

CBSE CLASS X

English Language & Literature (184)

ANSWER KEY

From previous CBSE Board Exam questions

Code: OBZ149	Questions: 13	Maximum Marks: 44	Generated: 2026-06-15 13:05
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SELECTIONS USED

Source	Previous-year board
Subject	English Language & Literature
Lessons	Mijbil the Otter
Year	2022-2026
Questions selected	13

Composition — Types: 10 Short · 2 literature_extract · 1 literature_long

Q1.

[6]

Answer in 100-120 words.

Examine the role of Nature in the poems 'The Dust of Snow' and 'Fog'.

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q10(a)

◆ 1.1 Dust of Snow

6.1 Fog

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Model Answer

In '**The Dust of Snow**', Frost uses nature as a healing force. The crow and the hemlock tree — both traditionally associated with darkness and sorrow — become unexpected agents of joy. A simple act, a crow shaking dust of snow onto the poet, lifts his mood and saves a day he had regretted. Frost shows that even the darker, "ordinary" elements of nature — a black crow, a poisonous tree — can bring positive change. Nature acts quietly but powerfully.

In '**Fog**', Sandburg personifies fog as a cat, arriving on "little cat feet," sitting silently on "haunches," surveying the harbour and city, then moving on. Nature here is mysterious, silent, and unhurried. The extended metaphor gives fog a living, animal quality.

In both poems, nature is presented as subtle yet significant — it observes, touches human life, and moves on without announcement.

Source: *First Flight* — Chapter 1 (*Dust of Snow*); Chapter 6 (*Fog*)

Explanation

- The question asks you to **examine the role of nature** in both poems — not just describe them. So connect each nature image to its effect/meaning.
- For Frost: highlight that crow + hemlock are **unconventional, dark** nature symbols, yet bring relief — examiners expect this contrast.
- For Sandburg: the **extended cat metaphor** is the key literary device; name it and explain it briefly.
- End with a **comparative point** linking both — that's what "examine" demands and earns full marks.
- Stay within 120–150 words; this answer is approximately 140 words.

Q2.

[3]

Mijbil turned out to be a playful pet. Elaborate. (Mijbil the Otter)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/2/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

Mijbil was extremely playful and kept himself entertained in various creative ways. In the bathroom, he went wild with joy, plunging and rolling in water. He shuffled a rubber ball around the room like a four-footed soccer player, using all four feet to dribble it. He could also juggle marbles on his flat belly while lying on his back. In London, he invented a game with a ping-pong ball on a sloping suitcase — rolling it down and then ambushing it at the other end. He also developed compulsive habits on walks, like galloping along a school wall every time he returned home.

Source: *Mijbil the Otter*, Sections II and IV

Explanation

The examiner expects **specific examples** of Mij's playfulness drawn from the text — water play, ball games, marble juggling, the suitcase game, and the school wall habit. Avoid vague statements like "he was very playful." Naming 2–3 concrete activities with brief detail earns full marks. Three marks = roughly three distinct points.

Q3.

[2]

How did Lutkins impress the lawyer? (The Hack Driver)

Previously asked in: 2022 2/4/1 Q6 (vii)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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The question asks about **Lutkins** from *The Hack Driver* — but the source passages provided are entirely from *Mijbil the Travel Companion* (Chapter 6 about Maxwell's otter). There is a mismatch between the question and the passages supplied.

Model Answer

Bill (who was actually Lutkins in disguise) impressed the lawyer with his friendly, helpful manner. He offered to drive him around, claimed to know Lutkins well, and seemed genuinely eager to help find him. His cheerful, talkative personality and local knowledge made the lawyer trust him completely, never suspecting he was Lutkins himself.

Explanation

- The question is from *The Hack Driver* (Class 10, First Flight), but the passages given belong to a different chapter entirely. The answer above is drawn from standard CBSE textbook knowledge of that story.
- Key examiner expectation: mention Bill's **friendly/helpful behaviour**, his **offer to assist**, and the **dramatic irony** that Bill is Lutkins. Two marks need two clear points — his impressive qualities + the twist of his real identity.
- Do not write a long narrative; two focused sentences covering both points are enough for 2 marks.

Q4.

[2]

How was the hack driver recognised ?

Previously asked in: 2022 2/2/1 Q6 (vii)

◆ 6.1 Fog

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Model Answer

The hack driver was recognised when the narrator returned to New Lutkins with a woman who knew the local people well. She identified the hack driver himself as Bill Magnuson, the man they had been looking for all along — Oliver Lutkins. He had been cleverly deceiving the narrator the entire previous day.

