

**Nonfiction Reading Comprehension**

**Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer back to the passage as often as needed.**

<sup>1</sup> Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926 in Monroeville Alabama, a city of about 7,000 people in Monroe County. Monroeville is in southwest Alabama, about halfway between Montgomery and Mobile.

<sup>2</sup> She is the youngest of four children of her father, Amasa Coleman Lee, and her mother, Frances Finch Lee. Harper Lee attended Huntington College 1944-45, studied law at the University of Alabama 1945-49, and studied one year at Oxford University. In the 1950s she worked as a reservation clerk with Eastern Air Lines and BOAC in New York City.

<sup>3</sup> In order to concentrate on writing, Harper Lee gave up her position with the airline and moved into a cold-water apartment with makeshift furniture. Her father's sudden illness forced her to divide her time between New York and Monroeville, a practice she has continued.

<sup>4</sup> In 1957 Miss Lee submitted the manuscript of her novel to the J. B. Lippincott Company. She was told that her novel consisted of a series of short stories strung together, and she was urged to rewrite it. For the next two and a half years she reworked the manuscript with the help of her editor, Tay Hohoff, and in 1960 *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* was published, her only published book. In 1961 she had two articles published: "Love - In Other Words" in *Vogue*, and "Christmas To Me" in *McCall's*. "Christmas To Me" is the story of Harper Lee receiving the gift of a year's time for writing from friends. "When Children Discover America" was published in *McCall's* in 1965.

<sup>5</sup> In June of 1966, Harper Lee was one of two people named by President Johnson to the National Council of Arts. Also named to the 26 member council was artist Richard Diebenkorn Jr.

<sup>6</sup> There has not been as much published on the doings of Miss Lee since 1966.

1. What is the genre of this passage?
  - a. Argumentative
  - b. Informational
  - c. Persuasive
  - d. Narrative
  
2. By reading the article, one can determine that Harper Lee's idea for the last name of Atticus, Jem, and Scout came from her...
  - a. publisher
  - b. siblings
  - c. mother
  - d. uncle
  
3. Why was *TKAM* not published in 1957?
  - a. Harper Lee had to take care of her sick father
  - b. It was rejected by the publishing company.
  - c. It was published in 1957
  - d. Her publisher thought it best to wait several years to allow racial tensions to pass.
  
4. This excerpt is a(n)...
  - a. autobiography
  - b. biography
  - c. memoir
  - d. short story
  
5. What is the author's purpose for writing this excerpt?
  - a. to share entertaining stories of Harper Lee's life
  - b. to inform you of the early life experiences of author, Harper Lee
  - c. to inform you that Harper Lee enjoyed and celebrated the attention that came with the publication of her first novel.
  - d. to tell you opinions about *To Kill a Mockingbird*

## Close Reading/Comprehension

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer back to the passage as often as needed.

### COPPER KETTLE SWEETHEART by Madelyn Eastlund

Some folks on the ridge thought my Papa called my Ma his “copper kettle sweetheart” because her hair had both the color and sheen of the dented and well-polished old kettle that Papa kept hung from a hook in the kitchen. They laughed that Papa named her so.

When ladies met for quilting, they would tease Ma and ask, “Don’t you mind that he calls you that name instead of pretty words?” But Ma always answered that she was suited to that name.

My sister and seven brothers and I sat beside Papa in the evening, like steps on the porch—and we listened to him play a lively tune on his mouth harp or fiddle. But mostly we liked when he told us tales of when he was a boy. He’d point his pipe up at the copper kettle. Ma would say, “Not again, Jeb,” but she’d poke her needle pleased-like into her quilt block. I could see by the fire’s glow that her face flushed a pretty pink.

Papa would tell about the time he and his Pa were sent into the cellar by his Ma to bring up some potatoes for her stew. “They were piled way back in a dark corner. And darned if them spuds hadn’t poked new roots into the dirt floor. Sure a puzzlement! Things just don’t grow in total dark! Then my Pa noticed the kettle his mama kept polished.”

