



THE CSSE 11+ GUIDE BOOKS

English

for the CSSE 11+

The CSSE English paper, both halves. Five kinds of reading question, one chapter each, with a passage, a five-step method, a worked example with its mark scheme, the traps, and ten questions on lines. Then the writing task in six chapters: planning, openings and endings, sentences, words that show, punctuation, checking. A timed test with a passage of its own and a writing task.

11

chapters

106

practice questions

220

marks to earn

WHAT IS INSIDE

- Five chapters on the reading questions, one per kind, with a passage
- Six chapters on the writing task, from the plan to the check
- A worked example with its mark scheme, and the answers that lose marks
- The three traps the markers see every year
- Ten questions a chapter, out of 20, on lines
- A timed test: a passage, fourteen questions and a writing task, 60 marks

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For Year 5, with an easier start in every chapter so a Year 4 child can begin.
Every practice question checked twice: by machine, and by a person reading it.

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BEFORE YOU START

The CSSE paper, explained

What the paper is

CSSE, the Consortium of Selective Schools in Essex, sets the 11+ for the Essex grammar schools. There are two papers, Maths and English, and this book is for the English paper.

It is a written paper: a passage to read, then questions answered in sentences on lines, worth one to six marks each, and then a piece of continuous writing. There is reading time before the clock starts. Since 2025 entry the paper has these two sections, reading and writing; the applied reasoning questions that older papers carried have gone. The number of questions and the exact split of marks vary a little from year to year, and the CSSE website publishes a familiarisation paper each year that shows the current shape.

How it is marked

Reading questions are marked against a list of points: a one-mark question has one thing the marker looks for; a four-mark question has four, or two points each with evidence. Anything that makes the point scores, in the passage's words or the child's, but a point without evidence usually scores half.

The writing task is marked for content and organisation, for sentences and punctuation, and for spelling. A planned piece with an ending, correctly punctuated speech, and no mistakes in common words beats a longer piece with none of those. Every question and exercise in this book carries its mark scheme, in the answers at the back, so that a parent can mark it as the paper is marked.

Timing

Use the reading time to read the passage properly, once, all the way through. Then answer the questions in order, at roughly a mark a minute, and leave the writing task twenty minutes: five to plan, thirteen to write, two to check. The commonest way to lose marks on this paper is to write a long comprehension answer worth two marks and leave the twenty-mark task ten minutes.

What is in this book

Eleven chapters. The first five are the five kinds of reading question: finding what the text says, reading between the lines, the writer's choice of words, explaining in your own words, and the longer answer. Each has a passage from the platform, the same passages the practice quizzes use, with every line reference computed rather than typed, and ten hand-written questions with model answers.

The next six are the writing task: planning in five minutes, openings and endings, sentences, words that show, speech and punctuation, spelling and checking. Each has ten short exercises, out of twenty marks. Where an exercise has one right answer it is given; where it is open, the answers page says what earns each mark.

How to use this book

One chapter is one kind of question. Read parts 1 to 4 first. For a reading chapter, read the passage once through before the questions, then look back at the lines given. Mark from the answers at the back and write the score on the progress page.

When every chapter has a score, sit the timed test at the end under exam conditions. It has a passage of its own, The Fence, with fourteen questions, and a writing task, sixty marks in all.

Guessing

There is no penalty for a wrong answer. Never leave a question blank: write the point you think is most likely, with the words from the passage that made you think it.

SAMPLE CHAPTER

CHAPTER 1 · READING

1 to 3 marks a question

Finding it in the text

1 WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

The first kind of question asks for something the passage says outright: a number, an object, an order of events, the exact words the writer used. The answer is on the page, the question tells you which lines to look at, and the marks are for finding it and writing it down clearly.

Example, 1 mark

How many steps does Nan climb? (line 2)

One mark for the number. "Ninety-eight" or "98": either is fine. A full sentence is not needed for a one-mark question, though it does no harm.

Answer: **ninety-eight**

2 THE METHOD

- 1 Read the question and underline what it wants: how many, what colour, which two things, the exact words.
- 2 Go to the lines given and put your finger on the words that answer it. Do not answer from memory; the passage is there to be looked at.
- 3 If the question says "find and copy" or "write down the words", copy them exactly, with quotation marks. If it does not, you can use your own words or the passage's.
- 4 Count the marks. Two marks usually means two things to write; three marks, three. Number them or put each on its own line so the marker can see them.
- 5 Read your answer against the question once. "What does she see?" wants the smudge of sail; "what is it?" wants the boat. They are different questions.

