

Example 1: "Keeping koalas wild"

Reading comprehension

Foundation level

MYP year: 5

Criterion	A	B	C	D	E
Level achieved	–	–	–	–	7

Background

The article "Keeping koalas wild" was originally published in the science magazine *Scientriffic* (July/August 2005, No 38). The teacher adapted it to the layout of a reading comprehension assessment task and modified the language and content slightly to reflect a foundation student's level of English. The students had focused on the environment as an area of interaction in many topics and had looked at endangered species. As the koala is a well-known symbol of Australia, this was considered an appropriate text, as all students would recognize the animal.

Students had a double class period (2 x 40 minutes) to read the text and answer the questions. The task was completed under examination conditions and the use of dictionaries or notes was not allowed.

Students were expected, whenever possible, to write their answers in the target language.

An answer key is included.

Note 1: The text used as a stimulus contained some pictures. For copyright reasons, these cannot be reproduced.

Note 2: As the work was done under examination conditions, the student's responses were handwritten; they have been retyped here to facilitate reading. All orthographical and grammatical errors remain as per the original work.

Assessment

Criterion E: reading comprehension

Maximum 8

Achievement level	Descriptor
7–8	<p>The student identifies basic and more-complex facts in texts with familiar and unfamiliar language, identifies the main idea and supporting details, and draws conclusions.</p> <p>The student shows good understanding of the text(s) overall.</p>

This work achieved level 7 because the student:

- identifies basic facts written in familiar language
- identifies more-complex facts written in unfamiliar language
- identifies the main idea and the supporting details
- is able to draw some conclusions from the text
- shows a good understanding of the text overall and, even though there are some language errors, the meaning is still clear.

The student would have achieved a higher level if he had answered questions 4 and 12 correctly.

Reading comprehension text

Keeping koalas wild

Can they survive the urban sprawl?

Imagine how you would feel if you came home from school one day and someone had knocked down your home and most of the houses in your neighbourhood. You would most likely feel sad, confused and frightened. Now think about how you would feel if you could not find a shop to buy some food. Hungry, afraid and tired – how do you cope?

The urban koala

When koala habitat (the bush land that koalas live in) is cleared to make way for a new road, housing estate or farm, the koala faces all of these problems and more. As urban sprawl (when towns and cities grow bigger) creeps across some of the best koala habitat in Australia, concerns for the koala's survival grow. While koala populations are large in some areas, they are small in others.

When a koala does survive the clearing of bushland and finds a new home, it can face more problems. If the area is surrounded by houses, koalas face dangers such as disorientation (feeling lost), cars, and dog attacks. Unless the area is safe or large enough to support large numbers of koalas, their days as town koalas are numbered.

While loss of habitat is the major threat to koala populations, researchers have also discovered that large numbers of koalas will only occur when the koala's favourite tree is available. Even though it is known that koalas can eat around 120 of the 600 eucalypt species in Australia, koalas do not live in the areas that do not have at least one or two of their favourite species of trees. Therefore, in areas that have buildings all around or that don't have their favourite trees koalas can starve to death.

The value of a good lunch

During the 1920s, millions of koalas were shot for their pelts (fur coats). By 1924, koalas were extinct in South Australia and in very low numbers in New South Wales and Victoria. Scientists, fearing that koalas would become extinct, transported 18 koalas from mainland Australia to Kangaroo Island, where koalas had never lived before. Without any predators and safe from the building of towns they have made such a successful comeback that today they suffer from overcrowding.

That might seem like great news, but the koalas have eaten the island's eucalyptus trees so much that the trees are dying. Efforts to move some of these koalas to less crowded areas on the mainland have not been successful.

Location

Koalas are found between south-eastern South Australia and Queensland, but only where suitable trees have been left. Unfortunately, European settlement has also favoured these areas along the east coast of Australia where the majority of koalas now live. Even worse, some of these areas continue to be cleared for houses to be built.

Save the koala month and day

Would you like to help raise money for the koala? Save the Koala Month is a good time to help! Each July is Save the Koala Month and Save the Koala Day is July 29th. For more information visit www.savethekoala.com/savethekoaladay.

Interesting facts and fiction***Koalas are lazy.***

False: even though the koala can spend more than 20 hours a day in the fork of a tree sitting or sleeping, it's not because they're lazy. Their sleepy state is due to their diet, which is low in nutrients and energy, so they conserve energy by sleeping most of the day.

Living the high life.

Koalas have two thumbs, three fingers and sharp claws on each front paw that make easy work of scaling a 10-storey high tree.

Koalas are fussy eaters, feeding almost entirely on eucalyptus leaves. Eucalyptus leaves are about 50% water, so koalas rarely need to drink.

The densely packed fur on the koala's bottom acts like a cushion on the hard branches it sits on.

Koalas have a very high-developed sense of smell, which helps them tell the difference between different types of eucalypt leaves.

Koalas come to ground to move between trees. They can't run very fast or for very long so many are killed by dogs and cars every year.

Koalas are bears.

False: Koalas may look like cuddly teddy bears, but they actually belong to a group of animals called marsupials. This means that the mother koala has a pouch in which she carries her baby. Another marsupial you might know is the kangaroo.

When joeys (a name given to baby marsupials) are born they are pink and the size of a jellybean. Marsupials such as the koala and the wombat give birth to very small, blind and hairless joeys that are about 2 cm long. Amazingly they rely on their well-developed senses of touch and smell to find their way into their mother's pouch where they stay and drink milk until they are bigger, can see and have hair.

