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# Language Arts–Reading

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# Language Arts – Reading

## Directions

Time – 35 minutes

20 Questions

This is a test of some of the skills involved in understanding what you read. The passages in this test come from a variety of works, both literary and informational. Each passage is followed by a number of questions.

The passages begin with an introduction presenting information that may be helpful as you read the selection. After you have read a passage, go on to the questions that follow. For each question, choose the best answer, and mark your choice on the answer sheet. You may refer to a passage as often as necessary.

Work as quickly as you can without becoming careless. Do not spend too much time on any question that is difficult for you to answer. Instead, skip it and return to it later if you have time. Try to answer every question even if you have to guess.

Mark all your answers on the answer sheet. Give only one answer to each question.

If you decide to change one of your answers, be sure to erase the first mark completely.

Be sure that the number of the question you are answering matches the number of the row of answer choices you are marking on your answer sheet. The answer sheet may contain more rows than you need.

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Questions 1 – 6 refer to the following passage.

The next two passages are related. First you will read one passage and answer questions. Then you will read another passage and answer questions. Then you will answer questions related to both passages.

**Excerpt from “Do We Still Need Skyscrapers?”**

Our distant forebears could create remarkably tall structures by exploiting the compressive strength of stone and brick, but the masonry piles they constructed in this way contained little usable interior space.

At 146 meters (480 feet), the Great Pyramid of Cheops is a vivid expression of the ruler’s power, but inside it is mostly solid rock.

5 The Industrial Revolution eventually provided ways to open up the interiors of tall towers and put large numbers of people inside. Nineteenth-century architects found that they could achieve greatly improved ratios of open floor area to solid construction by using steel and reinforced concrete framing and thin curtain walls. And they could integrate increasingly sophisticated mechanical systems to heat, ventilate, and cool growing amounts of interior space. In the 1870s and 1880s, visionary New York and Chicago architects and engineers  
10 brought these elements together to produce the modern skyscraper.

These newfangled architectural contraptions found a ready market because they satisfied industrial capitalism’s growing need to bring armies of office workers together at locations where they could conveniently interact with one another, gain access to files and other work materials, and be supervised by their bosses. Furthermore, tall buildings fitted perfectly into the emerging pattern of the commuter city, with  
15 its high-density central business district, ring of low-density bedroom suburbs, and radial transportation systems for the daily return journey. This centralization drove up property values in the urban core and created a strong economic motivation to jam as much floor area as possible onto every available lot. So as the twentieth century unfolded, and cities such as New York and Chicago grew, downtown skylines sprouted higher while the suburbs spread wider.

20 But there were natural limits to this upward extension of skyscrapers. The higher you go, the more of the floor area must be occupied by structural supports. At some point, it becomes uneconomical to add additional floors; the diminishing increment of usable floor area does not justify the increasing increment of cost.

Urban planning and design considerations constrain height as well. Tall buildings have some unwelcome effects at ground level; they cast long shadows, blot out the sky, and sometimes create dangerous and  
25 unpleasant blasts of wind. And they generate pedestrian and automobile traffic that strains the capacity of surrounding streets. To control these effects, planning authorities typically impose limits on height and on the ratio of floor area to ground area.

The consequence of these various limits is that exceptionally tall buildings have always been expensive, rare, and conspicuous. So organizations can effectively draw attention to themselves and express their power and  
30 prestige by finding ways to construct the loftiest skyscrapers in town, in the nation, or maybe even in the world.

While this race has been running, though, the burgeoning Digital Revolution has been reducing the need to bring office workers together, face-to-face, in expensive downtown locations. Efficient telecommunications have diminished the importance of centrality and correspondingly increased the attractiveness of less  
35 expensive suburban sites that are more convenient to the labor force. Digital storage and computer networks have increasingly supported decentralized remote access to databases rather than reliance on centralized paper files. And businesses are discovering that their marketing and public-relations purposes may now be better served by slick World Wide Web pages on the Internet and Super Bowl advertising spots than by investments in monumental architecture on expensive urban sites.

Do We Still Need Skyscrapers? By William J. Mitchell. *Scientific American*, December 1997  
The third party trademark SUPER BOWL was used in these testing materials.

