



Comprehension Passages + Worksheets

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Carly's Family

Carly has a large family. She lives with four people. Carly also has two pets. Carly's mom is a doctor. Carly's mom works at the hospital. Carly's mom helps people who are sick.

Carly's dad works at home. Carly's dad cooks for the family. Carly's dad drives the kids to soccer practice.

Carly has two brothers. James is ten years old. Scott is fourteen years old.

Carly has two pets. Jinx is a small, black cat. Diego is a large, brown dog.

Carly loves her family!

Questions

1) How many people are in Carly's family?

- A. four
- B. five
- C. six

2) Carly's mom works at the

- A. restaurant
- B. mall
- C. hospital

3) This passage is mostly about Carly's

- A. family
- B. pets
- C. soccer team

4) Which of the following is most likely true?

- A. Carly's mom coaches the soccer team.
- B. James is the best soccer player in the family.
- C. Jinx and Diego are part of Carly's family.

5) The oldest brother in Carly's family is

- A. James
- B. Scott
- C. Diego



Spider Webs

Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

All spiders spin webs. That's because webs help spiders do three things. Webs help spiders hold eggs, to hide and to catch food.

Many spiders like to lay their eggs in their webs. The webs help keep the eggs together. Webs help spiders keep their eggs safe.

Most spiders are dark. They are brown, grey, or black. But spider webs are light. They are white and cloudy. When spiders hide in their webs, they are harder to see.

Spider webs are sticky. When a bug flies into the web, it gets stuck. It moves around. It tries to get out. But it can't. It is trapped! Spiders can tell that the bug is trapped. That's because spiders feel the web move. And the spider is hungry. The spider goes to get the bug.

Without webs, spiders would not be able to live like they do. Spiders need their webs to survive!

1) This passage is mostly about

- A. spider colors
- B. spider webs
- C. spider eggs

2) Spider webs help spiders

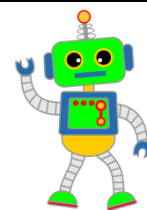
- A. jump
- B. catch food
- C. find water

3) In line "9" the word trapped most nearly means

- A. stuck
- B. hidden
- C. eaten

4) How can spiders tell when something is trapped in their web?

- A. They hear it.
- B. They smell it.
- C. They feel it.



Robots

A robot is a machine. But it is not just any machine. It is a special kind of machine. It is a machine that moves. It follows instructions. The instructions come from a computer. Because it is a machine, it does not make mistakes. And it does not get tired. And it never complains. Unless you tell it to!

Robots are all around us. Some robots are used to make things. For example, robots can help make cars. Some robots are used to explore dangerous places. For example, robots can help explore volcanoes. Some robots are used to clean things. These robots can help vacuum your house. Some robots can even recognize words. They can be used to help answer telephone calls. Some robots look like humans. But most robots do not. Most robots just look like machines.

Long ago, people imagined robots. Over 2,000 years ago, a famous poet imagined robots. The poet's name was Homer. His robots were made of gold. They cleaned things and they made things. But they were not real. They were imaginary. Nobody was able to make a real robot. The first real robot was made in 1961. It was called *Unimate*. It was used to help make cars. It looked like a giant arm.

In the future, we will have even more robots. They will do things that we can't do. Or they will do things that we don't want to do. Or they will do things that are too dangerous for us. Robots will help us fight fires. They will help us fight wars. They will help us fight sickness. They will help us discover things. They will help make life better.

1) As used in paragraph 1, we can understand that something **special** is NOT

- A. normal
- B. expensive
- C. perfect
- D. tired

2) According to the author, robots may be used to

- A. make cars
- B. do things that are too dangerous for us
- C. discover things
- D. All of the above answers

stretch	glass	metal
shiny	dull	stiff
plastic	wood	soft
rock	hard	water

Materials

A material is what something is made of. There are 5 basic materials. Most things are made with these materials. Some things are made of metal. Some things are made of glass. Some things are made of wood. Some things are made of cloth. And some things are made of plastic. There are some other materials. But they are not used as much as these 5 materials.

Let's talk about metal first. Metal is very heavy. And it is very hard and strong. It usually feels cool if you touch it. We use metal to make lots of things. We use it for forks and knives. We use it for keys. We use it for cars. We use it for these things because it is very strong.

Next, let's talk about glass. Glass is very smooth. It feels cool to touch. It is not as heavy as metal. It is hard. But it is not strong. It breaks very easily! Then why do we use it? We use it because it is clear! You can see through glass! That's why we use it for windows. That's also why we use it for glasses.

