

Exam Questions

Over the final 6 lectures of the series we are going to go through **each question of the A Star exam** using an **adapted** former **GCSE paper**.

Today's class is going to focus on **questions 1 and 2** of the A Star exam.

While we will go through the exam in chronological order, you can do the exam in any order and my recommended order is different. We will discuss this and explain the reasoning at the end of the course.

Exam Structure

The **reading** part of the exam consists of **5 questions**. The amount of marks for each goes up in the four times table meaning **every question is more important than the one before**.

The exam has **100 marks in total** so **each mark is worth 1%**. To pass the exam with a **grade 4** which is sufficient for most universities, you need **48%** or **48 marks**. To get a **grade 5** which you need to get into University College London (UCL), you need **55%**

Exam Structure

While there is no way to know what topic you will get in the exam or to see the sources before, you will have:

2 sources and they will both be non-fiction.

Also it is very likely that one source will be more **modern** and the other will be from the **19th Century** (the sources can be from any time from the 19th Century to the present day)

Every question in the exam is formulaic so you can **learn** exactly what to expect and **how to answer them.**

The **mark scheme** for the exam is split into **9 grades** with 9 being highest and 1 lowest. It is also split into **4 levels**. To get into **level 3 of the 4** which insures a **pass, clarity** is key.

Question 1

1. Read again the first part of Source A from lines 1 to 5.

‘Early one morning, the sub-inspector at another police station the other end of town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I started out. I took my rifle, much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful.’

Choose four statements below which are true.

Question 1 Tips

Always give **4 answers** as true. Never more, never less!

Make sure you only look for the answers in the **lines given** in the question.

Work through the options **methodologically**. They should all have information within the line that prove them true or false and normally the information appears in order of the options.

You can find a **clue** from **explicit** information (**what it says**) or **implicit** information (**reading between the lines**). Normally 2 or 3 of the true clues will be explicitly said and the remainder will be implicit.

Spend **5 minutes**. Go with your **instincts**. Time is one of the biggest challenges in this exam so it would be better to get off this question in less than 5 minutes and get 3 marks than spend more than 10 minutes and get all 4.

Although we have given reasoning for both our true and false answers below, in the real exam you only need to mark the 4 true answers.

Question 1 Tips

Shade the circles in the boxes of the ones that you think are true.

Choose a maximum of **four statements**.

If you make an **error cross out the whole box**.

If you change your mind and require a statement that has been crossed out then draw a circle around the box.

Question 1 Answer

A Orwell receives the phone call in the afternoon.

False Early one morning

B There is only one police station in the town. **False**
another police station

C There are reports of an elephant out of control. **True**
an elephant was ravaging the bazaar.

D The sub-inspector expects Orwell to sort out the problem. **True** Would I please come and do something about it?

E Orwell is confident he can sort out the problem with the elephant. **False** I did not know what I could do

F Orwell is curious about the elephant. **True** I wanted to see what was happening

G Orwell takes his rifle to kill the elephant. **False** I took my rifle, much too small to kill an elephant

H It takes a very powerful weapon to kill an elephant
True I took my rifle, much too small to kill an elephant

Question 2

You need to refer to Source A and Source B for this question.

Both sources describe how the elephants behave. Use details from both sources to write a summary of what you understand about the similar behaviour of the elephants.

[8 marks]

Question 2 Tips

Question 2 will always focus on **one aspect which is in both sources**. Make this the **subject** of your sentences. Eg: In source A, the elephants... Likewise, in Source B the elephants...

The easiest way to structure question 2 is to write **two paragraphs**.

a) The first paragraph can start with an **introductory sentence** briefly touching on **both sources**. It should then focus on the **subject** (in this case the elephants) in **source A**. It needs to include **evidence, explanation** and **inference**.

b) The second paragraph should start with a **comparative sentence** and then **focus** on the **subject** in **source B** comparing the **similarities (or differences)**. Again it needs to include **evidence, explanation** and **inference**. You can finish with a sentence summarising.

Question 2 Tips

You could be asked about **similarities** or **differences**. Make sure that your answer is **focused** on whatever you are asked. Eg: One similarity between the behaviour of the elephants is... or In source A the elephants... Likewise the elephants in Source B...

You must provide **evidence (quotations)** in your answer.

However, it is much easier to use very small quotations (**maybe even just key individual words**) to **embed** them within your sentences and give you more freedom to explain the source around the evidence in your own words.