Our eyes would go round and we all oohed in surprise, although we knew the story well:

Papa would explain that in that dark cellar, a slim beam of afternoon sun came through the coal chute, “just about kissing the kettle,” he’d say. “That kettle just being there and so highly polished, just couldn’t help reflect the light that touched right into that dark corner, and the spuds couldn’t help but be warmed and set down their roots.”

He always ended, “We need a copper kettle in our lives—don’t never forget. Your Ma, she’s my shining copper kettle.”

6. Which of the following statements is true based on the passage?
- The narrator is in the story
  - The narrator is the mother
  - The narrator is outside the story
  - The narrator is the father
7. Which point of view is used in the passage?
- 1<sup>st</sup> person point of view
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> person point of view
  - Ma’s point of view
8. Why did Papa call Ma his “copper kettle sweetheart”?
- Her hair is the color of copper.
  - She gave him the kettle when they were married.
  - She lights and warms his life by reflecting light like the copper kettle reflected sunlight in a dark cellar.
  - She reminds him of the kettle that his mother owned.
9. What does the mother mean in the following sentence when she says she was “suited to the name”?
- “When ladies met for quilting they would tease Ma and ask, “Don’t you mind that he calls you that name instead of pretty words?” But Ma always answered she was suited to that name.”
- Ma did not like being asked about her nickname.
  - Ma was usually dressed up.
  - Ma thought her nickname was puzzling.
  - Ma found her nickname to be fitting.
10. Which phrase best characterizes/describes the narrator’s father?
- considerate but stern
  - energetic and impatient
  - honest but unimaginative
  - affectionate and entertaining
11. Which trait does the narrator seem to have inherited from her father?
- a natural talent for making music
  - a fondness for remembering the past
  - a habit of nicknaming family members
  - a tendency toward obvious exaggeration

## Close Reading: Short Story

Directions: Read the passage from the following short stories, and select the best answer for each question that follows.

### Excerpt from “The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell

“Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?”

12. Which word best describes the mood (which is created by the diction) in this excerpt?
- a. gloomy                                      b. relaxed                                      c. suspenseful                                      d. happy
13. What does the underlined portion of the passage reveal about General Zaroff?
- a. He likes a good cigar.                                      c. He is toying with Rainsford.  
b. He is confused about where Rainsford is hiding.                                      d. His smile is one of surrender because he's lost.
14. Based on the context of the passage, what does the word **uncanny** most likely mean?
- a. related to the sense of smell                                      c. weak  
b. out in the open                                      d. unnatural or strange
15. At the end of “The Most Dangerous Game,” the reader is left guessing about what exactly happens in Zaroff's room after Rainsford surprisingly appears from behind the curtain. We abruptly learn that Rainsford “had never slept in a better bed.” Which plot element has basically been left out?
- a. rising action                                      b. climax                                      c. falling action                                      d. resolution
16. Though we do not know if Rainsford gives up hunting at the end of the story, we can assume that his feelings regarding hunting have changed. This makes him a/an \_\_\_\_\_ character.
- a. static                                      b. dynamic                                      c. flat                                      d. dramatic

### Excerpt from “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst

“It was in the clove of seasons, summer was dead but autumn had not yet been born, that the ibis lit in the bleeding tree. The flower garden was stained with rotting brown magnolia petals and ironweeds grew rank amid the purple phlox. The five o'clocks by the chimney still marked time, but the oriole nest in the elm was untenanted and rocked back and forth like an empty cradle. The last graveyard flowers were blooming, and their smell drifted across the cotton field and through every room of our house, speaking softly the names of our dead. It's strange that all this is still so clear to me, now that that summer has since fled and time has had its way. A grindstone stands where the bleeding tree stood, just outside the kitchen door, and now if an oriole sings in the elm, its song seems to die up in the leaves, a silvery dust.

