Reading Comprehension

Directions  Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

After Twenty Years
O. Henry

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o’clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them had well nigh depopled the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye down the pacific thoroughfare, the officer, with his stalwart form and slight swagger, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of a cigar store or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

When about midway of a certain block the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store a man leaned, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him the man spoke up quickly.

“It’s all right, officer,” he said, reassuringly. “I’m just waiting for a friend. It’s an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn’t it? Well, I’ll explain if you’d like to make certain it’s all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands—‘Big Joe’ Brady’s restaurant.”

“Until five years ago,” said the policeman. “It was torn down then.”

The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarfpin was a large diamond, oddly set.

“Twenty years ago to-night,” said the man, “I dined here at ‘Big Joe’ Brady’s with Jimmy Wells, my best chum, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn’t have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be.”

“It sounds pretty interesting,” said the policeman. “Rather a long time
between meets, though, it seems to me. Haven’t you heard from your friend since you left?”

“Well, yes, for a time we corresponded,” said the other. “But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept hustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he’s alive, for he always was the truest, staunchest old chap in the world. He’ll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door to-night, and it’s worth it if my old partner turns up.”

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

“Three minutes to ten,” he announced. “It was exactly ten o’clock when we parted here at the restaurant door.”

“Did pretty well out West, didn’t you?” asked the policeman.

“You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good fellow as he was. I’ve had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him.”

The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two.

“I’ll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?”

“I should say not!” said the other. “I’ll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he’ll be here by that time. So long, officer.”

“Good-night, sir,” said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. And in the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, smoked his cigar and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

“Is that you, Bob?” he asked, doubtfully.

“Is that you, Jimmy Wells?” cried the man in the door.

“Bless my heart!” exclaimed the new arrival, grasping both the other’s hands with his own. “It’s Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I’d find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well!—twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant’s gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?”
“Bully; it has given me everything I asked it for. You’ve changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches.”

“Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty.”

“Doing well in New York, Jimmy?”

“Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we’ll go around to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times.”

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his egotism enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug store, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them turned simultaneously to gaze upon the other’s face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm.

“You’re not Jimmy Wells,” he snapped. “Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man’s nose from a Roman to a pug.”

“It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one,” said the tall man. “You’ve been under arrest for ten minutes, ‘Silky’ Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us she wants to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That’s sensible. Now, before we go to the station here’s a note I was to hand to you. You may read it here at the window. It’s from Patrolman Wells.”

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short.

Bob, I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn’t do it myself; so I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job.

Jimmy
COMPREHENSION

Directions Answer the following questions about “After Twenty Years.”

1. The setting of the story is best summarized as a
   A. street
   B. trail
   C. warehouse
   D. home

2. What mood does the description in lines 1–4 create?
   A. mysterious
   B. anxious
   C. depressing
   D. stressful

3. Which words in lines 5–8 suggest a respectful tone?
   A. many, turning
   B. artful, watchful
   C. form, slight
   D. made, picture

4. Look at the dialogue in lines 38–43. Who is speaking?
   A. “Silky” Bob
   B. the plain clothes officer
   C. Jimmy Wells
   D. the policeman

5. Summarize the police officer’s actions in lines 12–59. After he meets Bob he
   A. gets something to eat
   B. takes Bob to a restaurant
   C. arrests Bob
   D. continues patrolling

6. The dialogue in lines 69–75 changes the story’s mood from anticipating to
   A. thoughtful
   B. excited
   C. romantic
   D. silly

7. Look at the dialogue in lines 93–97. The character speaking is
   A. the restaurant owner
   B. the plain clothes officer
   C. “Silky” Bob
   D. Jimmy Wells

8. What is the author’s tone toward Bob in lines 83–94?
   A. sarcastic
   B. frightened
   C. nervous
   D. critical

Written Response

SHORT RESPONSE

Directions Write two or three sentences to answer each question.

9. Identify one of Bob’s character traits that the dialogue reveals. Give one example from “After Twenty Years” to support your response.