Now, let's talk about wood. Wood is lighter than metal and glass. It is not as strong as metal. But it is much stronger than glass. We use wood to make lots of things. Things made from wood are usually light and hard and strong.

Chairs and tables are made from wood. Pencils are made from wood.

Now let's talk about cloth. Cloth is very light. It is much lighter than wood. And it is very soft. We use cloth to make lots of things. For example, it is used to make clothing. And it is used to make blankets.

Last, let's talk about plastic. Plastic is also very light. But it is different from cloth. Sometimes it is soft. And sometimes it is hard. Plastic can be used to make thin plastic bags. These are light, soft, and strong. But plastic can also be used to make bicycle helmets. These are light, hard, and strong. A helmet and a bag seem different. But they are both made from plastic.

1) Which sentence from the passage best describes the main idea?

- A. "We use cloth to make lots of things."
- B. "Metal is very heavy."
- C. "There are 5 basic materials."
- D. "A helmet and a bag seem different."

2) According to the passage, which of these things is a material?

- A. chairs
- B. clothing
- C. windows
- D. wood

3) According to the passage, how does glass feel?

- A. smooth and cool
- B. warm and soft
- C. light and hard
- D. sharp and heavy

4) In paragraph 4, the passage says, "Wood is lighter than metal and glass."
What is the main purpose of this sentence?

- A. to explain something
- B. to recommend something
- C. to compare something
- D. to demonstrate something

5) Which material would you use if you wanted to make something that was strong and very light?

- A. plastic
- B. wood
- C. metal
- D. glass

6) In this passage, the author talks about

- A. hard things first, then soft things
- B. heavy things first, then light things
- C. strong things first, then weak things
- D. cool things first, then warm things

Fruit Fly Fix

It is breakfast time. You have been looking forward to eating a nice ripe banana ever since you woke up. Just when you reach for the delicious piece of fruit on your counter, you see something that makes you much less hungry: a swarm of fruit flies!

Fruit flies are tiny insects that are attracted to ripe or rotting fruits and vegetables. The flies not only eat the fruit, they also lay their eggs there. A single fruit fly can lay up to 500 eggs on the surface of a piece of fruit. Within eight days, the fruit flies that hatch from these eggs are full adults that can then lay their own eggs. As you can see, what might start out as a small fruit fly problem can become very large very quickly.

Although there is a chance fruit flies can carry germs on to your food, this is not very likely. Fruit flies are annoying, but they probably will not hurt you. Because they are such a nuisance, however, most people want to get rid of these pesky bugs as quickly as possible. Some people use pesticide sprays on the fruit flies. Although this will kill the flies, it will also spread harmful poison all over your kitchen. Luckily, there is also a completely safe way for you to get rid of fruit flies in your house.

The first step is for you to remove all fruits or vegetables from your counter. Store these items in the refrigerator or in sealed containers. Clean up any spilled juice or bits of food that might be on the floor. Take out the trash and empty the recycling bin. Wash any dirty dishes that are in your sink. Doing all of these things will stop new fruit flies from finding food or places to lay their eggs.

Next, make a trap to catch all of the remaining fruit flies in your house. First, fill a small bowl with a few tablespoons of vinegar. Then, put a piece of very ripe or rotting fruit into the vinegar. Cover the bowl very tightly with a sheet of plastic wrap and poke a few very small holes in the wrap with a fork. If all goes according to plan, the flies will enter the trap through the holes but will be unable to fly back out. This trap will catch all of the remaining fruit flies. You can either kill these flies or release them outdoors.

Fruit flies can be a pest, but they do not have to make you crazy. With a little effort, you can get existing flies out of your house and prevent new ones from taking over your kitchen.

1) a nuisance is something that

- A. bothers you
- B. can be dangerous
- C. grows fast
- D. is very small

2) According to the passage, why should you not use pesticide spray to kill fruit flies?

- A. most sprays do not actually kill all of the fruit flies
- B. buying sprays can get expensive if you need to use a lot of them
- C. the sprays take too much time to work
- D. it can be dangerous to use them in your kitchen

3) Based on the information in the penultimate (next-to-last) paragraph, we can understand that the author thinks that

- A. some people do not mind having fruit flies in their house
- B. some people do not like killing insects
- C. fruit flies do not like vinegar
- D. making a fruit fly trap can be difficult



The Rio Grande

Although not the longest river in America, the Rio Grande is one of the most important. But, unlike other significant rivers, it is not used for shipping. In fact, oceangoing ships cannot navigate the waters. No, what makes the Rio Grande so important is its location. Since 1846, it has been the official border of Texas and Mexico.