Explanation

This question is from "**The Hack Driver**" by Sinclair Lewis. The key point examiners expect is: the narrator returned with someone who knew Lutkins personally, and she immediately recognised the hack driver as Lutkins himself. Mention the deception clearly. Note: the source passages provided are from other chapters and do not cover this story — answer is based on the prescribed textbook chapter.

Q5.

[3]

Maxwell decides to keep an otter as a pet. Elucidate with reference to the fact that owning a pet is a life of commitment. (Mijbil the Otter)

Previously asked in: 2024 2/5/1 Q8 (i)

◆ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

Maxwell's decision to keep an otter as a pet clearly reflects a life of deep commitment. He says that with the opening of the sack containing Mijbil, "a phase of my life began that has not yet ended," describing it as a *thralldom* to otters. He made a body-belt for Mij, took him on walks on a lead, fulfilled his love for water daily, and played with him for hours. He also transported Mij all the way from Basra to London, making special arrangements throughout. As the SPCA states, "owning a pet is a lifetime of commitment involving considerable responsibility" — Maxwell's experience with Mij perfectly illustrates this.

Source: *Mijbil the Otter*, Sections II and IV

Explanation

- The question links Maxwell's personal experience to the SPCA's statement about pet ownership being a lifelong commitment.
- Always quote or closely paraphrase both the narrative **and** the SPCA box — the question explicitly says "with reference to the fact that owning a pet is a life of commitment," pointing to that box.
- Key evidence: the word *thralldom*, daily water sessions, making a body-belt, London walks, and the long journey from Basra — these are your proof points.
- Keep to 3 specific examples; don't list everything — 3 marks = roughly 3 focused points.

Q6.

[3]

Mijbil's transportation to England was no less than a nightmare for the author. Justify the statement using incidents from the lesson.

(Mijbil the Otter)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/1/1 Q8 (v)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

Transporting Mijbil to England was indeed a nightmare for the author. When Maxwell returned after a meal, he found the box smeared with blood — Mij had torn its lining to shreds and was exhausted and blood-spattered. With only ten minutes left, Maxwell had to rush to the airport through busy streets.

On the aircraft, the moment Mij was let out of the box, he disappeared down the aisle at high speed, causing chaos — a woman screamed "A rat! A rat!", and Maxwell ended up with his face covered in curry while diving to catch Mij.

These incidents clearly show how stressful and nightmarish the journey was.

Source: Chapter 6 — *Mijbil the Otter*, Section III

Explanation

This is a 3-mark justify/explain question. Examiners expect **two clear incidents** with brief detail — the bloody box episode and the chaos on the aircraft. Do not just list; briefly describe each incident to show *why* it was a nightmare. Avoid over-explaining. The word "justify" means you must link the incidents back to the statement.

Q7.

[3]

What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? (Mijbil the Otter)

Previously asked in: 2026 2/2/1 Q8 (iv)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom on a lead, the otter went wild with joy in the water. He plunged and rolled in the bathtub, shot up and down underwater, and made a great deal of splash and slosh — enough, as Maxwell says, for a hippo. This showed that otters love water and feel the need to keep it moving and spread it around.

Two days later, Mijbil escaped from the bedroom and ran to the bathroom on his own. Maxwell found him at the tap, fumbling at the chromium taps with his paws. In less than a minute, Mij turned the tap far enough to produce a trickle, and soon achieved a full flow of water.

Source: Mijbil the Otter, Section II and continuation

Explanation

- This question has **two parts**: what happened in the bathroom the first time, AND what Mij did two days later. Address both clearly.
- Key details examiners look for: "wild with joy," plunging/rolling/splashing, and then the remarkable act of **turning the tap on himself**.
- Avoid copying whole sentences verbatim; paraphrase to show understanding, but use key words (plunged, rolled, tap, trickle).
- For 3 marks, roughly 3 points are needed — Mij's joy in water, his splashing behaviour, and the tap-turning incident.

Q8.

[3]

"Mijbil the Otter" sensitises human beings especially city people to wildlife. What emotions are conveyed through the association of Mijbil and Maxwell?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q8 II

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

The story conveys a deep bond of love and mutual trust between Maxwell and Mijbil. Maxwell experiences **wonder and delight** at Mij's intelligence — the otter independently turns on a tap and invents games. He feels **affection and pride**, naming the new species after himself. The relationship shows **companionship** — Mij sleeping in the crook of Maxwell's knees reflects warmth and trust. For city readers unfamiliar with wildlife, the story evokes **curiosity and empathy** toward wild animals, sensitising them to the richness of the natural world beyond urban life.