10. Clarify the ending of “After Twenty Years” by rephrasing the note that Jimmy wrote to Bob.

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Directions Answer the following question. Write two or more paragraphs.

11. Summarize “After Twenty Years.” Include details about the setting, the conflict, and the characters in your summary.
Reading Comprehension

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

Getups from Wouldn’t Take Nothing for My Journey Now
Maya Angelou

I was a twenty-one-year-old single parent with my son in kindergarten. Two jobs allowed me an apartment, food, and child care payment. Little money was left over for clothes, but I kept us nicely dressed in discoveries bought at the Salvation Army and other secondhand shops. Loving colors, I bought for myself beautiful reds and oranges, and greens and pinks, and teals and turquoise. I chose azure dresses and blouses and sweaters. And quite often I wore them in mixtures which brought surprise, to say the least, to the eyes of people who could not avoid noticing me. In fact, I concocted what southern black women used to call “getups.”

Because I was very keen that my son not feel that he was neglected or different, I went frequently to his school. Sometimes between my jobs I would just go and stand outside the fenced play area. And he would, I am happy to say, always come and acknowledge me in the colorful regalia. I always wore beads. Lots of beads. The cheaper they were, the more I got, and sometimes I wore head wraps.

When my son was six and I twenty-two, he told me quite solemnly that he had to talk to me. We both sat down at the kitchen table, and he asked with an old man’s eyes and a young boy’s voice, “Mother, do you have any sweaters that match?” I was puzzled at first. I said, “No,” and then I understood that he was talking about the pullover and cardigan sets which were popular with white women. And I said, “No, I don’t,” maybe a little huffily. And he said, “Oh, I wish you did. So that you could wear them to school when you come to see me.” I was tickled, but I’m glad I didn’t laugh because he continued, “Mother, could you please only come to school when they call you?” Then I realized that my attire, which delighted my heart and certainly activated my creativity, was an embarrassment to him.

When people are young, they desperately need to conform, and no one can embarrass a young person in public so much as an adult to whom he or she is related. Any outré action or wearing of “getups” can make a young person burn with self-consciousness.

I learned to be a little more discreet to avoid causing him displeasure. As he grew older and more confident, I gradually returned to what friends thought of as my eccentric way of dressing. I was happier when I chose and created my own fashion.
I have lived in this body all my life and I know it much better than any fashion designer. I think I know what looks good on me, and I certainly know what feels good in me.

I appreciate the creativity which is employed in the design of fabric and the design of clothes, and when something does fit my body and personality, I rush to it, buy it quickly, and wear it frequently. But I must not lie to myself for fashion’s sake. I am only willing to purchase the item which becomes me and to wear that which enhances my image of myself to myself.

If I am comfortable inside my skin, I have the ability to make other people comfortable inside their skins although their feelings are not my primary reason for making my fashion choice. If I feel good inside my skin and clothes, I am thus free to allow my body its sway, its natural grace, its natural gesture. Then I am so comfortable that whatever I wear looks good on me even to the external fashion arbiters.

Dress is important to mention because many people are imprisoned by powerful dictates on what is right and proper to wear. Those decisions made by others and sometimes at their convenience are not truly meant to make life better or finer or more graceful or more gracious. Many times they stem from greed, insensitivity, and the need for control.

I have been in company, not long to be sure, but in company where a purveyor of taste will look at a woman or a man who enters a room and will say with a sneer, “That was last year’s jacket.” As hastily as possible, I leave that company, but not before I record the snide attitude which has nothing to do with the beauty or effectiveness of the garment, but rather gives the speaker a moment’s sense of superiority at, of course, someone else’s expense.

Seek the fashion which truly fits and befits you. You will always be in fashion if you are true to yourself, and only if you are true to yourself. You might, of course, rightly wear that style which is emblazoned on the pages of the fashion magazines of the day, or you might not.

The statement, “Clothes make the man” should be looked at, reexamined, and in fact reevaluated. Clothes can make the man or woman look silly and foppish and foolish. Try rather to be so much yourself that the clothes you choose increase your naturalness and grace.