Rio Grande Geography

The Rio Grande is either the fourth or fifth longest river system in North America. It all depends on how it is measured. Because the river twists so much, it occasionally changes course. And these course shifts can cause it to be longer or shorter. At its last official measure, the Rio Grande clocked in at 1,896 miles. The river starts in Colorado and extends downward to the Gulf of Mexico.

Downward is the best way of describing it too. Not only does the river extend south, but it also starts in the mountains and gets lower and lower in elevation as it extends to the Gulf.

Its name is Spanish for the “Big River,” but the Rio Grande is actually known as Rio Bravo in Mexico. “Bravo” translates as “furious,” so the name makes sense. Because of its twists and turns, it certainly does seem to be angrier than most rivers!

The Rio Grande Today

The Rio Grande today is mostly used as a source of drinking water. Sadly, much of the water has been drained from the river. Parts of the river are almost dry! This is because people use more water from the river than the river can get back from rain and other sources. Experts are working to correct this, though, with hopes of restoring the river to its past strength.

Today, the river is important as a source of water for Texans and Mexicans. More important, it is a symbol of cooperation between two nations. Though borders like the Rio Grande separate nations, they are also shared spaces. The Rio Grande is therefore a symbol of friendship and peace between two peoples.

1) According to the passage, why is the Rio Grande so important?

- A. It is a source of drinking water for most of the United States.
- B. It is the border of Texas and Mexico.
- C. It is the longest river system in the United States.
- D. It is known by two different names.

2) In paragraph 3, the author most likely writes that “downward is the best way of describing it too” to

- A. prove that the Rio Grande’s water levels have gone down recently
- B. argue that the Rio Grande has changed shape over the years
- C. highlight the fact that the Rio Grande flows south and from high elevations
- D. explain why the Rio Grande is known as the Rio Bravo down in Mexico

3) Based on its use in paragraph 4, the word furious most nearly means

- A. angry
- B. large
- C. twisted
- D. dry

4) According to the passage, the Rio Grande has endpoints in

- A. Texas and the Gulf of Mexico
- B. New Mexico and Colorado
- C. Texas and Mexico
- D. Colorado and the Gulf of Mexico

The Incredible Machine

Everyone has a favorite attraction at an amusement park, and I am no different. However, unlike most people who seem to prefer rollercoasters, my favorite ride is a little more gentle. Every time I go to Coney Island, Navy Pier, or the Santa Monica Pier, I absolutely have to ride the Ferris wheel.

The Ferris wheel is simple and yet also quite complex. That is, riding it is easy, but how it works is complicated. A series of carts are attached to a wheel, which is attached to a rim. That rim rotates vertically around an axis, and gravity keeps the carts upright. As simple as the ride seems, only advanced engineers can make safe and fun Ferris wheels.

What It Lacks in Thrills...

While the Ferris wheel is not as thrilling as a rollercoaster, it is still very exciting. The fact of being high in the air makes it so much more entertaining than a lot of rides. I mean, how often do you hang from that high up in daily life?

Nevertheless, I have to admit, I don't seek Ferris wheels out because of their excitement. Rather, I find them very relaxing. At the top of the Ferris wheel, you get beautiful sights of the park. You also get a sense of calm that you don't get in the hustle and bustle of the park below.

Additionally, Ferris wheels are also gorgeous to look at when they are lit up at night. In fact, the original Ferris wheel was designed as much to be seen as to be ridden.

It Happened at the World's Fair

The first Ferris wheel was made by and named after George Washington Gale Ferris, Jr. He designed it for the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. It was the tallest attraction there, standing 264 feet high.

However, visitors to the fair were impressed by the size of the ride as well as the mechanics of it. In 1893, anything that was not turned by hand was considered a sight to see. And the wheel, which was a machine, was truly incredible to see. Further, as one visitor put it, the wheel was amazing because it seemed to be missing support. That is, it did not look like it could stand on its own. And yet it did and even rotated!