3 WORKED EXAMPLE

3 marks

Nan's grandfather has a rule about the light. Write down the three parts of the rule. (lines 13 to 14)

- STEP 1** The question wants three parts and gives three marks, so the answer is three things, not one sentence about the rule.
- STEP 2** Lines 13 to 14 say: "never late, never dim, never for one moment unattended". There they are, separated by commas.
- STEP 3** Write them as a list: 1 never late, 2 never dim, 3 never unattended. Copying the passage's words is safest; "never left alone" for the third would also score.
- STEP 4** Write the answer: never late; never dim; never for one moment unattended.

Where the marks are

M1 1 mark for never late

M2 1 mark for never dim

A 1 mark for never unattended

Answers that lose marks

0/3 *The light must always be on.* true in spirit, but it is one thing, and none of the three parts is named

2/3 *Never late and never dim.* two of the three; the third part is on the next line

0/3 *He said it so often it became a kind of weather.* this is what the passage says ABOUT the rule, not the rule

4 THE THREE TRAPS

Answering from memory. The passage is in front of you. A child who read it once and then answers without looking back writes “a lantern” for the oil can and loses a mark that was free.

Giving one thing when the marks say two. Two marks, two things. If you have written one and cannot find a second, look at the lines again; it is there.

Copying the wrong words. “Find and copy” wants the writer’s words exactly. Half a phrase, or the sentence next to it, is not the answer.

WORKING SPACE for the questions on the next pages: notes, underlinings, a plan

Working space for the questions on the next pages: notes, underlinings, a plan

10 questions, 20 marks, 20 minutes with the passage

5 TRY IT

Read the passage once through, then answer on the lines. The line numbers tell you where to look. Every answer here is on the page.

Nan has been left in charge of the lighthouse while her grandfather is away on the mainland. The storm has been building since morning.

The Lighthouse

The lamp had to be lit by dusk, and dusk was coming on faster than Nan liked. She climbed the ninety-eight steps with the oil can knocking against her knee, counting as she went, because counting kept her from
5 thinking about the wind. It had been rising all afternoon. Now it leaned against the tower with the patience of something that had nowhere else to be. At the top she set down the can and looked out. The sea was the colour of an old coin. Far off, where the water
10 met the cloud, she could make out a smudge of sail, and she watched it a moment before she understood what she was watching. A boat. Out there, in that. Her grandfather had a rule about the light: never late, never dim, never for one moment unattended. He had said
15 it so often that it had stopped being a rule and become a kind of weather, something that simply was. Nan had never once thought to ask what would happen if she failed. Standing there with the wick in her hand, she found she could imagine it perfectly well.
20 The match went out. So did the second. On the third she cupped her hands the way she had been shown, and the flame caught and steadied and grew, and the great lens above her began to gather it up and throw it out across the water in long slow arms of light. She did not cheer.
25 She simply stood, breathing, and watched the beam sweep out to the place where the sail had been. It was still there. It had not moved much, and it was lower in the water than before, but it was there, and now it was lit. Nan wound the clockwork, checked the
30 oil, and sat down on the cold iron floor with her back against the wall, where she could see the sea and the sea could see her. She stayed until morning.

1**(a)** By what time must the lamp be lit? (line 1)

..... (1 mark)

(b) How many steps does Nan climb? (line 2)

..... (1 mark)

2**(a)** What is Nan carrying up the steps? (line 3)

..... (1 mark)

(b) What does Nan do as she climbs, and why does she do it? (line 4).....
.....
..... (2 marks)**3** Find and copy the exact words the writer uses for what Nan sees far off. (line 10)

..... (1 mark)

4 Find and copy the phrase that tells you the colour of the sea. (line 9)

..... (1 mark)

5 Nan's grandfather has a rule about the light.

Write down the three parts of the rule. (lines 13 to 14)

.....
.....
.....
..... (3 marks)**6** How many matches does Nan strike before the flame catches, and what does she do differently on the last one? (lines 20 to 21).....
.....
..... (2 marks)**7** When the lamp is lit,**(a)** does Nan cheer?Yes ☐ No ☐

(1 mark)

(b) Copy the words that tell you.

..... (1 mark)

8 After the lamp is lit and before she sits down, Nan does two things. What are they? (lines 29 to 30)

.....
.....
..... (2 marks)

9 When Nan looks at the boat again,
what has changed about it? Give two things. (line 28)

.....
.....
..... (2 marks)

10

(a) Where does Nan sit? (line 30)

.....
..... (1 mark)

(b) How long does she stay there? (line 33)

..... (1 mark)