“Getups,” from Wouldn’t Take Nothing For My Journey Now by Maya Angelou, copyright © 1993 by Maya Angelou. Used by permission of Random House, Inc.
COMPREHENSION

Directions Answer the following questions about “Getups.”

1. Which of the following lines from the selection is a fact?
   A. “I was a twenty-one-year-old single parent with my son in kindergarten.”
   B. “I kept us nicely dressed in discoveries bought at the Salvation Army.”
   C. “When people are young, they desperately need to conform.”
   D. “You will always be in fashion if you are true to yourself.”

2. Monitor your understanding of lines 6–7. What does them refer to?
   A. beads
   B. clothes
   C. head wraps
   D. shoes

3. Which type of style does the sentence structure in lines 10–15 reveal?
   A. journalistic
   B. conversational
   C. objective
   D. poetic

4. Which type of style does the word choice of “lots” and “got” in lines 14–15 reveal?
   A. informal
   B. persuasive
   C. scientific
   D. flowery

5. Which words in lines 21–26 best suggest a sincere tone?
   A. wear, school
   B. come, see
   C. realized, embarrassment
   D. continued, only

6. Clarify your understanding by rephrasing lines 31–34. The author
   A. wore clothes that her friends liked
   B. kept her clothes secret from her son
   C. borrowed clothes from her friends
   D. changed her style of dress for her son

7. Which words in lines 35–37 best show that the author is giving an opinion?
   A. fashion designer
   B. I think
   C. this body
   D. have lived

8. What is the author’s tone in lines 60–63?
   A. joking
   B. confident
   C. happy
   D. gentle
Written Response

SHORT RESPONSE
Directions  Write two or three sentences to answer each question on a separate sheet of paper.

9. What are two examples of the author’s word choice in “Getups” that help create an upbeat mood?

10. Identify two opinions from “Getups.”

EXTENDED RESPONSE
Directions  Answer the following question. Write two or more paragraphs on a separate sheet of paper.

11. What kind of style does the author use, based on the imagery and word choice in “Getups”? Give three examples from the selection to support your response.
Vocabulary

Directions: Use context clues, your knowledge of synonyms, and a dictionary or thesaurus to answer the following questions.

1. Which word is a synonym for spectators in line 2 of “After Twenty Years”?
   A. tourists  
   B. observers  
   C. pedestrians  
   D. customers

2. Which word is a synonym for vicinity in line 8 of “After Twenty Years”?
   A. building  
   B. neighborhood  
   C. department  
   D. state

3. Which word is a synonym for keen in line 23 of “After Twenty Years”?
   A. eager  
   B. closed  
   C. blue  
   D. tired

4. Which word is a synonym for solemnly in lines 16 of “Getups”?
   A. tiredly  
   B. angrily  
   C. immediately  
   D. seriously

5. Which word is a synonym for attire in line 25 of “Getups”?
   A. clothing  
   B. vehicle  
   C. house  
   D. painting

6. Which word is a synonym for eccentric in lines 33 of “Getups”?
   A. childish  
   B. casual  
   C. unusual  
   D. fashionable
Revising and Editing

Directions  Read the response to literature and answer the questions that follow.

(1) Consider a time when you faced a difficult situation. (2) Did you go through it on your own, or did someone help you? (3) In Virginia Hamilton’s “the People Could Fly,” Sarah, Toby, and other unnamed characters experience the hardships of slavery. (4) Through the characters’ actions, the author reveals the importance of working together during hard times.

(5) Early in the story, the narrator explains that Sarah works in the field with her baby tied to her back. (6) Crying loudly, the Driver cracks his whip across the baby. (7) Sarah and the baby fall to the ground. (8) Toby goes over to help Sarah up. (9) Sarah and Toby decide that it is almost time for Sarah to fly away. (10) The Driver cracks his whip around Sarah’s legs, and she falls to the ground a second time. (11) The narrator says, “Toby was there where there was no one to help her and the babe.” (12) Toby helps Sarah a second time. (13) This time Toby says the magic words so Sarah can fly away. (14) Sarah would not have been able to escape without Toby’s help.