They Keep Reaching Higher and Higher

Ferris wheel technology has only improved since then. Most of today's Ferris wheels are much larger than that first one. The largest in the world is the "Singapore Flyer," which stands slightly taller than twice what Ferris's did! Today, the Ferris wheel is the most common amusement park ride. But that does not mean you should take them for granted. Instead, be thankful for Ferris' invention. The next time you're at an amusement park, don't just look up at the impressive wheel in the sky on your way to a newer attraction.

1) As used in paragraph 1, the word **attraction** most nearly means

- A. sense
- B. park
- C. ride
- D. vision

2) It can be understood that Coney Island, Navy Pier, and the Santa Monica Pier are all examples of

- A. amusement parks
- B. Ferris wheels
- C. vacation spots
- D. boat docks

3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best antonym for **complex**?

- A. impressive
- B. beautiful
- C. exciting
- D. simple

4) What does the author like best about Ferris wheels?

- A. the impressive engineering and beauty of them
- B. the excitement and thrills they guarantee
- C. the beautiful sights and relaxation they allow
- D. the fact that most amusement parks have one

5) According to the passage, the Ferris wheel was originally designed for

- A. Coney Island
- B. the world's fair
- C. Disneyworld
- D. Singapore

6) This passage was most likely written to

- A. describe the author's favorite amusement park rides
- B. explain the original design of Ferris wheels and how they work today
- C. describe the history of Ferris wheels and why they are so popular
- D. explain the history of Ferris wheels and why the author likes them

7) Using information in the passage, the reader can understand that the tallest Ferris wheel in the world is

- A. under 250 feet tall
- B. between 250 and 500 feet tall
- C. between 500 and 750 feet tall
- D. over 750 feet tall

Tools of Persuasion

Persuasion is the art of convincing someone to agree with your point of view. According to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, there are three basic tools of persuasion: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is a speaker's way of convincing the audience that she is a credible source. An audience will consider a speaker credible if she seems trustworthy, reliable, and sincere. This can be done in many ways. For example, a speaker can develop ethos by explaining how much experience or education she has in the field. After all, you would be more likely to listen to advice about how to take care of your teeth from a dentist than a firefighter. A speaker can also create ethos by convincing the audience that she is a good person who has their best interests at heart. If an audience cannot trust you, you will not be able to persuade them. Pathos is a speaker's way of connecting with an audience's emotions. For example, a speaker who is trying to convince an audience to vote for him might say that he alone can save the country from a terrible war. These words are intended to fill the audience with fear, thus making them want to vote for him. Similarly, a charity organization that helps animals might show an audience pictures of injured dogs and cats. These images are intended to fill the viewers with pity. If the audience feels bad for the animals, they will be more likely to donate money. Logos is the use of facts, information, statistics, or other evidence to make your argument more convincing. An audience will be more likely to believe you if you have data to back up your claims. For example, a commercial for soap might tell you that laboratory tests have shown that their soap kills all 7,000,000 of the bacteria living on your hands right now. This piece of information might make you more likely to buy their brand of soap. Presenting this evidence is much more convincing than simply saying "our soap is the best!" Use of logos can also increase a speaker's ethos; the more facts a speaker includes in his argument, the more likely you are to think that he is educated and trustworthy. Although ethos, pathos, and logos all have their strengths, they are often most effective when they are used together. Indeed, most speakers use a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade their audiences. The next time you listen to a speech, watch a commercial, or listen to a friend try to convince you to lend him some money, be on the lookout for these ancient Greek tools of persuasion.

1) As used in paragraph 2, what is the best antonym for **credible**?

- A. unintelligent
- B. boring
- C. dishonest
- D. amazing

2) Amy is trying to convince her mother to buy her a pair of \$200 shoes. She says: "Mom, the shoes I have are really old and ugly. If I don't get these new shoes, everyone at school is going to laugh at me. I will be so embarrassed that I will want to die." What form of persuasion is Amy using here?

- A. pathos
- B. ethos
- C. logos
- D. a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos

3) According to the passage, logos can build ethos because

- A. an audience is more easily convinced by facts and information than simple appeals to emotions like pity or fear
- B. an audience is more likely to trust a speaker who uses evidence to support his argument
- C. a speaker who overuses pathos might make an audience too emotional; audiences who are too frightened or too sad are unlikely to be persuaded
- D. a speaker can use misleading or false information to make his argument seem more convincing

4) Gareth is running for mayor. He tells his audience: "Under our current mayor, there have been 15,000 new cases of unemployment. If he stays in office, who knows how many more people will lose their jobs? The number could go up even higher. When I was the CEO of Magnatech, I helped to create over 1,000 new jobs. I can do the same thing for this city if you vote for me." Which form of persuasion is Gareth using here?