Source: "Mijbil the Otter," Chapter 6

Explanation

- Examiners expect you to name specific emotions (wonder, affection, companionship, empathy) and **link each to a textual detail** — don't just list feelings vaguely.
- The question has two parts: emotions felt by Maxwell AND awareness created in city readers/general readers. Cover both briefly.
- Avoid retelling the whole story; focus on emotional moments only.
- At 3 marks, 3 well-supported points are ideal.

Q9.

[3]

The story, 'Mijbil the Otter', has it all – emotions, humour, certain surprising incidents and the freshness of a new and unique type of story. Explain how Maxwell has highlighted these in his story. (Mijbil – The Otter)

Previously asked in: 2025 2/6/1 Q8 (iii)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

Maxwell skillfully blends emotions, humour, surprising incidents, and freshness in the story:

- **Emotions:** Maxwell's deep bond with Mij is evident when Mij nuzzles his face on the aeroplane and sleeps in the crook of his knees, showing mutual affection.
- **Humour:** Londoners mistake Mij for a walrus, hippo, brontosaur, and leopard "that had changed its spots," creating comic situations.
- **Surprising incidents:** Mij independently learns to turn on the bathroom tap and invents his own game with a ping-pong ball on a sloping suitcase.
- **Freshness:** Mij belongs to a species previously unknown to science, later named *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* – Maxwell's otter – making the story genuinely unique.

Source: *Mijbil the Otter*, Chapter 6

Explanation

The examiner expects you to address **all four aspects** mentioned in the question – emotions, humour, surprising incidents, and freshness – with a specific example from the text for each. Since it is 3 marks, covering all four elements concisely with textual evidence is key. Avoid writing only about one or two aspects. The examples used here are directly from the passages provided, which is what earns full marks.

Q10.

[5]

For the first twenty-four hours, Mijbil was neither hostile nor friendly; he was simply aloof and indifferent, choosing to sleep on the floor as far from my bed as possible. The second night Mijbil came on to my bed in the small hours and remained asleep in the crook of my knees until the servant brought tea in the morning, and during the day he began to lose his apathy and take a keen, much too keen, interest in his surroundings. I made a body-belt for him and took him on a lead to the bathroom, where for half an hour he went wild with joy in the water.

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

- (i) Which of the following is not a reason why Mijbil came on to Maxwell's bed in the small hours? [1]
- (A) He had started taking interest in his surroundings.
(B) He was becoming friendly with Maxwell.
(C) He wanted to play with Maxwell on his bed.
(D) He wanted to feel safe and not remain indifferent.
- (ii) Maxwell says that Mijbil was neither hostile nor friendly, he was simply aloof and indifferent for the first twenty-four hours. Give reasons in not more than 40 words. [2]
- (iii) Read the following descriptions (A)–(D) and identify which one correctly corresponds to the extract. [1]
- (A) Owning a pet is tedious and needs commitment.
(B) A pet needs his own space and time to get adjusted to his owner's environment.
(C) Maxwell decided to bring Mijbil because he was very sad to lose his dog.
(D) Maxwell and Mijbil loved travelling.
- (iv) Which characteristic trait of otters is revealed when Mijbil is taken to the bathroom? [1]

Previously asked in: 2024 2/4/1 Q6(a)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

- (i) (C) He wanted to play with Maxwell on his bed.
- (ii) Mijbil was newly brought to a strange environment. He was unfamiliar with Maxwell and his surroundings, so he felt uncertain and kept his distance — sleeping on the floor far from Maxwell's bed. It took time for him to feel comfortable and trust his new owner.
- (iii) (B) A pet needs his own space and time to get adjusted to his owner's environment.
- (iv) When Mijbil is taken to the bathroom, he goes wild with joy in the water for half an hour. This reveals that otters are naturally water-loving animals — they are highly energetic and playful in water.

Source: *Mijbil the Otter*, Gavin Maxwell

Explanation

- (i) Options B and D relate to his growing comfort with Maxwell; option A happened during the *day* after the second night. Option C — playing — is never mentioned; this is the "not a reason" answer.
- (ii) Examiners want you to explain the *cause* of aloofness: new/strange place + unfamiliar owner. Keep it within 40 words.
- (iii) The extract clearly shows Mijbil needing time to adjust — so B is the best fit. Avoid overthinking other options.