1

The passage suggests that an important factor in making skyscrapers possible in the late 1800s was

- A. innovation in mathematical formulas.
- B. better understanding of the compressive strength of stone and brick.
- C. the availability of improved construction materials and methods.
- D. the fact that large numbers of people were living in cities.

2

The passage indicates that after a certain point, as the height of a building increases, usable floor space in additional stories

- A. increases.
- B. decreases.
- C. needs fewer supports.
- D. is relatively inexpensive.

3

What is the meaning of “burgeoning” (line 32)?

- A. Growing
- B. Intriguing
- C. Influential
- D. Unexpected

4

What does the author view as the primary reason that skyscrapers are in less demand than they once were?

- A. Workers are increasingly unwilling to commute downtown.
- B. People are not as impressed by skyscrapers as they used to be.
- C. Communications technology now allows employees to work from any location.
- D. Relatively inexpensive land is now available in the suburbs.

5

According to the passage, why have skyscrapers become less effective advertising tools than they used to be?

- A. Companies cannot afford to build skyscrapers anymore.
- B. Skyscrapers are no longer symbols of wealth and power.
- C. It is not feasible to build anything taller than existing skyscrapers.
- D. Skyscrapers have less influence on people than TV and the Internet now do.

6

Which of the following best summarizes the general point the author makes in the last paragraph?

- A. The Internet has become an increasingly popular tool among businesses.
- B. Businesses should reevaluate their advertising strategies.
- C. Many of the needs skyscrapers once fulfilled for businesses are now being met by new technology.
- D. Businesses are no longer willing to construct enormous buildings on expensive city lots.

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Questions 7 and 8 refer to the following passage.

### Pencil Towers

Some newer buildings in New York City are remarkable not just for their height but also for their width — or lack thereof. Known as “skinnyscrapers,” or “pencil towers,” these buildings, already common in the crowded city of Hong Kong, are redefining Manhattan’s skyline with their thin profiles and dizzying altitudes.

5 The tallest pencil towers soar over 90 stories high but have a much smaller footprint than traditional skyscrapers, which stand wide at street level but narrow as they rise upward. Pencil towers are primarily residential and do not need to support thousands of workers pouring in and out each day. Because of this, pencil towers can be built with fewer elevator banks, more compact floor plans, and less complex systems for plumbing, heating, and cooling. Shrinking these features allows architects to reduce the buildings’ interior  
10 space requirements and simply build up, not out and around. This makes pencil towers a more attractive choice for developers when building where land is very expensive. These more slimly designed skyscrapers also cast thinner shadows and block less of the sun than their predecessors.

Pencil towers certainly have their critics, however. Many New Yorkers worry about the aesthetic impact of the buildings’ modern architecture and excessive height on the landscape of historic neighborhoods. The price  
15 of the pencil towers’ luxury residences has caused resentment as well. For example, apartments in the 96-story high-rise named 432 Park Avenue are among the most expensive in the world, selling for tens of millions of dollars. These homes are not accessible to most locals but are marketed mostly to the global ultra-rich, who may live in New York for only a few weeks a year. Regardless, because these new skyscrapers can offer panoramic views in prime locations, the tall, slender spires will likely keep rising above the skylines of  
20 major world cities for years to come.

7

Which building feature would most likely be included in the design of a pencil tower but would NOT be included in a traditional skyscraper?

- A. Elevator
- B. Swimming pool
- C. Lobby
- D. Air conditioning system

8

The last paragraph of the passage implies that some local residents see the pencil towers as symbols of

- A. economic growth.
- B. architectural creativity.
- C. financial inequality.
- D. environmental neglect.

9

**Use both the excerpt from “Do We Still Need Skyscrapers?” and “Pencil Towers” to answer this question.**

Which statement best represents a main idea found in both passages?

- A. There are structural limitations that restrict how high skyscrapers can reach.
- B. The cost associated with constructing tall buildings constantly increases.
- C. Skyscrapers are designed around the needs of their intended tenants.
- D. Newer building methods are superior to older construction techniques.