- I. pathos
 - II. logos
 - III. ethos
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III

5) According to the passage, the most effective tool of persuasion is

- A. ethos, because you cannot persuade an audience that does not trust you
- B. logos, because it can also be used to build ethos
- C. a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos
- D. pathos, because human beings are most easily persuaded by emotion

Summer Rain

The worst days of any summer are the rainy ones. We spend all year looking forward to nice weather and long, hot days. All of winter, with its dreary gray days and bitter cold, we dream of those endless days at the beach, laying on the sand and soaking in the bright and burning sun. And then, summer comes, and it rains. As a child, I would wake up to rainy summer days and come close to crying. It wasn't fair. We suffered through months of school and miserable weather for those scant ten weeks of freedom and balmy weather. Any day that I could not spend at the beach or playing ball with my friends seemed like a punishment for something I didn't even do. On those rainy summer days, I had nothing fun to do and could only sit inside, staring out at the rain like a Dickensian orphan. I was an only child, so there was no one else to play with. My father worked from home, so I was not truly alone, but he could not actively play with me since he was technically at work. It was those days that I would resign myself to whatever was on television or any books that I could find lying around. I'd crawl through the day and pray each night that the rain would not be there the next day. As an adult, though, my opinion of summer rain has changed. When you have to work every day, summer is not as eagerly anticipated. Mostly, the days run together, bleeding into each other so that they no longer seem like separate entities and instead feel like continuations of the same long day. Everything seems monotonous and dull, and an ennui or listlessness kicks in. Such a mindset makes you cheer for anything new or different. I spend the winter dreaming of summer and the summer dreaming of winter. When summer comes, I complain about how hot it is. And then I look forward to the rain, because the rain brings with it a cold front, which offers a reprieve—admittedly one that is all too short—from the torture of 100° and humid days. Rainy days are still the worst days of the summer, but summer rain today means positively beautiful—and considerably cooler—weather tomorrow.

1) The passage makes use of language that is

- A. metaphorical
- B. rhetorical
- C. formal
- D. ambiguous

2) According to the passage, summer is different for adults because

- A. rain brings with it cold temperatures for the following days
- B. the weather is much warmer than it is for children
- C. they do not get a long time off from work for the season
- D. they better know how to occupy their downtime

3) According to the passage, which of the following is a true statement about the narrator as a child?

- A. He or she was often bored on summer days.
- B. He or she preferred cooler weather.
- C. He or she liked staying indoors.
- D. He or she had no siblings.

4) Compared to how he or she was as a child, the narrator as an adult is

- A. more realistic
- B. less excitable
- C. more idealistic
- D. less calm

5) As used in the final paragraph, the word **reprieve** most nearly means

- A. a permanent conclusion
- B. a short continuation
- C. a higher level of pain
- D. a temporary break

The Battle of Chancellorsville

The Battle of Chancellorsville, one of the most famous battles of the Civil War, took place in Virginia in the spring of 1863. For months, the two armies had been staked out on opposite banks of a narrow river. The Confederate troops were led by perhaps the most revered military tactician in American history, General Robert E. Lee. The Union soldiers were led by "Fighting" Joe Hooker. In appearance, personality, and lifestyle, these men were nearly perfect opposites. Lee, an older man in poor health with a gray beard, had a somber, measured demeanor. Hooker was a blond, strapping young man whose vanity over his appearance was but one aspect of his egotism. Whereas Lee was devout and principled, Hooker was known for his rollicking enjoyment of both women and whiskey. Despite the fact that the Confederacy had won the last four major battles and the Union soldiers were famished, exhausted, and demoralized, Hooker proclaimed, "My plans are perfect. And when I start to carry them out, may God have mercy on Bobby Lee, for I shall have none." Why, aside from a propensity for narcissism, was Hooker so confident? Hooker had used spies, analysts, and even hot air balloons to compile a vast amount of intelligence about Lee's army. He had discerned, for example, that Lee had only 61,000 men to Hooker's own 134,000. Buoyed by his superior numbers, Hooker covertly moved 70,000 of his men fifteen miles up and across the river, and then ordered them to sneak back down to position themselves behind Lee's army. In effect, Hooker had cut off the Confederate soldiers in front and behind. They were trapped. Satisfied with his advantage, Hooker became convinced that Lee's only option was to retreat to Richmond, thus assuring a Union victory. Yet Lee, despite his disadvantages of both numbers and position, did not retreat. Instead, he moved his troops into position to attack. Union soldiers who tried to warn Hooker that Lee was on the offensive were dismissed as cowards. Having become convinced that Lee had no choice but to retreat, Hooker began to ignore reality. When Lee's army attacked the Union soldiers at 5:00 p.m., they were eating supper, completely unprepared for battle. They abandoned their rifles and fled as Lee's troops came shrieking out of the brush, bayonets drawn. Against all odds, Lee won the Battle of Chancellorsville, and Hooker's forces withdrew in defeat.