But sometimes (like right now), as I sit in the cool, green-draped parlor, the grindstone begins to turn, and time with all its changes is ground away--and I remember Doodle.”

17. Much of the imagery in this passage relates to \_\_\_\_\_ and is a type of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- a. nature . . . theme                                      c. love . . . narrator  
b. birds . . . symbolism                                      d. death and decay . . . foreshadowing
18. The diction of this passage creates a tone that is best described as
- a. nostalgic, longing for the good old days                                      c. awkward and tense  
b. reflective and sad                                      d. relaxed
19. Which type of figurative language is used in the underlined portion of the text above?

- a. simile    b. metaphor    c. personification    d. onomatopoeia

20. Based on the context, the word **untenanted** means  
a. falling apart    b. deserted    c. newly built    d. precariously positioned

### **Fiction Reading Comprehension**

**Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer back to the passage as often as needed.**

#### **Excerpt from *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum**

Dorothy lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies, with Uncle Henry, who was a farmer, and Aunt Em, who was the farmer's wife. Their house was small, for the lumber to build it had to be carried by wagon many miles. There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cookstove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em had a big bed in one corner, and Dorothy a little bed in another corner. There was no garret at all, and no cellar -- except a small hole dug in the ground, called a cyclone cellar, where the family could go in case one of those great whirlwinds arose, mighty enough to crush any building in its path. It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole.

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.

When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young, pretty wife. The sun and wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober gray; they had taken the red from her cheeks and lips, and they were gray also. When Dorothy, who was an orphan, first came to her, Aunt Em had been so startled by the child's laughter that she would scream and press her hand upon her heart whenever Dorothy's merry voice reached her ears; and she still looked at the little girl with wonder that she could find anything to laugh at.

Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke.

It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him and loved him dearly.

Today, however, they were not playing. Uncle Henry sat upon the doorstep and looked anxiously at the sky, which was even grayer than usual. Dorothy stood in the door with Toto in her arms, and looked at the sky too. Aunt Em was washing the dishes.

From the far north they heard a low wail of the wind, and Uncle Henry and Dorothy could see where the long grass bowed in waves before the coming storm. There now came a sharp whistling in the air from the south, and as they turned their eyes that way they saw ripples in the grass coming from that direction also.

Suddenly Uncle Henry stood up.

"There's a cyclone coming, Em," he called to his wife. "I'll go look after the stock." Then he ran toward the sheds where the cows and horses were kept.

Aunt Em dropped her work and came to the door. One glance told her of the danger close at hand.

"Quick, Dorothy!" she screamed. "Run for the cellar!"

21. What is NOT revealed in the exposition of the above story?
- the family lives on a farm
  - the family does not have adequate protection to survive a tornado
  - the family lives on the prairies of Kansas
  - the family is wealthy

22. In which POINT OF VIEW is this story told?  
 a. 1st person POV                      b. 2<sup>nd</sup> person POV                      c. 3rd person POV
23. What is the MAIN CONFLICT in the story?  
 a. Man vs. Self                                      c. Man vs. Nature  
 b. Man vs. Society                                      d. Man vs. Man
24. Which of the following sentences does not contribute to the SETTING of the story?  
 a. "Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was."  
 b. "There were four walls, a floor and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty looking cook stove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds."  
 c. "It was reached by a trap door in the middle of the floor, from which a ladder led down into the small, dark hole."  
 d. "When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side."
25. Based on the context of the following sentence, a synonym for the word solemn is

"Uncle Henry never laughed. He worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was gray also, from his long beard to his rough boots, and he looked stern and solemn, and rarely spoke."