10

**Use both the excerpt from “Do We Still Need Skyscrapers?” and “Pencil Towers” to answer this question.**

Why would pencil towers likely experience less of the increased pedestrian and automobile traffic that occurs around traditional skyscrapers?

- A. Pencil towers have fewer occupants.
  - B. Pencil towers have less historical value.
  - C. Pencil towers are located in less-populated areas.
  - D. Pencil towers have more entrances and exits.
-

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Questions 11 – 15 refer to the following poem.

The following poem was written by Martín Espada.

*Who Burns for the Perfection of Paper*

At sixteen, I worked after high school hours  
at a printing plant  
that manufactured legal pads:  
*Line* Yellow paper  
5 stacked seven feet high  
and leaning  
as I slipped cardboard  
between the pages,  
then brushed red glue  
10 up and down the stack.  
No gloves: fingertips required  
for the perfection of paper,  
smoothing the exact rectangle.  
Sluggish by 9 P.M., the hands  
15 would slide along suddenly sharp paper,  
and gather slits thinner than the crevices  
of the skin, hidden.  
Then the glue would sting,  
hands oozing  
20 till both palms burned  
at the punchclock.  
  
Ten years later, in law school,  
I knew that every legal pad  
was glued with the sting of hidden cuts,  
25 that every open lawbook  
was a pair of hands  
upturned and burning.

Courtesy of Martín Espada

11

In lines 1-21, the speaker in the poem is primarily describing

- A. his current job.
- B. a job he had as a teenager.
- C. the challenges he faced in high school.
- D. the process of bookbinding.

12

The work the poem describes apparently requires

- A. speed.
- B. precision.
- C. accurate timing.
- D. technical training.

13

Which of the following is NOT among the themes this poem addresses?

- A. The little-known ordeals involved in the creation of ordinary objects
- B. The acknowledgment of the dignity of all kinds of work
- C. The contrast between the speaker's relationship to legal pads as a factory worker and as a law student
- D. The toll that after-school jobs take on the academic achievement of high-school students

14

Which of these does the speaker most strongly express at the end of the poem (lines 22-27)?

- A. Recognition of what workers have had to undergo to produce the articles he uses in his profession
- B. Regret that he has chosen a career that entails the use of legal pads
- C. Resentment about the working conditions he once had to bear
- D. Relief that he can now take legal pads for granted rather than suffer through the process of making them

15

In the last three lines, the comparison of an open lawbook to a pair of hands "upturned and burning" can be seen as suggesting all of the following ideas EXCEPT

- A. a passion for justice.
  - B. the hope that a system of laws can offer.
  - C. a gesture of resignation or giving up.
  - D. the physical hardships endured by production workers.
-

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Questions 16 – 20 refer to the following passage.

In this adaptation from the opening of a historical novel by Henry Carlisle, a seventeen-year-old boy is returning from his first voyage on a whaling ship after nineteen months at sea.

Excerpt from *The Jonah Man*

I was on board the *Eliza Slade*, returning to the Island on a blue, windy September afternoon in 1808; we had rounded Brant Point and the town came into view.

That day was a proud one for me. Not two hours before, Mr. Bench, the mate of the *Slade*, standing with  
Line Captain Clasby on the afterdeck, had called me over to them and the captain had growled, “Well, Pollard, I  
5 guess it’s back to the potato patch for you now. Eh?”

“No, sir,” I said.

“No, sir?” he said in mock surprise.

“I intend to ship on another whaling cruise.”

“Ship again! Did you hear what this young man just said, Mr. Bench?”

10 “Truly amazing.”

The captain shook his head in wonderment. “You mean to tell me, Pollard, that with all the trouble the whales have given you, not to mention Mr. Bench, that you actually want to go whaling again?”

“Yes, sir. I mean to spend my life at it.”

“Worse than I thought,” said Clasby. “Much worse.”

15 “Hopeless, I’d say,” said Mr. Bench.

Then the captain eyed me narrowly and said, “Well, then, in that case I guess I got no choice but to recommend you for boatsteerer your next voyage out. ’Course the say-so’ll be your next skipper’s and the owner’s, but they’ll have my view of the matter, and you can use it as you like.”

“Thank you, sir,” I told him. “Thank you very much.”