1) Based on information in the passage, it can be concluded that Hooker lost the Battle of Chancellorsville mostly because of his

- A. vanity
- B. ignorance
- C. overconfidence
- D. faulty information
- E. vices

2) The contrast drawn between Lee and Hooker in paragraph 2 is intended to

- A. showcase the different backgrounds and personal histories of these two enemy soldiers
- B. provide support for the idea that Lee was a more virtuous person than Hooker, and therefore a better military commander
- C. prove that two men with very different values could end up in similar positions of power

- D. suggest that if Hooker had been more devout and principled, he might not have been outwitted by Lee
- E. imply that these men fundamentally differed in their approaches to nearly everything, including battle

3) In paragraph 3, the author quotes Hooker as saying, "My plans are perfect. And when I start to carry them out, may God have mercy on Bobby Lee, for I shall have none." The author most likely includes this quote in order to

- A. demonstrate Hooker's belief in his own infallibility
- B. provide an example of the way language has changed since 1863
- C. reveal that Hooker was a deeply religious man in spite of his lifestyle
- D. foreshadow Hooker's defeat at the hands of Lee's army
- E. portray Hooker as a merciless general who was compelled by his hatred of Lee

4) Based on its use in paragraph 3, it can be inferred that the word **propensity** belongs to which of the following word groups?

- A. fondness, partiality, affection
- B. flaw, fault, shortcoming
- C. distaste, aversion, dissatisfaction
- D. tendency, inclination, predisposition
- E. confidence, self-assurance, certitude

5) How many men did Hooker position behind Lee's army?

- A. 61,000
- B. 70,000
- C. 73,000
- D. 134,000
- E. 158,000

6) As used in paragraph 4, **buoyed** most nearly means

- A. strengthened
- B. anchored
- C. floated
- D. sharpened
- E. heartened

7) According to the author, Hooker's advantages going into the Battle of Chancellorsville included

- I. numbers
- II. position
- III. strategy

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. II and III only
- E. I, II, and III

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

Concussions are brain injuries that occur when a person receives a blow to the head, face, or neck. Although most people who suffer a concussion experience initial bouts of dizziness, nausea, and drowsiness, these symptoms often disappear after a few days. The long-term effects of concussions, however, are less understood and far more severe. Recent studies suggest that people who suffer multiple concussions are at a significant risk for developing chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disorder that causes a variety of dangerous mental and emotional problems to arise weeks, months, or even years after the initial injury. These psychological problems can include depression, anxiety, memory loss, inability to concentrate, and aggression. In extreme cases, people suffering from CTE have even committed suicide or homicide. The majority of people who develop these issues are athletes who participate in popular high-impact sports, especially football. Although both new sports regulations and improvements in helmet technology can help protect players, the sports media and fans alike bear some of the responsibility for reducing the incidence of these devastating injuries. Improvements in diagnostic technology have provided substantial evidence to link severe—and often fatal—psychological disorders to the head injuries players receive while on the field. Recent autopsies performed on the brains of football players who have committed suicide have shown advanced cases of CTE in every single victim. In response to the growing understanding of this danger, the National Football League (NFL) has revised its safety regulations. Players who have suffered a head injury on the field must undergo a "concussion sideline assessment"—a series of mental and physical fitness tests—before being allowed back in the game. In an effort to diminish the amount of head and neck injuries on the field, NFL officials have begun enforcing stricter penalty calls for helmet-to-helmet contact, leading with the head, and hitting a defenseless player. Furthermore, as of 2010, if a player's helmet is accidentally wrenched from his head during play, the ball is immediately whistled dead. There is hope that these new regulations, coupled with advances in helmet design, will reduce the number of concussions players endure, and thus curb the number of CTE cases. Efforts by the NFL and other professional sports leagues are certainly laudable; indeed, we should commend every attempt to protect the mental and physical health of players. However, new regulations at the professional level cannot protect amateur players, especially young people. Fatal cases of CTE have been reported in victims as young as 21. With appropriate equipment and form, tackling need not be dangerous. Proper tackling form—using the arms and shoulders to aim for a player's midsection rather than leading with the top of the head—should be taught at an early age. Youth, high school, and college leagues should also adopt safety rules even more stringent than the NFL's. Furthermore, at an early age, athletes should be educated about the serious dangers of head injuries. Perhaps the most important factor in reducing the number of traumatic brain injuries, however, lies not with the players, the coaches, or the administrators, but with the media and fans. Sports media producers have become accustomed to showcasing the most aggressive tackles and the most intense plays. NFL broadcasts often replay especially violent collisions, while the commentators marvel at the physical prowess of the players involved.

