

Identifying information for Paper 2 Question 1

Assessment objective

- AO1

What skills do I need to draw out key information from a text?

Dickens was not the only person concerned about the plight of the poor. Henry Mayhew (1812–87) was a social reformer, journalist and playwright who researched the lives of many of London's working class and unemployed.

Glossary

from the parish: money or food given by the local church

ha'porth: a shortening of 'half penny worth'

Account of a Victorian child street seller

In order to find out specific information about a child's life, read the following account, which Mayhew heard from a 9-year-old girl.

It's in the winter, sir, when things are far worst with us. Father can make very little then but I don't know what he earns exactly at any time – and though mother has more work then, there's fire and candle to pay for. We were very badly off last winter, and worse, I think, the winter before. Father sometimes came home and had made nothing, and if mother had no work in hand

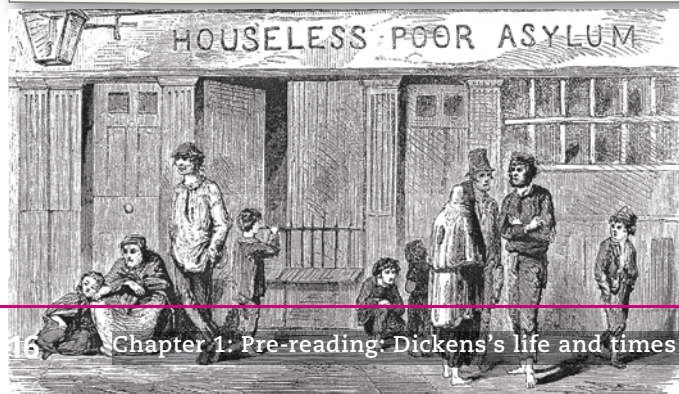
5 we went to bed to save fire and candle, if it was ever so soon. Father would die afore he would let mother take as much as a loaf **from the parish**. I was sent out to sell nuts first: 'If it's only 1d you make,' mother said, 'it's a good piece of bread.' I didn't mind being sent out. I knew children that sold things in the streets. Perhaps I liked it better than staying at home without a fire and with nothing to do, and if I went out I saw other children busy. No, I wasn't a bit frightened when I first

10 started, not a bit. Some children – but they was such little things – said: 'O, Liz, I wish I was you.' I had twelve **ha'porths** and sold them all. I don't know what it made; 2d most likely. I didn't crack a single nut myself. I was fond of them then, but I don't care for them now. I could do better if I went into public-houses, but I'm only let go to Mr Smith's, because he knows father, and Mrs Smith and him recommends me and wouldn't let anybody mislest me. Nobody ever offered

15 to. I hear people swear there sometimes, but it's not at me. I sell nuts to children in the streets, and laces to young women. I have sold nuts and oranges to soldiers.

I don't know what I shall be when I grow up. I can read a little. I've been to church five or six times in my life. I should go oftener and so would mother, if we had clothes.

From London's Labour and London's Poor, by Henry Mayhew (1851)



Scanning for key information

Question 1 of your English Language Paper 2 exam will ask you to read a text and then decide whether statements about that text are 'true'. To do this, you need to be able to **scan** the text for key words, in order to check the statement's accuracy.

For example, for the Henry Mayhew text, if you were given the statement: 'The girl's father occasionally earned nothing during the day', you would need to:

- scan the text for the word 'father'
 - read the whole sentence and information around the reference to 'father', to establish clearly what is being said
 - decide whether the information you have found supports the statement
 - continue scanning and checking the text, until you have checked all references to 'father' and can make a final decision about the accuracy of the statement.
- 1** Use the guidance above to work out whether the statement 'The girl's father occasionally earned nothing during the day' is true.
 - 2** Which of the following statements about the girl's father are also true?
 - a The father makes more money in the winter.
 - b The father objects to the girl's mother taking things 'from the parish'.
 - c The father would go more regularly to church if he had suitable clothing.

Key term

scan: to run your eyes quickly over lines of text until your selected word, or one close to it in meaning, comes up

Final task

- 3** Now complete this exam-style task.

Read again the source from line 3 to the end.

Choose **four** statements below which are TRUE.

Choose a maximum of four statements.

- a In a bad winter, the girl goes to bed early to save using up candles.
- b The first thing the girl sold was nuts.
- c The girl was a bit frightened when she first started street selling.
- d The only pub the girl can go to is Mr Smith's.
- e The girl sells oranges and laces to soldiers.
- f The girl has been to church only five or six times in her life so far.

[4 marks]

Literature link

In *A Christmas Carol*, you will read an account of a poor family who, like this one, try to remain respectable despite their poverty. These are versions of the poor as represented by Mayhew and Dickens. Look out for other descriptions that are not as sympathetic to the poor.