TEXT 1 — STORY

Questions 1–5

The Dry Dam

For three summers, the dam behind Tilly's farm had been shrinking. Once, it had been a glittering lake where she and her brother Joe swam after school. Now it was a cracked grey saucer, and the water had retreated so far that the old fence posts stood like tombstones in the dust. Dad no longer talked at dinner. He just stared at the weather report.

On Friday, the clouds arrived: heavy, bruise-coloured clouds that piled up above the hills. Tilly ran onto the veranda and sniffed the air. It smelt of metal and wet earth, the way it did before a storm. "It's coming," she whispered. Joe, who had been fooled by clouds before, shrugged. "Don't get your hopes up."

But by dusk, the first drops were falling, fat and slow, drumming on the tin roof like impatient fingers. Mum opened the front door, and the family stood in silence on the veranda as the rain thickened into a roar. Dad laughed, a rusty, startled sound that Tilly had not heard for months. He held out his hands and let the water run over them.

All night, it rained. In the morning, Tilly pulled on her gumboots and splashed down to the dam. A thin sheet of brown water now covered the bottom, with tiny ripples chasing each other across it. It was not much, but a lone pelican, miles from the coast, was already gliding over the surface, as though it had been waiting.

Dad joined her, his hat dripping. "It'll take a lot more than one night," he said, but his voice was lighter. "Still, it's a start." Tilly slipped her hand into his rough palm. Behind them, the paddocks were already tinged with a faint, shy green, as if the land itself were letting out a long-held breath.

1. How many summers had the dam been shrinking?

A two
B four
C three
D five

2. "The old fence posts stood like tombstones" suggests the posts looked

A lifeless and sad
B tall and proud
C bright and new
D crowded and noisy

3. Why had Joe "been fooled by clouds before"?

A Past clouds brought no rain.
B He did not know about storms.
C He could not see the sky.
D He was afraid of thunder.

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THE WORKED ANSWERS TO THOSE 3 QUESTIONS

1. How many summers had the dam been shrinking? [Detail]

Correct answer: C — three

• What is the question asking? It asks for a fact that the text states.

• Go back to the text and find the evidence: “For three summers, the dam behind Tilly’s farm had been shrinking”

• The first sentence gives the number.

• So the correct answer is C (three).

• Why the other options are wrong:

• A (two): Two summers is close, but the opening sentence says the dam had been shrinking for three summers, so a quick skim that settles on a smaller number misses the exact count given.

• B (four): Four sounds plausible for a long drought, yet the text never says it. The first sentence states three summers, and nothing later adds an extra year to that count.

• D (five): Five is far longer than the text allows. The very first sentence gives the figure as three summers, so a number this large has no support anywhere in the story.

• Check it against the evidence. Check the detail: “For three summers, the dam behind Tilly’s farm had been shrinking” points to ‘three’, so the other choices do not fit.

LOS: EN3-RECOM-01: reads and comprehends texts for wide purposes, analysing text structures and language

KEY TAKEAWAY
Go back to the text and find the exact words that answer the question, then match them to an option.

2. “The old fence posts stood like tombstones” suggests the posts looked [Figurative]

Correct answer: A — lifeless and sad

• What is the question asking? It asks how the writer's special language works.

• Go back to the text and find the evidence: “the old fence posts stood like tombstones in the dust”

• The simile makes the dry dam seem dead.

• So the correct answer is A (lifeless and sad).

• Why the other options are wrong:

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• B (tall and proud): Tombstones are not tall or proud. A student might think of upright stones, but the comparison is about dead, grey things standing in dust, which fits a drought-struck dam, not pride.

• C (bright and new): Bright and new is the opposite of ‘old fence posts’ in cracked, dusty ground. A tombstone marks something that has died, so the picture is of lost life, not freshness.

• D (crowded and noisy): Crowded and noisy does not fit. The posts stand alone in the dust of a dry dam, and a tombstone is silent, so the simile suggests stillness and sadness instead.

• Check it against the evidence. Think about what the comparison suggests: “the old fence posts stood like tombstones in the dust” points to ‘lifeless and sad’, so the other choices do not fit.

LOS: EN3-UARL-01: analyses representations of ideas in literature through narrative, character, imagery, symbol and connotation

KEY TAKEAWAY
A comparison with like or as paints a picture. Ask what the two things have in common.

3. Why had Joe “been fooled by clouds before”? [Inference]

Correct answer: A — Past clouds brought no rain.

• What is the question asking? It asks what the clues in the text show.

• Go back to the text and find the evidence: “Joe, who had been fooled by clouds before, shrugged.”

• He had seen clouds before that did not bring rain.

• So the correct answer is A (Past clouds brought no rain).

• Why the other options are wrong:

• B (He did not know about storms.): Joe’s shrug is about clouds, not storms in general. Nothing says he lacks knowledge; he has simply seen rainless clouds before and does not want to hope again.

• C (He could not see the sky.): Joe sees the clouds well enough to doubt them. ‘Fooled’ means the clouds looked like rain and then gave none, which is different from being unable to see.

• D (He was afraid of thunder.): Thunder is never mentioned as a fear. Joe’s words, ‘Don’t get your hopes up’, show he is cautious about disappointment, not frightened of the weather.

• Check it against the evidence. Look for the clue: “Joe, who had been fooled by clouds before, shrugged.” points to ‘Past clouds brought no rain’, so the other choices do not fit.

LOS: EN3-RECOM-01: reads and comprehends texts for wide purposes, analysing text structures and language

KEY TAKEAWAY
When the text does not say it directly, use the clues it gives, then ask: what must be true?

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