Some sports programs even feature weekly countdowns of the hardest hits. When the media exalts such hazardous behavior, professionals are rewarded for injuring each other on the field, and amateurs become more likely to try to imitate their favorite NFL athletes. Announcers, commentators, television producers, and sportswriters should engage in a collective effort to cease glorifying brutal plays. In turn, fans should stop expecting their favorite players to put their lives on the line for the purposes of entertainment. Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game.

1) The author apparently believes that

- A. NFL officials have not thoroughly implemented stricter safety regulations
- B. doctors need to do more research about the potential long-term effects of CTE
- C. amateur athletes suffer more serious long-term effects of CTE than professional athletes
- D. fans share some of the blame for athletes' injuries
- E. young people should not be encouraged to play football due to CTE risks

2) According to the author, each of the following statements are true EXCEPT which one?

- A. Tackling itself is not dangerous; however, players who use improper tackling form may suffer injury.
- B. Scientists have established a link between players who shoot themselves and others and the onset of CTE.
- C. NFL officials have done nothing to address the problem of CTE.
- D. Athletes who are praised for exceptionally brutal hits are likely to continue engaging in such dangerous behavior.
- E. Sports programs showcase exceptionally hard hits.

3) According to the author, which of the following contribute(s) to an increase in incidences of CTE in amateur players?

- I. fewer safety regulations than professional players
- II. a lack of education geared to youth players about the dangers of head injuries
- III. a desire to emulate professionals

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. II and III only
- E. I, II, and III

4) As used in paragraph 4, which is the best synonym for **laudable**?

- A. praiseworthy
- B. ineffective
- C. determined
- D. blameworthy
- E. satisfactory

5) The author's tone in the final paragraph can best be described as

- A. apologetic
- B. depressed
- C. confused
- D. solemn
- E. hopeless

6) As used in the final paragraph, which is the best antonym for **exalts**?

- A. ignores
- B. misrepresents
- C. praises
- D. reports
- E. criticizes

7) In the final paragraph, the author writes, "Players must stop being encouraged to trade their careers, health, happiness, and their lives for the sake of a game." Which of the following literary devices is used in this quotation?

- A. Irony, characterized by the expression of something which is contrary to the intended meaning.
- B. Climax, characterized by the arrangement of words, phrases, or causes in an order of ascending power.
- C. Litotes, characterized by the expression of understatement used for intensification of a rhetorical purpose.
- D. Hyperbole, characterized by the use of exaggeration for emphasis or rhetorical effect.
- E. Apostrophe, characterized by a sudden turn from addressing the general audience to addressing a specific person, group, or personified abstraction.

8) Based on the information in the passage, explain CTE in your own words. What does it stand for? How does it occur? Whom does it normally affect? What are its effects?

9) What is your opinion of the NFL's new safety regulations? Do you think they are too strict, not strict enough, or just right? Why? What would change about the new rules, if anything? Explain.

