

GCSE English Language, AQA Paper 2 Questions: Source B: *Our Aquarium At The Seaside*

Name _____ Date _____



Source B: extract adapted from *Our Aquarium At The Seaside* from Harper's Monthly (1873)

Nothing is more interesting, during a visit to the seaside, than the institution of an aquarium; but unfortunately, it is not always so popular as it is interesting. The lodging-house keeper is apt to say that she “don't want them nasty things lol-opping all over the place, and making a swim everywhere;” and if we are as careless as some young people I

5 have known, who put scratchy shells and damp seaweed on polished tables, and spilt fishy water over new carpets, I do not much wonder at the poor woman's objections.

From all this you will see that those showy glass tanks kept in the fashionable shops are not at all the right things to have, and that earthenware pans, although less ornate, are really far better for your little prisoners.

10 And now for the inmates themselves.

Let us begin with the *actinia*, or sea anemones, who perhaps after all will form our chief delight in our new aquarium. The commonest kind, found all over England, is the beadlet (I will not attempt its terrible scientific name, which boats sixteen letters in one word).

The beadlet, when closed, is a little roundish lump of crimson or green jelly, sticking firmly
15 to the rock; when open, he is a soft hamper, full of waving leaflets, a rim of bright blue ornamenting the base of the hamper. The beadlets, when on their native rocks, are often to be seen surrounded by a happy family of baby beadlets, and will populate the aquarium rapidly with fresh members. They are very hardy little animals, and will stand unintentional or maltreatment with greater good temper than most of our marine friends.

20 There is another fish, the dahlia wartlet. It is another common but beautiful sea anemone. This fine creature is often more than five inches in diameter, and is coloured white, crimson, and green. When open it resembles a soft basketful of fine buds, something like the dahlia in appearance. Its name of wartlet it gets from the little protuberances, like warts, which cover its body. These protuberances attract small bits of shell and stone, which so cover the
25 anemone that it is difficult to discover it when closed.

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But the dahlia wartlet, like the starfish, is a dangerous addition to an aquarium. It is a hungry creature, and so skilled with its tentacles, that shellfish, crabs, and even prawns fall victims to its voracious dexterity. There is no such objection to the plumose anemone (*Actinoloba dianthus*), who is an exceedingly pretty little fellow, white, yellow, and red.

30 When open its outer edge is beautifully fringed, resembling a circle of fairy feathers. This little anemone loves the dark, and I have found a beautiful species of it in caves on the Bristol Channel, coloured scarlet, with a white fringe.

A few *acalepha* or sea jellies will make a nice variety in our aquarium. I would scarcely advise you to burden your can with one of those huge rainbow-hued crystal bowls lying
35 upon the sands, but I *would* advise you, in passing, to bend down and admire its opal, transparent brilliancy; and then, turning it gently over, to mark its strange India-rubber-like appendages or tentacles, and the shape of its body, which – convex or pointed above – is concave or hollowed below. Many of the jelly-fish are called *Medusida* on account of the long tendrils which fall from their bodies or float after them like the locks of Medusa – as
40 they lie lazily and gracefully on the summer sea.

But we must pause. One could go on for ever enumerating new instances of the intricate beauties of creation, and the loving care of a divine Father. But we have now more than sufficient to stock the moderate aquarium of a beginner, who will find that a careful study of the habits of even a few among the countless multitudes of strange and beautiful little
45 creatures will open out to her new fields of ever-widening thought, and many an hour of unexpected enjoyment.