

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Preparation for
**State Reading
Assessments**

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LEVEL



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Introduction to the Student



How to Take a Reading Comprehension Test

Taking a reading comprehension test does not have to be a stressful event. The following tips and methods can be used to make your test-taking efforts more effective and your results more accurate.

FOCUS:

When you read a comprehension passage, you should try to identify the following:

- main idea
- author's attitude or tone
- author's purpose

Many comprehension questions focus on your ability to determine what the author is trying to say and why he or she is saying it. Think about whether the author is biased: Does he or she support, criticize, or remain objective about the subject? What clues show the author's attitude?

While you read, you should imagine yourself as the test writer.

- Which pieces of information do you think are important?
- Is the passage about a person or a group of people?
- What is that person's or group's message to the world?
- What questions would you write about the passage?

When you come across a point that stands out, make a mental note of it. Ask yourself why the author included it. Information that seems to have a special purpose often shows up in the questions.

TIPS:

In order to determine an author's attitude toward the subject, look for emotionally charged words, such as *tragically*, *sadly*, *unfortunately*, *surprisingly*, *amazingly*, *justly*, etc. These words indicate an author's bias—whether the author sides with or against the subject of the passage. Simple words tell you a lot about the author's feelings.

Frequently, you are asked to identify the main idea of a passage. These types of questions do not always use the words *main idea*. They may ask for the most appropriate title or the statement with which the author would most likely agree or disagree. Pick the answer that is true for the entire passage. If no choice relates to the entire selection, choose the answer that is supported by most of the passage.

Model Passage

The following model passage demonstrates effective use of the reading tips and strategies. You will see that there are underlined words and phrases in the passage and notes in the margins. The notes in the margins refer to the underlined portions of the passage and serve as examples of the way you should think about the passage. These notes include questions you should ask yourself or comments you should make to yourself as you read.

The Railroads Connect

¹This passage will be about the disorder of the “Wedding of the Rails” celebration.

On May 10, 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was finally connected after years of hard work and confusion, but the celebration of the “Wedding of the Rails” was plagued by disorder and misunderstanding.¹

²What are the funny errors?

Of course, the real story is a comedy of errors.² First³ the actual location of the event was Promontory Summit, Utah, but since this was not on the map, the press reported that it occurred at Promontory Point; therefore, postcards, souvenirs, and even textbooks to this day bear the name of the incorrect location. Second, on May 4, 1869,⁴ the president of the Central Pacific Railroad, Leland Stanford, revealed to his friend, David Hewes, that no commemorative item had been made for the event. Upset by this fact, Hewes attempted to have a solid gold rail made, but after failing to find someone to finance it, he had \$400 worth of his own gold melted and cast⁵ as the “Golden Spike,” which was then engraved⁶ for the occasion. Three other spikes were also made for the event.

³The points are organized. The word first tells me to look for second, etc. Look for next and finally.

⁴Wow, that is only four days before the ceremony.

⁵Wow, \$400 of his own gold! Why? What kind of question could the test ask about this?

⁶I should look at the context of these boldfaced words. What do they mean?

⁷Those spikes were just dropped in the holes!

⁸This was a huge event if the telegraph was going to relay the sound.

The next problem arose when the event had to be postponed because **disgruntled**⁶ workers and poor weather conditions delayed the arrival of officials from the Union Pacific Railroad. Finally, on May 10, 1869, the officials from both the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific railroads **convened**⁶ for the celebration. A special laurelwood railroad tie was laid in place at the junction, and the specialty made spikes were dropped into pre-drilled holes. Not one of them was actually hammered into place.⁷ Then, the laurelwood tie and spikes were replaced with a standard tie and regular iron spikes. The last spike and the hammer were connected to the telegraph line so that the entire nation could hear⁸ the “Wedding of the

3. Which of the following did not contribute to the confusion on May 10, 1869?

- A. the telegraph operator
- B. poor weather conditions
- C. last-minute planning
- D. uncertainty about the location

(A) *The telegraph operator does not make any errors. The poor weather postponed officials, last minute planning required a friend to donate his own gold for the commemorative spike, and uncertainty about the location led to incorrect information.*

4. As used in the passage, the word *engraved* most nearly means

- A. molded.
- B. decorated.
- C. transported.
- D. purchased.

(B) *If the spike was engraved for the occasion, it must have been decorated to show its commemorative purpose. Molded is not the answer because the passage already stated that the gold was melted and cast. Although the spike would have to be transported, the context is discussing the making of the spike, not the shipping of the spike. Finally, the gold was already purchased since it belonged to Hewes.*

5. Based on the information provided in the passage, what can you infer is the reason for David Hewes's melting his own gold to make the spike?

- A. He was angry that no one would help him.
- B. He wanted to become famous for his contribution to the Transcontinental Railroad.
- C. He could find no one willing to pay for or donate the gold.
- D. He had more gold than he needed, so he was willing to give some away.