(15) Later in the story, Toby helps other slaves escape from the field. (16) The narrator says that when slaves fell from the extreme heat, “Toby was there.” (17) Whispering the magic words to the slaves, they fly away to freedom. (18) At the end of the story, Toby, with a large group of slaves, fly away. (19) The narrator says, “And the old man, old Toby, flew behind them, takin’ care of them.” (20) The freedom of the slaves depend on Toby’s willingness to help.

(21) The characters’ actions in Hamilton’s “The People Could Fly” reveal the importance of working together during hard times. (22) The characters’ support for each other and their ability to work together allow them to escape the bonds of slavery. (23) The author’s message of working together is an important message for anyone in an especially difficult situation. (24) It is important to have a group of people who support you when times are challenging.
1. Which tone does the writer use to achieve his or her purpose?
   A. serious  
   B. bitter  
   C. nervous  
   D. modest

2. Which sentence identifies the title and author of the story?
   A. sentence 1  
   B. sentence 2  
   C. sentence 3  
   D. sentence 4

3. To correct the capitalization error in sentence 3, change “the People Could Fly” to
   A. “the People could Fly”  
   B. “The People Could Fly”  
   C. “the people Could Fly”  
   D. “the People Could fly”

4. Which sentence contains the writer’s thesis statement?
   A. sentence 2  
   B. sentence 4  
   C. sentence 6  
   D. sentence 8

5. Which is the best correction of the dangling participle in sentence 6?
   A. The baby, crying loudly, cracks his whip across the Driver.
   B. The Driver, crying loudly, cracks his whip across the baby.
   C. The Driver cracks his whip across the loudly crying baby.
   D. Crying loudly, the whip of the Driver cracks across the baby.

6. Which element does the writer use in sentence 11 to support the key idea of people working together during hard times?
   A. conclusion  
   B. quotation  
   C. tone  
   D. metaphor

7. Which sentence provides plot details that help you understand the interpretation of the story?
   A. sentence 1  
   B. sentence 6  
   C. sentence 14  
   D. sentence 21

8. To correct the dangling participle in sentence 17, change “Whispering the magic words to the slaves,” to
   A. By whispering the magic words to the slaves,  
   B. Having whispered the magic words to the slaves,  
   C. After whispering the magic words to the slaves,  
   D. He whispers the magic words to the slaves, and

9. To correct subject-verb agreement around the prepositional phrase in sentence 18, change “fly away” to
   A. flies away  
   B. flying away  
   C. flied away  
   D. fly away (no change needed)

10. To correct subject-verb agreement around the prepositional phrase in sentence 20, change “The freedom of the slaves depend” to
   A. The freedom of the slave depend  
   B. The freedom of the slaves depending  
   C. The freedom of the slaves depends  
   D. The freedoms of the slave depends

11. To correct the capitalization error in sentence 21,  
    A. lowercase *The* in “The People Could Fly”  
    B. capitalize hamilton’s  
    C. lowercase *Could* in “The People Could Fly”  
    D. capitalize characters’

12. Which tone did the writer select because it is appropriate for the purpose of arguing a viewpoint?
    A. gentle  
    B. formal  
    C. amused  
    D. silly
Writing

Directions  Read the following quotation. Then read the prompt that follows and complete the writing activity.

“All meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation.”

George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)

Prompt: Write a response to literature that examines the conflict that Patrolman Wells faces. As the quote suggests, use your interpretation to find meaning in the story. Use details from the story to support your response.

Now write your response to literature. The following reminders will help you.

Reminders

• Be sure your writing does what the prompt asks.
• Include a thesis statement that identifies the key points of the essay.
• Summarize the interpretation in a conclusion and tell why the story is interesting or important.
• Provide evidence from the text, such as details or quotations.
• Check for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.