Freely adapted from the article entitled "Keeping koalas wild" written by Tanya Patrick, published in *Scientriffic*, July/August 2005, No 38, CSIRO's Double Helix Science Club. Please note that the original layout of the article was not linear.

Student work

1. How long do koalas spend sitting or sleeping in a tree? (level 1–2)
Koala spend 20 hours a tree
2. Why do koalas spend a lot of time sleeping? (level 1–2)
That is due to their diet
3. Why is the land where the koalas live cleared of trees? (level 3–4)
Because the urban sprawl. Cause by that people cut off most of trees and make buildings and roads
4. What is concerning people about the koalas? (level 3–4)
Koala hunter
5. What dangers do the koalas face when they find a new home? (level 5–6)
Face dangers like disorientation, cars and dog attacks
6. What is the problem with the food? (level 3–4)
 - A) There are not enough places with eucalypt trees
 - B) Koalas do not eat all species of eucalypt
 - C) The trees are polluted
 - D) Dogs and cars are scaring the koalas so they can't eat
7. Why did the numbers of koalas decrease in the 1920s? (level 5–6)
Koalas were shot for their pelts
8. Can koalas climb tall trees: why / why not? (level 1–2)
Yes because they have good finger
9. Why don't koalas drink very often? (level 1–2)
Eucalyptus leaves has much water, this is koala food
10. What does the word marsupial mean? (level 5–6)
The mom has poket and the babys are live in that poket

11. How can Koalas tell the difference between different types of eucalypt leaves? (level 5–6)

They have good nose

12. After reading the article do you think life is difficult for new born koalas? Justify your answers with information from the text. (level 7–8)

Baby koalas will be difficult for alive. Unless born at the people concerning place. It born other place that will be very hard because, trees are decreasing and the city is growing. So, danger thing will be increasing. According to that I think life difficult for baby koalas.

13. Using information provided in the article, if you and your classmates wanted to help protect the koalas, what could you do? (level 7–8)

We will plant many Eucalyptus leave and we must tie our dog

14. Why is it better for animals to be left in their natural habitat rather than be shifted to other places? Support your answers with reasons from the article. (level 7–8)

Their home is comfortable and safely but when they shifted other places that places feel bad, not enough food, other animals. And they can feel that place is not ours so they are living their home.

Answer key

1. How long do koalas spend sitting or sleeping in a tree? (level 1–2)
(basic facts with familiar language)
More than 20 hours per day.
2. Why do koalas spend a lot of time sleeping? (level 1–2)
(basic facts with familiar language)
Because their diet is low in nutrients and energy so they are conserving energy.
3. Why is the land where the koalas live cleared of trees? (level 3–4)
(more-complex facts with familiar language, main idea)
To make way for developments such as houses, towns and other buildings.
4. What is concerning people about the koalas? (level 3–4)
(more-complex facts with familiar language, main idea)
The number of koalas is decreasing and in some places there aren't any left.
5. What dangers do the koalas face when they find a new home? (level 5–6)
(supporting details, basic and more-complex facts with unfamiliar language)
**Disorientation - feeling lost
Dogs' attacks
Being hit by cars**
6. What is the problem with the food? (level 3–4)
(more-complex facts with familiar language, main idea)
 - A) There are not enough places with eucalypt trees
 - B) Koalas do not eat all species of eucalypt
 - C) The trees are polluted
 - D) Dogs and cats are scaring the koalas so they can't eat
7. Why did the numbers of koalas decrease in the 1920s? (level 5–6)
(supporting details, basic and more-complex facts with unfamiliar language)
Because they were killed for their pelts.

8. Can koalas climb tall trees: why / why not? (level 1–2)
(basic facts with familiar language)
Yes, they can because they have two thumbs, three fingers and very sharp claws designed for tree climbing.
9. Why don't koalas drink very often? (level 1–2)
(basic facts with familiar language)
Eucalyptus leaves contain 50% water and since koalas only eat eucalyptus leaves, they don't have to drink very often.
10. What does the word *marsupial* mean? (level 5–6)
(supporting details, basic and more-complex facts with unfamiliar language)
A group of animals that give birth to very small babies that are then carried in their mothers' pouches.
11. How can koalas tell the difference between different types of eucalypt leaves? (level 5–6)
(supporting details, basic and more-complex facts with unfamiliar language)
They have a very strong sense of smell.
12. After reading the article do you think life is difficult for newborn koalas? Justify your answers with information from the text. (level 7–8)
(draw conclusions)
Yes, life is very difficult as they are born blind, hairless and very small; they then have to make their way into their mother's pouches.
No, as after they have made their way to their mother's pouch, they live in there so they are safe, warm and don't have to do anything.
Both answers are acceptable provided they are justified
13. Using information provided in the article, if you and your classmates wanted to help protect the koalas, what could you do? (level 7–8)
(draw conclusions)
Organise an awareness campaign or fundraising event by accessing the website given during Save the Koala Month (July) or even on Save the Koala Day (July 29th)
14. Why is it better for animals to be left in their natural habitat rather than be shifted to other places? Support your answers with reasons from the article. (level 7–8) (draw conclusions)
When animals such as the koala are shifted the area may not be as good (for example Kangaroo Island). It is now overcrowded and lacks food. Also the animals might not like the food. It is better to leave them in their natural habitat.
*Other answers that are well supported will be accepted.