In order to score well on question two, **inference** is key. This means writing about **why** the subject is **presented how it is** (in this case the behaviour of the elephant) and **why it is similar (or different)** in both sources. You just need to justify why you have inferred that, you don't need to prove it as it is your **interpretation**.

You can use words like could and '**perhaps**' to show that your inference is a **theory**.

Question 2 Tips

In all questions in the exam, the more **sophisticated** your language, the better you will score. However, it is important you are using words accurately.

The **recommended time** for this question is around **10 minutes**. This is very challenging and it can be tempting to take a lot longer. However, it's important to remember you can only get **8 marks** on this question and taking too long could cause you problems on more important questions.

This is one of the reasons I will recommend doing this question at the end of the exam as it's better to rush and drop a couple of marks than to spend too long and drop more marks later.

You **don't** want to **write too much** for this question, leaving not enough time for later ones. **Two good paragraphs** is more than enough to score well.

Question 2: Example Answers

Level 4 (grades 8 to 9) Perceptive summary 7-8 marks

Shows perceptive synthesis and interpretation of both texts:

- a) Makes **perceptive inferences from both texts**
- b) Makes **judicious references/use of textual detail relevant to the focus of the question**
- c) **Statements show perceptive similarities between texts**

At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors.

At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 3 and at least one of the skills descriptors

The elephant in Source A appears to behave in a violent and destructive way, by taking fruit as he 'raided' the market stall, but his behaviour is instinctive, as there is no other way for him to survive without food. In fact both elephants behave in a conscious way to achieve their aims, showing how intelligent elephants are and how they are misunderstood by their owners and keepers. In Source B, the elephant 'destroy[s] the doors' of the cage which confine him. This suggests his behaviour is both rational and deliberate, motivated by an attempt to escape from captivity, as he 'was perfectly quiet as soon as he was able to be free.'

Question 2: Example Answers

Level 3 (grades 5 to 7) Clear, relevant summary 5-6 marks

Shows clear synthesis and interpretation of both texts:

- a) Makes clear inferences from both texts**
- b) Selects clear references/textual detail relevant to the focus of the question**
- c) Statements show clear similarities between texts**

At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors.

At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 2 and at least one of the skills descriptors.

The elephant's behaviour in Source A looks aggressive, as he 'raided some fruit stalls' but he may have only taken the fruit so he could eat something or he would not survive. This is similar to the other elephant which also appears to behave violently but they are only being destructive because they want to escape or survive. In Source B, Jumbo 'began to destroy the doors' of his home, but he only behaves in a violent way because he wants to be free.

Question 2: Example Answers

Level 2 Some attempts at summary 3-4 marks (This is a bottom pass and therefore the standard you need to be reaching in order to pass the exam)

Shows some interpretation from one/both texts:

- a) Attempts some inference(s) from one/both texts**
- b) Selects some appropriate references/textual detail from one/both texts**
- c) Statements show some similarity between texts**

At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 1 and at least one of the skills descriptors

The elephant in Source A takes food and destroys the market stall, where it says 'raided some fruit-stalls,' which shows that he could be dangerous. This dangerous behaviour is similar to the other elephant who is also quite violent. In Source B, the elephant 'began to destroy the doors and other parts of his house' which shows he doesn't care what he destroys.

Question 2: Example Answers

Level 1 Simple, limited summary 1-2 marks (This is a fail but it's important to pick up marks, even on questions you struggle with, as they can contribute to an overall pass)

Shows simple awareness from one/both texts:

- a) Offers paraphrase rather than inference**
- b) Makes simple reference/textual details from one/both texts**
- c) Statements show simple similarities between texts**

At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have at least one of the skills descriptors

The elephant in Source A is bad because it says 'raided some fruit-stalls' which shows that it took food from the market stall. This is similar to Jumbo who behaves really badly as well and breaks things. The elephant in Source B is naughty because it says 'he began to destroy the doors and other parts of his house,' which shows he behaves badly.

Question 2: Final Tips

- A candidate has to deal with **both texts** and address the **correct focus of the question** to achieve L3 or above.

The focus of this question is the similar behaviour of the elephants.

AO1 content may include ideas such as:

- Their violence • Their unpredictability • Their bid for freedom • Their greed • Their actions towards humans • Their docility • Their motivation/instinct