FREE SAMPLE: TEXT 1 AND THE FIRST 3 QUESTIONS

TEXT 1 — NON-FICTION

Reading booklet · numbered paragraphs for reference

Swifts: Masters of the Sky

1 On a warm evening in early summer you may hear them before you see them: a band of dark, sickle-winged birds hurtling around the rooftops and shrieking as they go. These are swifts, and no other British bird lives quite as they do. A swift weighs between 36 and 50 grams, roughly the same as a bar of chocolate, yet it spends almost its entire life on the wing.

A life in the air

2 Swifts feed on insects caught in flight, and they even sleep in the air. Most birds rely on a perch, a branch or a patch of ground to rest on, but a swift usually touches down only at its nest. For a swift, the air is home; solid ground is somewhere it hardly ever goes.

Summer visitors

3 Swifts are summer visitors. Each year they travel to Britain from central and eastern Africa, arriving in late April or May, and they begin to leave in mid-July; by mid-September most have gone. They stay only long enough to raise a family before the long journey south begins again.

4 The weeks in Britain are not without danger. Poor weather can reduce the survival of swift chicks. Ornithologists also suspect that a fall in the number of airborne insects is making life harder, although the evidence is limited.

Losing their homes

5 Swifts nest almost exclusively in buildings, squeezing into narrow gaps under roof tiles and beneath eaves. Adults tend to come back to the same site every year, which makes the loss of a nest site especially damaging: if a gap is sealed during repairs, the pair may lose an entire breeding season. Demolition, modern building designs and the refurbishment of older buildings have steadily removed the crevices that swifts need.

6 The consequences have been severe. According to the Breeding Bird Survey, the number of swifts in the UK plummeted by 70% between 1995 and 2024. Yet researchers are cautious about blaming a single culprit. Poor summer weather, a shortage of insects and the loss of nest sites have all been suggested, and the British Trust for Ornithology admits that the causes of the decline are unclear.

How you can help

7 While researchers search for answers, one remedy is already within reach. Swift boxes, fixed tightly beneath the eaves of a building, offer swifts the gaps that repairs have taken away. The RSPB advises placing a box at least five metres above the ground, on a wall facing north or east so that it avoids direct sunlight, and where the birds have a clear flight path in. Because swifts are so faithful to their nest sites, a box that is occupied once may be used again year after year.

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Questions 1 to 11 are about “Swifts: Masters of the Sky”

Look at the whole text.

1 **Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement about swifts is true or false.** **2 marks**

	True	False
Swifts begin to leave Britain in mid-July.	☐	☐
Researchers agree that the loss of nest sites is the main reason for the decline.	☐	☐
A swift normally rests by perching in trees.	☐	☐
A pair of swifts is likely to try to use the same nest site again.	☐	☐

Look at the whole text.

2 **Number the ideas 1 to 4 in the order in which the writer deals with them.** **1 mark**

Write the numbers 1 to 4 in the boxes to show the order in which the events happen in the text. The first one is number 1.

☐ How far swift numbers have fallen

☐ What a swift box needs

☐ How swifts spend their time in the air

☐ When swifts are in Britain

Look at paragraph 4.

3 *Ornithologists ‘suspect’ that falling numbers of airborne insects are making life harder.* **1 mark**

What does the word ‘suspect’ tell you about what ornithologists know?

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THE WORKED ANSWERS TO THOSE 3 QUESTIONS

SOLUTIONS — TEXT 1

Swifts: Masters of the Sky · questions 1 to 11

1. Tick one box in each row to show whether each statement about swifts is true or false. (2 marks) [2b: True or false]

Look at the whole text.

Correct answers: 1 True; 2 False; 3 False; 4 True

• Step 1: Work out what the question wants. Check every statement against the text. Two of them change a detail or claim more than the text says.

• Step 2: Check each statement against the text, one at a time. Do not rely on memory.

• Statement 1: “Swifts begin to leave Britain in mid-July” is TRUE. Evidence (paragraph 3): “they begin to leave in mid-July” The text gives mid-July as the time when they start to leave, with most gone by mid-September.

• Statement 2: “Researchers agree that the loss of nest sites is the main reason for the decline” is FALSE. Evidence (paragraph 6): “the British Trust for Ornithology admits that the causes of the decline are unclear” Nest sites are only one of three suggested causes, and the text says the causes are unclear.

• Statement 3: “A swift normally rests by perching in trees” is FALSE. Evidence (paragraph 2): “a swift usually touches down only at its nest” The text says a swift usually touches down only at its nest, so it does not normally perch.

• Statement 4: “A pair of swifts is likely to try to use the same nest site again” is TRUE. Evidence (paragraph 5): “Adults tend to come back to the same site every year” The text says adults tend to come back to the same site every year.

• Step 3: Mark your table. The correct answers are: 1 True; 2 False; 3 False; 4 True.

Mark scheme

– Award 2 marks for all four rows correct.

– Award 1 mark for two or three rows correct.

Content domain 2b: retrieve and record information or identify key details

KEY TAKEAWAY

Treat each statement on its own. Find the line in the text that proves it true or false, not what feels right.

2. Number the ideas 1 to 4 in the order in which the writer deals with them. (1 mark) [2b: Sequencing]

Look at the whole text.

Correct numbers in the boxes, top to bottom: 3, 4, 1, 2

• Step 1: Work out what the question wants. This asks for the order of four ideas, so find where each one appears in the text.

• Step 2: Find each event in the text and note where it happens.

• Event 1, “How swifts spend their time in the air”: paragraph 2: “Swifts feed on insects caught in flight”

• Event 2, “When swifts are in Britain”: paragraph 3: “arriving in late April or May”

• Event 3, “How far swift numbers have fallen”: paragraph 6: “plummeted by 70% between 1995 and 2024”

• Event 4, “What a swift box needs”: paragraph 7: “Swift boxes, fixed tightly beneath the eaves of a building”

• Step 3: Put them in the order they appear. The sections run in this order: a life in the air, summer visitors, losing their homes (with the 70% fall), and how you can help (swift boxes).

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• Step 4: The correct order of the boxes as printed is: 3, 4, 1, 2.

Mark scheme

– Award 1 mark for all four numbers correct: 3, 4, 1, 2.

Content domain 2b: retrieve and record information or identify key details

> **KEY TAKEAWAY**
> Ordering questions test the sequence in the text. Check each event's paragraph number rather than relying on memory or on how likely an order seems.

3. Ornithologists 'suspect' that falling numbers of airborne insects are making life harder. What does the word 'suspect' tell you about what ornithologists know? (1 mark) [2g: Language choices]

Look at paragraph 4.

Model answer: it is only a belief

• Step 1: Work out what the question wants. This asks what one word suggests about certainty. Use the rest of the sentence to help.

• Step 2: Go back to the text (paragraph 4) and find the evidence: "Ornithologists also suspect that a fall in the number of airborne insects is making life harder, although the evidence is limited."

• Step 3: Turn the evidence into your answer. To suspect something is to think it may be true without proof. The writer adds 'although the evidence is limited', which confirms that the idea is not yet proved.

• Step 4: Write it clearly. A full-mark answer includes: they do not know for certain / they have no proof.

Mark scheme

– Award 1 mark.

– Accept: they do not know for certain / they have no proof, for example: 'it is only a belief'; 'they think so but have not proved it'; 'they are not sure'

– Do not accept: they are worried; they know insects are the cause; they have seen insects falling

Content domain 2g: identify and explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases

> **KEY TAKEAWAY**
> Quote the word or phrase, then explain what it suggests and how the reader is meant to feel.

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