

Reading Comprehension Task:

The Whale

You have 30 minutes to read the following passage and answer **all** of the questions below. Match your response to the marks available. You may continue your answers on the additional pages provided, if required.

Lurking –

a sinister shadow; never fully formed as it haunts the seabed.
Rippling below the waves; a babbling current of its own.

Emerging –

a majestic mountain; moving too effortlessly for its form.
Triumphing into the great crescendo of a deep-sea symphony.

Returning –

a plummeting pillar; displacing a tidal wave of saltwater.
Disappearing beneath the sunlight as another hour passes.

Stranded –

a lifeless boulder; washed ashore amidst an oceanic tragedy.
Stuffed full of toxicity; a buffet from humanity.



1. Discuss two ways that the poet makes the whale seem mysterious in the first verse, explaining the effect that this has on the reader.

2 marks

2. **Triumphing into the great crescendo of a deep-sea symphony.**

What does this phrase imply about the whale's surfacing?

2 marks

3. What impression does the poet give of the whale's physicality in this poem? Discuss at least two points, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

3 marks

4. Write an additional verse for the poem which fits between the existing first and second verses. The first line of this verse should read 'Grazing -'.

3 marks

Reading Comprehension Task:

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To achieve the full number of marks for each question, pupils' responses should be to the same quality as the examples below. This is not a comprehensive list of answers and should only be used as a guide regarding answer depth and detail.

1. Discuss two ways that the poet makes the whale seem mysterious in the first verse, explaining the effect that this has on the reader.

One way that the poet makes the whale seem mysterious is by calling it 'a sinister shadow' – this adds an atmosphere of uncertainty around what the whale really looks like or is. The poet also describes the whale as 'haunting the seabed' which makes it seem like a ghost. That is something that is usually associated with mystery.

2. **Triumphing into the great crescendo of a deep-sea symphony.**

What does this phrase imply about the whale's surfacing?

The phrase implies that the whale's surfacing is noisy, like the peak of an orchestral piece of music. It also implies that it is something pleasant and exciting to experience.

3. What impression does the poet give of the whale's physicality in this poem? Discuss at least two points, using evidence from the text to support your answer.

The poet gives the impression that the whale is large by describing it as 'a majestic mountain'. The poet also gives the impression that the whale is heavy by using words such as 'pillar' and 'boulder' to describe it.

4. Write an additional verse for the poem which fits between the existing first and second verses. The first line of this verse should read 'Grazing –'.

Grazing –

**A graceful guzzler; ploughing through fields of ripe and helpless prey
Accidentally ingesting man-made poison in its natural pasture.**