

ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS

SECTION A: Reading

You should spend about 40 minutes on this section.

Read the following passage carefully and then answer the questions which follow.

Henry Blogg was the captain of a lifeboat that was rowed out to rescue the crews of two ships on the same night and in dreadful conditions.

A brave rescue



Many a man has good reason to remember the winter of 1917, for it was one of the worst on record. A fierce gale was pushing the waters of the North Sea on to the coast. It was just such conditions as these that had for centuries littered the shores with the bones of many ships. Throughout the previous night the gale had torn limbs from trees and slates from roofs.

Before the sound of the lifeboat signal had died away some of the lifeboat-men were dashing towards the boathouse. The boathouse was a tangle of men and equipment as the crew struggled into lifebelts and oilskins. Henry Blogg knew what a grim struggle lay ahead. The ship in trouble was just two miles off. Not far, perhaps, on a summer day, but in the teeth of that gale, pitting oars against such seas, two miles was a very long way.

The crew were barely conscious of the stinging hail, for the icy spray whipped up by the gale was flung continuously over the open boat. They pulled and pushed the heavy oars, jarred by each blow of the sea and thrown about by the steep pitching of their boat. Henry Blogg exhorted and instructed his crew. Progress was slow, but three hours of back-breaking effort had its reward, for sixteen men were taken into the lifeboat.

The relief of the rescued at getting ashore was almost equalled by the relief the rescuers felt to be safely back after that gruelling contest. With their oilskins flapping in the gale, they clasped the hands of the helpers who ran into the surf to assist in the landing.

The crew were in an exhausted state. But it had been a good day's work and now it was over they could relax and enjoy the steaming cocoa that brought back feeling to their numb bodies.



25 Their relief was short-lived, however, for hardly had they got into their dry clothes
ready for the return home when a message came that the Swedish ship 'Fernebo'
was in great difficulty three to four miles out. The immediate reaction was that they
could not aid her. They were too exhausted and some other lifeboat must go. When
he received the message Henry Blogg looked at his crew and knew that he must put it
30 to them. He was ready to go, he said, and he believed his crew would want to go with
him. The exhausted men saw the need and, tired as they were, they were prepared to
face that howling gale again. Having already achieved the seemingly impossible that
day under Blogg, there was fire in their hearts.

They would follow if Henry Blogg would lead.

35 They struggled back into their wet oilskins and cork lifebelts, and started the grim
battle all over again.

Some witnesses say five thousand people were gathered on the shore to watch that
fight. Not one who saw it would ever forget it, and many a man not used to praying
did so now for that little boat fighting those mountainous seas. Wet through and
shivering, they watched spellbound. It was magnificent. Henry Blogg was getting
40 more out of them than they knew they had in them.

On board the Fernebo, hope was almost dead. The sea was now in its worst mood.
Everything seemed against them. From the shore cheer after cheer of encouragement
rang out across the water, bringing new hope to the wrecked men. The cheering could
mean only one thing to the Fernebo's men: a new attempt was being made to save
45 them. Hope broke through the hardening crust of despair and they strengthened their
grip on ropes and rails as the seas tried harder than ever to dislodge them.

The lifeboat slowly approached the wreck and time and again it looked as though
the stout boat would be flung against the sides of the broken Fernebo. No one could
remember how long it took to get the exhausted survivors into the boat, but it seemed
50 an age, fraught with anxious suspense, before the lifeboat began to draw away from
the wreck.

Then, to the spectators' unspeakable relief the lifeboat came quickly to the shore,
where willing hands helped the eleven rescued men and the rescuers to safety. It was
nearly 1 a.m. and Henry Blogg and his crew had battled on and off for fourteen hours,
55 risking their lives to save total strangers from the fury of the sea. It was over! Blogg
had won the last round and beaten the North Sea in its worst mood.

¹oilskins: waterproof clothes



**You should refer closely to the passage to support your answers.
You may include brief quotations.**

1. What made Henry Blogg’s crew think that another lifeboat should go and rescue the ‘Fernebo’?

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Q1

(Total 1 mark)

2. Look again at lines 6 – 17.
Give **three** words or phrases that the writer uses to describe the difficulties of rowing the lifeboat in these conditions.

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Q2

(Total 3 marks)

3. Describe, **in your own words**, the character of Henry Blogg, the captain of the lifeboat.

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Q3

(Total 4 marks)



4. How does the writer try to create a sense of danger and growing excitement in this passage?

In your answer you should write about:

- the opening of the passage
- how the writer describes the weather and the sea
- the challenges the crew faced
- the words, phrases and techniques which the writer uses.

You should refer closely to this passage to support your answer. You may include **brief** quotations.

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