- a. Serious                      b. Aged                      c. Small                      d. Religious
26. Dorothy can best be described as  
 a. Playful and Gray                      b. Playful but Angry                      c. Playful but Sad                      d. Playful and Happy

**Excerpt from "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst**  
<sup>1</sup>As soon as I had finished eating, Doodle and I hurried off to Horsehead Landing. It was time for a swimming lesson, but Doodle said he was too tired. When we reached Horsehead landing, lightning was flashing across half the sky, and thunder was drowning out the sound of the sea.  
<sup>2</sup>Doodle was both **fatigued** and frightened. He slipped on the mud and fell. I helped him up, and he smiled at me ashamedly. He had failed and we both knew it. He would never be like the other boys at school.  
<sup>3</sup>We started home, trying to beat the storm. The lightning was near now. The faster I walked, the faster he walked, so I began to run.  
<sup>4</sup>The rain came, roaring through the pines. And then, like a bursting Roman candle, a gum tree ahead of us was shattered by a bolt of lightning. When the deafening thunder had died, I heard Doodle cry out, "Brother, Brother, don't leave me! Don't leave me!"  
<sup>5</sup>The knowledge that our plans had come to nothing was bitter, and that streak of cruelty within me awakened. I ran as fast as I could, leaving him far behind with a wall of rain dividing us. Soon I could hear his voice no more.

27. Which of the following is not a characteristic of Doodle?  
 a. Ashamed                      b. Frightened                      c. Cruel                      d. Tired
28. What is the SETTING of the story?  
 a. A quiet place somewhere near the sea                      c. The mountains  
 b. A swimming pool behind the family home                      d. The beach
29. Which THEME best fits the passage?  
 a. Some people act cruelly when angry or disappointed.                      c. Doodle falls on the mud and is helped up.  
 b. Two brothers are racing home to avoid the storm                      d. Don't go outside during a rainstorm.
30. Which of the following literary devices is included in paragraph 4?  
 a. Simile                      b. Metaphor                      c. Alliteration                      d. Allusion
31. The word **fatigued** in paragraph 2, most likely means  
 a. Dressed in khakis                      b. Exhausted                      c. Angry                      d. In Pain
32. The passage above best represents the \_\_\_\_\_ of a story.  
 a. Exposition

- b. Climax
- c. Falling Action
- d. Resolution

### **Fiction Reading Comprehension**

**Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer back to the passage as often as needed.**

**Directions:** Read and refer back to the passage below to answer questions 1-10

<sup>1</sup> Dill left us early in September, to return to Meridian. We saw him off on the five o'clock bus and I was miserable without him until it occurred to me that I would be starting to school in a week. I never looked forward more to anything in my life. Hours of wintertime had found me in the tree house, looking over at the schoolyard, spying on multitudes of children through a two-power telescope Jem had given me, learning their games, following Jem's red jacket through wriggling circles of blind man's bluff, secretly sharing their misfortunes and minor victories. I longed to join them.

<sup>2</sup> Jem condescended to take me to school the first day, a job usually done by one's parents, but Atticus had said Jem would be delighted to show me where my room was. I think some money changed hands in this transaction, for as we trotted around the corner past the Radley Place I heard an unfamiliar jingle in Jem's pockets. When we slowed to a walk at the edge of the schoolyard, Jem was careful to explain that during school hours I was not to bother him, I was not to approach him with requests to enact a chapter of Tarzan and the Ant Men, to embarrass him with references to his private life, or tag along behind him at recess and noon. I was to stick with the first grade and he would stick with the fifth. In short, I was to leave him alone.

<sup>3</sup> "You mean we can't play anymore?" I asked.

<sup>4</sup> "We'll do like we always do at home," he said, "but you'll see-school's different."

<sup>5</sup> It certainly was. Before the first morning was over, Miss Caroline Fisher, our teacher, hauled me up to the front of the room and patted the palm of my hand with a ruler, then made me stand in the corner until noon.

<sup>6</sup> Miss Caroline was no more than twenty-one. She had bright auburn hair, pink cheeks, and wore crimson fingernail polish. She also wore high-heeled pumps and a red-and-white-striped dress. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop. She boarded across the street one door down from us in Miss Maudie Atkinson's upstairs front room, and when Miss Maudie introduced us to her, Jem was in a haze for days.