(C) *Hewes tried to find someone to finance a rail but was unsuccessful. Had he found someone willing to pay or donate at least something, then he would not have had to use his own resources. Since he looked for someone to finance a golden rail instead of financing it himself, we can infer that he did not have an overabundance of gold. There are no clues to imply he was searching for fame. Finally, the passage states that he was upset that there was item made to commemorate the event, but no mention of his being angry at finding no one willing to help.*

Annie Leibovitz

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ KNEW BEFORE she enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute that she wanted to become an artist; however, she originally thought she wanted to be a painter. This determined and talented woman discovered her true love—photography—during a family vacation and has since become the most famous female photographer in history, excluding Margaret Bourke White, the famous *Life* magazine photographer.

Born in 1949 in Connecticut to Sam and Marilyn Leibovitz, Annie moved frequently during her childhood because of her father's military career. During a summer trip to Japan with her mother, the young Leibovitz realized her talent and love for photography. Upon her return to San Francisco, she enrolled in photography classes. Just a year later, Leibovitz showed her portfolio to the editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, Jann Wenner, who was immediately impressed with her. Her first assignment was one that quickly launched her career in photography. Her black-and-white portrait of John Lennon appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in January of 1971. Just two short years later, she became the magazine's chief photographer.

Not only did Leibovitz's career take off at lightning speed, but she also had to stay abreast of new photographic technologies. Trained only in black-and-white photography, Leibovitz had to teach herself how to shoot in color.

She also knew very little about lighting. Still, her limited knowledge did not impede her success—her talent and determination were enough to ensure it.

Leibovitz photographed hundreds of famous musicians, actors, and politicians, among others, including people as **diverse** as Bob Dylan, Robin Williams, and Bill Clinton. Her photos have graced the pages of *Rolling Stone*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker* and appeared in numerous advertising campaigns, making her pictures recognizable by Americans of all ages and backgrounds, as well as by people from all across the globe.

Annie Leibovitz is a highly acclaimed and decorated photographer. Two of her photographs won first and second place as the American Society of Magazine Editors' best magazine covers of the last forty years. One of them featured John Lennon and Yoko Ono, taken just hours before Lennon's murder; the other was a tasteful nude shot of actress Demi Moore, who was nine months pregnant. Additionally, Leibovitz's first museum exhibit, entitled *Photographs: Annie Leibovitz 1970-1990*, circled the globe for six years. She was the first female photographer to be featured at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the Library of Congress named her a living legend. In the past twenty years, Leibovitz has also published several books of her amazing photographs. ●

Q U E S T I O N S

1. Based on the facts in the article, what is the most likely reason the author wrote this passage?

- A. to explain the different types of avalanches
- B. to show the most avalanche-prone areas of the world
- C. to convey statistics about avalanches
- D. to explain the conditions that may cause an avalanche

2. Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?

- A. Understanding the Avalanche
- B. The Most Common Types of Avalanches
- C. Avalanches: Silent Killers
- D. Avalanches: Power Unleashed

3. As used in the passage, the word *adhere* most closely means

- A. attach.
- B. pile on.
- C. go.
- D. rise.

4. According to the passage, which of the following is not a condition that can cause an avalanche?

- A. temperature
- B. melting
- C. recent snow
- D. number of layers

5. According to the passage, why is wind a contributing factor in avalanche formation?

- A. Heavy wind can loosen snow and make it slide.
- B. A lack of wind can prevent the snowpack from solidifying, causing an avalanche.
- C. Wind causes snow to deposit unevenly on the sides of mountain.
- D. Snowdrifts caused by wind are unstable.

6. Answer the following question using complete sentences:

Using the facts in the passage, write a summary of how to avoid being caught in an avalanche.

Q U E S T I O N S

1. **What was probably the author's primary purpose in writing this passage?**

- A. to make a tribute to Baron Pierre de Coubertin
- B. to show the beginning of the International Olympic Committee
- C. to explain how the modern Olympic Games were launched
- D. to illustrate the importance of amateur athletic competition

2. **Based on the passage, which of the following is true?**

- A. Evangelis Zappas sponsored the first modern Olympic Games.
- B. The modern Olympics are based on the same sports as in ancient Greece.
- C. Pierre de Coubertin founded the first Olympic Games in 1896.
- D. Coubertin helped in the foundation for the modern Olympics.

3. **Based on the passage, which of the following is false?**

- A. Pierre de Coubertin began what would ultimately be the IOC.
- B. The first international Olympics were held in Athens.
- C. The first Olympics were held in Olympia.
- D. Coubertin's congress refused all of his suggestions.

4. **What was most important to Coubertin about founding the new games?**

- A. that they be held in Paris, in time for the Exposition
- B. that the games would be held every four years
- C. that only amateur athletes be allowed to compete
- D. that ancient sports be included in the games

5. **As used in the passage, the word *flagging* most nearly means**

- A. increasing.
- B. dwindling.
- C. substantial.
- D. inappropriate.

6. **Answer the following question using complete sentences:**

Based on information in the passage, support or refute the following: Without the guidance and vision of Pierre de Coubertin, the Olympic Games would not have been re-established for the modern world.