Many candidates lose marks when answering context questions, firstly because they are unsure of the meaning of words or phrases due to a limited vocabulary, and secondly because they fail to answer the question using the appropriate method.

**ACTION**

- Continue to read newspaper articles widely as a means of expanding your vocabulary.
- Make sure you are familiar with how you should be answering context questions: 1) Say what you think the word or phrase means; 2) Refer to the words or phrases surrounding the area of focus and say how the context helped you to arrive at a definition.

**PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

1. “One of them is a belief in the grandeur of the everyday, where the ordinary is just the unique in hiding. As it says in Docherty, ‘messiahs are born in stables’. That being so, as a boy I kept finding Bethlehem round every corner. So many things amazed me.”

   Question – Show how the lines above help you to arrive at the meaning of “the ordinary is just the unique in hiding.” (2)

2. “Odd, this business of going out to ‘see’ a band. My parents, when they were younger, would probably have talked about going to hear a band or going to dance to one, and would not have recognised or understood the ritual that evolved with rock: clumps of people solemnly gathering to face the stage.”

   Question – Explain the significance of the word ‘ritual’ in the context of the lines above. (2)
3. “The Gulf Stream has not always flowed. As far as scientists can tell, it has stopped quite abruptly in the past – and in as little as a couple of years. Now it seems that global warming is recreating the very conditions which caused it to stall before, with the potential to plunge the whole of northern Europe into another Ice Age.”

Question – Explain the meaning of ‘stall’ as it is used above. (2)

4. “If you hail from Glasgow you will have friends or relatives whose roots lie in the Irish Republic. You will have Jewish friends or colleagues whose grandparents, a good number of them Polish or Russian, may have fled persecution in Europe. You will eat in premises run by Italian or French proprietors. It is a diverse cultural heritage enriched now by a large and vibrant Asian population and a smaller but significant Chinese one.”

Question – By referring closely to the extract above, show how you are helped to understand the meaning of the expression “diverse cultural heritage”. (2)

5. “Frank Furedi, reader in sociology at the University of Kent, has written a book, _Paranoid Parenting_, in which he explores the causes and far-reaching consequences of too much cosseting. ‘It is always important to recall that our obsession with our children’s safety is likely to be more damaging to them than any risks that they are likely to meet with in their daily encounter with the world,’ Furedi writes.”

Question – How does the context in which it is used help you to understand the meaning of the word “cosseting”? (2)

6. “Others are, however, convinced that it is only a matter of time before we face Armageddon. Liberal Democrat MP and sky-watcher Lembit Opik, says: ‘I have said for years that the chance of an asteroid having an impact which could wipe out most of the human race is 100 per cent.’ He has raised his worries in the Commons, successfully campaigned for an all-party task force to assess the potential risk and helped set up the Spaceguard UK facility to track near-earth objects. He admits: ‘It does sound like a science fiction story and I may sound like one of those guys who walk up and down with a sandwich-board saying the end of the world is nigh. But the end is nigh.’”

Question – Show how the extract above helps you to understand the meaning of the word “Armageddon”. (2)