20 Captain Clasby studied me for a moment, then, still looking at me, said to the mate, “Reckon he’ll always think I’ve done him such a favor, Mr. Bench?”

At the time the captain’s question made no sense to me. As we neared our anchorage my gaze swept the town. I felt elated on this first homecoming, assured that I had acquitted myself creditably, and all that I could see ahead on that bright September afternoon was clear sailing.

25 My Uncle Hezekiah met me at the wharf, the news of the arrival of the *Eliza Slade* having not yet reached my family in Polpis, six miles upharbor from the town.

“How’s everyone in Polpis?”

“Same. ’Bout the same. How long you been out?”

“Nineteen months.”

30 “Be shipping again?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Your old man could use you handily on the farm.”

“Can’t help that.”

My uncle was right about the farm at Polpis. Everything was about the same there. Sheep bells tinkled.  
35 Chickens squawked. My mother greeted me as a ghost returned from the dead. My father was pleased to see me. My safe return had settled an argument in his favor.

“See, Tamar,” he said that evening, poking at the fire in the kitchen hearth. “He’s home in one piece. What about all them gloomy predictions?”

40 As if she hadn’t heard him, my mother looked at me and said, “Glad you’re home, son, and hope you’ll stay awhile. We need you here.”

My younger sister, Susan, was looking at me expectantly. I reached into my pocket and handed her a package. With delight she opened it and took out the amber necklace I had bought her in Valparaiso.

“It’s pretty,” she said and kissed me on the cheek.

“Pearls next time,” I told her.

45 My mother looked at my father. “Next time,” she said.

In the days that followed I helped with the last of the harvest, feeling that everyone was blind to the changes that had happened in me. They were still treating me as the Polpis farm boy I had been before I put to sea.

Everything was the same except me.

Excerpts from *The Jonah Man* © 1984 by Henry C. Carlisle. Used by permission of the Hill Nadell Literary Agency

16

What is the major source of young Pollard’s feeling of pride on the day the *Eliza Slade* returned to port?

- A. Seeing the family farm at Polpis in the distance
- B. The sight of his hometown after nineteen months away
- C. Relief that he had been able to survive the long, perilous voyage
- D. Learning that he had earned a recommendation for promotion

17

The exchange between Captain Clasby and Mr. Bench in lines 9-15 primarily reflects

- A. serious concern for a young man’s welfare.
- B. good-humored teasing of a young sailor.
- C. the sarcastic scorn of sailors for a farm boy.
- D. mean-spirited ridicule of an inexperienced shipmate.

This passage is reprinted here for your convenience in answering questions 18–20.

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18

Captain Clasby’s question in lines 20-21 seems to hint that later in the story

- A. the plot will be primarily a humorous one.
- B. a dark side to Clasby’s character will be revealed.
- C. Pollard will probably face tougher challenges at sea than he can imagine.
- D. the symbolic differences between life on land and at sea will be a main theme.

19

Which of these best describes how Captain Clasby is portrayed in this passage?

- A. Gruff but kind
- B. Competent but insensitive
- C. Casual and irresponsible
- D. Humorless and strict

20

Pollard’s mother had apparently predicted that he would

- A. not survive his voyage.
  - B. not come home for a visit.
  - C. not want to work the farm.
  - D. return home empty-handed.
- 



## Answer Key

<b>Sequence Number</b>	<b>Correct Response</b>	<b>Process Category</b>	<b>Question Difficulty</b>
1	C	D. Synthesis and Generalization	Medium
2	B	A. Comprehension	Medium
3	A	A. Comprehension	Medium
4	C	C. Analysis	Medium
5	D	A. Comprehension	Medium
6	C	C. Analysis	Medium
7	B	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
8	C	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
9	C	D. Synthesis and Generalization	Medium
10	A	D. Synthesis and Generalization	Medium
11	B	C. Analysis	Easy
12	B	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
13	D	C. Analysis	Medium
14	A	D. Synthesis and Generalization	Medium
15	C	C. Analysis	Medium
16	D	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
17	B	C. Analysis	Medium
18	C	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
19	A	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium
20	A	B. Inference and Interpretation	Medium



