (✓) **one** correct answer. (1 mark)

- a. *Stars in the Kitchen* our bestselling charity cookbook, is now available to buy online. To get your copy, simply visit our website and pay at the secure checkout.
- b. *Stars in the Kitchen*, our bestselling charity cookbook, is now available to buy online. To get your copy, simply visit our website and pay at the secure checkout.
- c. *Stars in the Kitchen*, our bestselling charity cookbook is now available to buy online. Simply visit our website and pay at the online checkout quickly and securely.
- d. *Stars in the Kitchen* our bestselling charity cookbook is now available to buy online. Simply visit our website and pay at the online checkout, quickly and securely.

Question 4: Punctuating sentences

Select the sentence that is punctuated correctly. Tick (✓) **one** correct answer. (1 mark)

- a. We sincerely apologise to all our customers who were affected by the lift breakdown last week we have taken steps to ensure that any future breakdowns are repaired within 4 hours.
- b. We need to be in Oxford by 7 o'clock. Shall we catch the 4.37 train or do you want to get the 5.07.
- c. Watch out! You must keep away from the edge of the platform.
- d. I hope the show doesn't go on too late. I don't want to miss the last train home

Section C – Grammar

Question 1: Past tense

Fill in the gaps using the correct words from each list to complete the sentences in the **past tense**. (2 marks)

a. They _____ all night.
drive drove will drive

b. I _____ the car.
washed will wash wash

Question 2: Present tense

Fill in the gaps using the correct words from each list to complete the sentences in the **present tense**. (2 marks)

a. Mark _____ basketball on Tuesdays.
plays played will play

b. I _____ to college every day apart from Friday.
will go go went

Question 3: Subject/verb agreement

Fill in the gaps using the correct words from each list to complete the sentences in the **present tense**. (3 marks)

a. My family and I _____ to go abroad for our summer holiday every year.

likes like liked

b. We usually _____ on holiday in May but this year we are going in June.

goes went go

c. My brother isn't coming with us this year because he _____ exams in June.

had has have

Question 4: Subject/verb agreement

Using the words below, fill in the gaps to complete the sentences in the past tense and with the correct subject-verb agreement. (3 marks)

was were

a. I didn't know you _____ a singer.

b. Jason _____ studying in the library when the fire alarm went off.

c. The pasta we ate last night _____ delicious!

Section D – Bringing it all together

Correct the spelling, punctuation and grammar in this student's work. There are 10 errors in total.

My friend anna armstrong is a wheelchair user last week she was furious because the lift at the station isn't working. Apparently, the lift has been out of order for day's. She was told that it is an electricians' job to check it regularley in the Summer months. The staff at the train station agreed that this was unexceptable

Marking the diagnostic

Now that you have completed the diagnostic, use the mark scheme and the exemplar answers to see how your answers match up with the requirements of the questions. This is a rough guide to help you see if you are on the right track towards a GCSE course or if the Raising Skills: English course would be the best route for you.