- **(iv)** "Went wild with joy in the water" is the key phrase. Always lift evidence from the passage to support your answer.

Q11.

[5]

The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Read the following extract and answer the questions.

- (i)** Examine the strategic use of imagery in the above lines. [2]
- (ii)** How does the poet portray the relationship between nature and the urban environment ? [1]
- (iii)** On the basis of the extract, select the correct option. The image of a cat moving "on little cat feet" evokes : [1]
 - (A) softness
 - (B) roughness
 - (C) wilderness
 - (D) hardness
- (iv)** Fill in the blank with the appropriate option from the brackets : In the given extract, the tone of the poet is _____ (playful and mysterious/cold and rough/pessimistic and aggressive). [1]

Previously asked in: 2026 2/3/1 Q7(b)

♦ 6.1 Fog

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Model Answer

- (i)** The poet uses the extended metaphor of a cat to describe fog. The image "on little cat feet" appeals to the sense of touch and movement, suggesting fog's soft, silent arrival. "Silent haunches" creates a visual image of fog crouching over the harbour and city, making the abstract phenomenon feel tangible and alive.
- (ii)** The poet portrays fog as a gentle, quiet visitor that silently observes both the harbour (nature) and the city (urban environment), suggesting a peaceful, non-destructive relationship between the two.
- (iii) (A) softness**
- (iv)** In the given extract, the tone of the poet is **playful and mysterious**.

Source: 'Fog' by Carl Sandburg, *Beehive* – Class IX (CBSE)

Explanation

- **(i)** Focus on TWO images minimum — "little cat feet" and "silent haunches." Name the device (extended metaphor/imagery) and explain its effect.
- **(ii)** 1-mark = 1 crisp point. Mention both harbour (natural) and city (urban) from the poem.
- **(iii)** The cat metaphor emphasises gentle, soft movement — (A) is correct.
- **(iv)** The fog arrives quietly and mysteriously like a cat; "cold and rough" contradicts the poem's gentle tone; "pessimistic" is incorrect as no negative emotion is expressed.

Q12.

[3]

In 'Mijbil the Otter', how does the narrator's patience contrast with the reactions of fellow passengers and local people? What does this reveal about human understanding of the unfamiliar?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/5/1 Q8 (iii)

♦ Mijbil the Otter

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Model Answer

The narrator, Maxwell, remains calm and patient while walking Mij on London streets, even when facing a "continuous barrage of conjectural questions." Fellow passengers and locals, however, react with confusion, surprise, and even **affront** — guessing Mij to be a walrus, seal, hippo, or brontosaur. A labourer glared and growled, "What is that supposed to be?"

This contrast reveals that humans are often uncomfortable with the unfamiliar. Instead of showing curiosity or openness, they react with suspicion or ridicule. Maxwell's patience suggests that familiarity and experience breed understanding, while ignorance tends to produce fear or mockery of the unknown.

Source: *Mijbil the Otter*, Section IV

Explanation

- The examiner expects you to use **textual evidence** — quote or reference specific reactions (walrus, hippo, the labourer's growl).
- Link the contrast to a **broader theme**: human response to the unfamiliar. This is the "what does it reveal" part, worth at least 1 mark.
- Don't over-explain Maxwell's love for Mij — focus on **patience vs. others' reactions**, as the question asks.
- Keep it tight: 3 marks = ~3 clear points + 1 supporting quote.

Q13.

[3]

What is the contribution of the extended metaphor in the poem "Fog"?

Previously asked in: 2026 2/1/1 Q8 III

♦ 6.1 Fog

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Model Answer

The extended metaphor in "Fog" compares fog to a cat throughout the entire poem, making it highly effective. The fog arrives on "little cat feet" — silently and stealthily, just as a cat moves. It then "sits looking over harbour and city on silent haunches," exactly like a cat crouching and observing. Finally, it "moves on," as a cat does without warning. This sustained comparison gives the fog a living, mysterious quality, helping readers visualise its silent, effortless movement vividly.

Source: *Fog (Poem)*, Chapter 6

Explanation

- The question asks specifically about the **contribution** (effect/impact) of the extended metaphor — so you must explain *what* the metaphor does, not just identify it.
- Three key points to cover: (1) the cat metaphor runs throughout (extended), (2) specific images — feet, haunches, moves on, (3) the effect — fog feels alive, silent, mysterious.
- Examiners award marks for identifying the metaphor, quoting evidence from the poem, and stating its effect on the reader.

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