A Streetcar Named Desire –passage 1

A Streetcar Named Desire is a classic of the American theater. Tennessee Williams' landmark work was a tour de force in its original stage production in 1947 and continues to resonate with audiences and readers today despite—or perhaps because of—its simplistic though layered story. A faded Southern belle, Blanche DuBois, arrives at her sister's seedy New Orleans apartment where she is tortured by her brutish brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. Blanche puts on airs of class and happiness throughout the play, though internally she is miserable and haunted by her tragic and scandalous past. Stanley forces Blanche to face her dolorous reality with his vitriol and, finally, his act of sexual aggression, and in doing so, he causes her to lose her tenuous grip on sanity. Most have argued (correctly) that the play is about the ways the past haunts our present or (again correctly) that it is about the ways class and sexuality impact our lives. However, few have seen the play for what it is: an allegory for the theater itself. Before Williams wrote *Streetcar*, the theater had been dominated by melodrama. A brief interlude in the 1930s brought political theater to center stage (pardon the pun), but by the 1940s, its principal playwright, Clifford Odets, had left New York for Hollywood, and the sensationalized and maudlin form of melodrama once again flourished. The theater was in limbo, and Williams had a desire to bring something new to the world. It would bring the realism of the political theater of the 1930s but without the political (read: socialist) underpinnings. To that end, he created lifelike characters who spoke in realistic dialect. But to make his point that melodrama was flawed, he added an equally unrealistic character. Blanche, unlike the other characters, speaks theatrically, acts larger than life on stage, and uses floral language and heightened mannerisms. Blanche is a character not to be trusted. She lies about everything, and the only thing that finally exposes her lies is reality itself: Stanley. He finally forces her off the stage and into the insane asylum by forcing himself on her sexually. And with that, realism forcibly removed melodrama from the stage.

A Streetcar Named Desire –passage 2

It is not possible to imagine *A Streetcar Named Desire* without the influence of Marlon Brando, the actor who rose to fame playing Stanley Kowalski. On the page, the part is fairly simplistic. Stanley is a monster and a beast without any redeeming qualities. But Brando and the play's original director, Elia Kazan, imagined the character as having a soft underbelly, rooted in his own sorrow, insecurities, and soulful complexity. Brando's Stanley is a brute, yes, but he is a brute who hates the fact that he is so awful. He is also unable to control himself and his passions, and this lack of control is equally embarrassing to him, even as it is also threatening to Blanche and alluring to her sister Stella. For instance, after he hits Stella, he comes back to her, famously begging for forgiveness by shouting "Stella" outside their apartment. But in Brando's depiction on the stage and later on the screen, he is soaked from the rain and looks completely desperate, as though he needs Stella to live. He looks and seems totally helpless and weak, the exact opposite of the brute he appears later when he forces himself onto Blanche. The play is excellent and memorable, even when read. But it is Brando's interpretation of the male lead role that makes the play indelible. Without Brando, the play would still have a deep meaning, but with Brando's interpretation, the play becomes even more profound.

1) Paragraph 1 of Passage 1 provides each of the following EXCEPT

- A. a critical interpretation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- B. an explanation of why modern audiences connect with *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- C. a brief plot synopsis of *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- D. background information on the times that produced *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- E. the author's main argument concerning *A Streetcar Named Desire*

2) It can be inferred from Passage 1 that *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- A. was Tennessee Williams' first play
- B. is better on stage than in print
- C. did not have socialist leanings
- D. was not melodramatic
- E. would not have been successful without Marlon Brando

3) According to Passage 1, the character of Blanche DuBois

- A. is intentionally overdramatic and theatrical
- B. has never been to the city of New Orleans before
- C. is recently married to Stanley Kowalski
- D. is brutally honest and frank during the play
- E. is firmly rooted in realism and sanity

4) Passage 2 argues that Marlon Brando's portrayal of Stanley Kowalski

- I. earned the actor great fame
- II. is more nuanced than the part that is written
- III. is what really made *A Streetcar Named Desire* a classic

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. I and II only
- D. II and III only
- E. I, II, and III

5) Both Passage 1 and Passage 2 argue that

- A. the New York theater scene was blown away by *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- B. Tennessee Williams wrote *A Streetcar Named Desire* to end melodrama
- C. *A Streetcar Named Desire* has more than one true meaning
- D. *A Streetcar Named Desire* only has power when performed on the stage
- E. the character of Stanley Kowalski is simply a brute monster

6) The author of Passage 2 focuses on Marlon Brando's portrayal of Stanley Kowalski as being particularly memorable and powerful, whereas the author of Passage 1 focuses on Tennessee Williams' skilled writing. In your opinion, what makes for better drama: a high-quality script or unparalleled acting? Can a drama be successful with one but not the other? Why?

7) In paragraph 2 of Passage 1, the author suggests that drama in the 1930s was heavily influenced by socialist playwrights and the politics of the era. In what ways do modern plays, shows, and films reflect modern politics, if at all? Do you see any current trends in today's media?

N B: You can change the questions

Good Luck