

# Designing a reading comprehension exercise for MYP language B

## Text

Choose a text in the target language that is of appropriate difficulty for the language B level. Often this may involve adapting a text. Sometimes it may be a passage that a teacher has authored. If the task is to be used as a year 5 moderation piece, ensure that the text conforms to the word limits listed in the moderation section of the *Language B guide* (500, 750 or 1,000 words/characters). A reading comprehension exercise may consist of more than one text to cover the length requirement. However, multiple texts must be related to constitute one exercise overall.

## Questions

A straightforward way to design the questions accompanying the text is to work through the level descriptors for language B criterion E, ensuring that each skill is addressed at least once, and preferably two or three times. Students will then have the opportunity to achieve all levels of the criterion.

Examples for each level descriptor are as follows. Please note that these examples use **language B standard** assessment criterion E.

Achievement level	Descriptor
1–2	The student identifies <b>basic information</b> stated in texts with <b>familiar language</b> . The student shows a <b>limited understanding of the text(s) overall</b> .

To achieve this descriptor, there need to be questions asking for factual information from the “easy” parts of the text. The student may also need to be asked to identify the type of text and its basic components.

These questions may look like the following.

- What did the main character do on Saturday?
- Where did his sister go?
- Why didn't he use his bike?
- In two sentences, describe this text in terms of structure and what it is about. (Answer could be something like, “It's a letter. It's a boy writing to his mum.”)

A student who achieves level 1 or 2 would answer some of these types of questions correctly, but not necessarily all of them. It is advisable to use many of these types of questions to allow very weak students the opportunity to achieve at least a lower level.

Achievement level	Descriptor
3–4	The student identifies <b>stated information, main ideas</b> and <b>some supporting details</b> in texts with <b>familiar language</b> . The student shows an <b>understanding of some parts of the text(s)</b> .

In addition to answering most of the questions at the 1–2 level correctly, students will also answer questions relating to stated information/opinions, and details that support the main idea of the text.

These questions may look like the following.

- What does Bob think of school? (Ensure this information is stated in the passage.)
- Give three examples to support the fact that Katy doesn't like science class.
- In two sentences, describe what this text is about. (Answer could be something like, "It's a letter from a boy to his mum. He is at camp and wants to come home.")

A student who achieves level 3 or 4, in addition to answering most of the questions at the 1–2 level correctly, would answer some of these types of questions correctly, but not necessarily all of them.

Achievement level	Descriptor
5–6	The student identifies <b>stated and implied information, main ideas</b> and <b>supporting details</b> in texts with <b>familiar and unfamiliar language</b> and/or <b>complex ideas</b> . The student <b>draws conclusions</b> . The student shows an <b>understanding of most parts of the text(s)</b> .

In addition to answering most of the questions at the 1–2 and 3–4 levels correctly, students will also answer questions relating to information/opinions where the language is unfamiliar or where the ideas are complex. The teacher will need to decide what language is unfamiliar for the students, what ideas are complex, and design questions appropriately. This may involve gleaning the meaning of the unfamiliar word(s) from the context, or understanding the "bigger picture" when the idea is complex or described with unfamiliar language.

For this descriptor, students also need to show that they can draw conclusions from the text.

These questions may look like the following.

- Based on Peter's comments, do you think he is ready to take the next step? Give at least two examples to support your conclusion.
- Based only on the information given in the text, do you think this new medical procedure is ready to be tested on people? Explain.

A student who achieves level 5 or 6, in addition to answering most of the questions at the 1–2 and 3–4 levels correctly, would answer some of these types of questions correctly, but not necessarily all of them.

Achievement level	Descriptor
7–8	<p>The student identifies <b>stated and implied information, main ideas</b> and <b>supporting details</b> in texts with <b>familiar and unfamiliar language</b> and/or <b>complex ideas</b>.</p> <p>The student <b>draws conclusions</b> and <b>recognizes opinions and attitudes implied within the text</b>. The student <b>identifies some aspects of format and style</b> where appropriate.</p> <p>The student shows a <b>good understanding of the text(s) overall</b>.</p>

The wording of this descriptor denotes that there are implied opinions and attitudes within the text for the student to infer. On occasions the text used may also be of a nature where it is appropriate to ask students questions on format and/or style.

In addition to answering most of the questions at the 1–2, 3–4, and 5–6 levels correctly, students will also answer questions relating to the identification of implied opinions and attitudes, and will identify format and style.

These questions may look like the following.

- Based on his comments, what do you think Bert’s opinion of Alicia is? Explain.
- “Frank had the best attitude towards the newcomer.” Support or oppose this statement, using examples from the text.
- The author lets us know the answer to the mystery at the beginning of the text. Why do you think she did this?
- The author has purposefully talked about the flood before talking about the storm. Why do you think he did this?
- What effect do you think the author was aiming for by using a mix of formal language and slang in the final dialogue? Support your answer with examples.

With these higher-level questions, it may be necessary to remind students that their explanation, or reference to the text, is very important.

If questions are designed according to the explanations and examples given above, students will be given the opportunity to reach all levels of criterion E.

## Notes

1. For final assessment, **questions** should be in the target language. Students of language B advanced level should also give their answers to a reading comprehension exercise in the target language. However, at standard and foundation levels, students should be allowed to demonstrate their comprehension in their mother tongue, or in the language of instruction of the school, if they know the answer but cannot express it in the target language when answering questions that address the higher levels of criterion E.
2. In addition, when answers are given in the target language, teachers should remember that as they are assessing **comprehension**, and not writing/production skills, language errors should not be penalized (providing they don’t interfere with the meaning of the answer).

3. Although multiple-choice questions may be appropriate in addressing the lower levels of criterion E, they are not recommended for addressing the higher levels: open-ended questions, as exemplified, are more effective in allowing students to demonstrate all the skills listed in the higher levels.
4. Teachers may like to indicate next to the question in brackets which descriptor each question addresses. This assists both the students and the marking process.