

Grade 8

SECTION A: READING (40 Marks)

Read the following text.

This is the story of a French pirate who turned to piracy for fun and left behind a mystery – perhaps even a treasure – that lasts to this day.

1. Olivier Levasseur was born in the town of Calais, in northern France, in 1689. His family was wealthy and he was sent to the best schools in France. After receiving an excellent education, he became an officer in the French Navy. During the war of Spanish succession (1701 – 1714), he got his own ship and he became a privateer, someone whose job is to capture enemy ships and keep a percentage of their goods. Levasseur did not need the money, but he enjoyed the excitement of hunting and catching ships. When the war ended, he was ordered to return home with his ship, but he ignored the order and became a pirate.
2. In 1716, Olivier Levasseur became the captain of a pirate ship named 'Postillion'. He attacked ships in the Atlantic Ocean, near Cuba. He soon earned the nickname of "La Buse" (the Buzzard), a bird of prey, because of the speed and ruthlessness with which he attacked his enemies.
3. In the years that followed, La Buse teamed with other pirates as they attacked ships along the coast of South America. In 1717, he was made captain of a new pirate ship, with a crew of 200 men. No one knows what he did after that, but in 1718, he lost his ship after being attacked by Francis Hume, the British Captain of the 'HMS Scarborough'. La Buse managed to escape with only sixty of his crew.
4. Throughout 1719 and 1720, he started pirating in the Indian Ocean. In April 1721, he perpetrated one of piracy's greatest exploits: the capture of the Portuguese galleon 'Our Lady of the Cape'. This ship was travelling from Goa in India and was returning home to Lisbon in Portugal. It was full of treasures – bars of gold and silver, dozens of boxes of gold coins, diamonds, pearls, silk and more spectacularly, the Flaming cross of Goa – a cross made of pure gold, inlaid with diamonds, rubies and emeralds, which was so heavy that three men were needed to carry it.
5. Despite gaining incredible wealth from looting the 'Lady of the Cape', Levasseur continued to sail, looking for more adventures. Eventually, in 1730, he was captured by the French authorities near Fort Dauphin in Madagascar and brought to St Denis in Réunion Island. He was found guilty of piracy and sentenced to death. Legend has it that just before he was hanged on 7 July 1730, he removed his necklace and threw it in the crowd, shouting, "Find my treasure, the one who may understand it." The necklace contained a 17-line cryptogram – a message written in code.
6. Many treasure hunters have tried to find La Buse's treasure and there are many myths surrounding it. Some believe it is buried in Trou d'Argent in Rodrigues. Others think that it could be found on the island of Mahé, in Seychelles. An even more intriguing possibility is that the treasure could be found in Mauritius itself. Not far from the village of Poudre d'Or there is a bunch of rocks in the sea. One of the rocks is strangely shaped like a boot and some people believe that it could be showing the direction of the treasure. Could this fascinating pirate really have left one of the biggest treasures in pirate history so close to us?

Answer the following questions.

(a) Say whether the following statements are True or False and pick out the extract from the passage which justifies your answer.

(i) Olivier Levasseur did not get a good education.

Statement:

(ii) Olivier Levasseur was forced to become a pirate.

Statement:

(b) Arrange the following events in the order they happened in the life of Olivier Levasseur. The first one has been done for you.

- He becomes Captain of the 'Postillion'.
- He is executed by the French authorities.
- He is born.
- He captures 'Our Lady of the Cape'.
- He is attacked by Captain Francis Hume.

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(c) What could be an appropriate title for the passage? Tick () the right box.

- Piracy in the Indian Ocean.
- Ships of the 18th Century.
- Treasure in Poudre D'Or.
- The life of a famous pirate.

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(d) According to the passage, what is the job of a privateer?

(e) Why was Olivier Levasseur compared to a 'bird of prey' (line 10)?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(f) How do we know that the attack by Francis Hume was a heavy defeat for Levasseur?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(g) Explain why the capture of 'Our Lady of the Cape' is considered to be 'one of piracy's greatest exploits.' (line 18)

(h) 'Legend' has it that Levasseur threw a cryptogram in the crowd (line 27). Which word from paragraph 6 continues the idea of 'legend'?

(i) (1) Circle two adjectives that best describe the character of Olivier Levasseur.

Kind	mysterious	shy	generous
	funny	adventurous	

(2) Now say why you have chosen these two adjectives.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(j) Olivier Levasseur is considered to be 'fascinating' (line 37). Do you agree with this description of him? Why?