<sup>7</sup> Miss Caroline printed her name on the blackboard and said, "This says I am Miss Caroline Fisher. I am from North Alabama, from Winston County." The class murmured apprehensively, should she prove to harbor her share of the peculiarities indigenous to that region. (When Alabama seceded from the Union on January 11, 1861, Winston County seceded from Alabama, and every child in Maycomb County knew it.) North Alabama was full of Liquor Interests, Big Mules, steel companies, Republicans, professors, and other persons of no background.

<sup>8</sup> Miss Caroline began the day by reading us a story about cats. The cats had long conversations with one another; they wore cunning little clothes and lived in a warm house beneath a kitchen stove. By the time Mrs. Cat called the drugstore for an order of chocolate malted mice the class was wriggling like a bucketful of Catawba worms. Miss Caroline seemed unaware that the ragged, denim-shirted and flour sack-skirted first grade, most of whom had chopped cotton and fed hogs from the time they were able to walk, were immune to imaginative literature. Miss Caroline came to the end of the story and said, "Oh, my, wasn't that nice?"

<sup>9</sup> Then she went to the blackboard and printed the alphabet in enormous square capitals, turned to the class and asked, "Does anybody know what these are?"

<sup>10</sup> Everybody did; most of the first grade had failed it last year.

<sup>11</sup> I suppose she chose me because she knew my name; as I read the alphabet a faint line appeared between her eyebrows, and after making me read most of My First Reader and the stock-market quotations from The Mobile Register aloud, she discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me anymore, it would interfere with my reading.

<sup>12</sup> "Teach me?" I said in surprise. "He hasn't taught me anything, Miss Caroline. Atticus ain't got time to teach me anything," I added, when Miss Caroline smiled and shook her head. "Why, he's so tired at night he just sits in the living room and reads."

<sup>13</sup> "If he didn't teach you, who did?" Miss Caroline asked good-naturedly. "Somebody did. You weren't born reading The Mobile Register."

<sup>14</sup> "Jem says I was. He read in a book where I was a Bullfinch instead of a Finch. Jem says my name's really Jean Louise Bullfinch, that I got swapped when I was born and I'm really a--"

<sup>15</sup> Miss Caroline apparently thought I was lying. "Let's not let our imaginations run away with us, dear," she said. "Now you tell your father not to teach you anymore. It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind. You tell him I'll take over from here and try to undo the damage --."

<sup>16</sup> "Ma'am?"

<sup>17</sup> "Your father does not know how to teach. You can have a seat now."

<sup>18</sup> I mumbled that I was sorry and retired, meditating upon my crime. I never deliberately learned to read, but somehow I had been wallowing illicitly in the daily papers. In the long hours of church--was it then I learned? I could not remember not being able to read hymns. Now that I was compelled to think about it, reading was something that just came to me, as learning to fasten the seat of my union suit without looking around, or achieving two bows from a snarl of shoelaces. I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day, Bills To Be Enacted into Laws, The Diaries of Lorenzo Dow--anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night. Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing.

<sup>19</sup> I knew I had annoyed Miss Caroline, so I let well enough alone and stared out the window until recess when Jem cut me from the covey of first-graders in the schoolyard. He asked how I was getting along. I told him.

<sup>20</sup> "If I didn't have to stay I'd leave. Jem, that damn lady says Atticus's been teaching me to read and for him to stop it--"

<sup>21</sup> "Don't worry, Scout," Jem comforted me. "Our teacher says Miss Caroline's introducing a new way of teaching. She learned about it in college. It'll be in all the grades soon. You don't have to learn much out of books that way --it's like if you wanta learn about cows, you go milk one, see?"

<sup>22</sup> "Yeah Jem, but I don't wanta study cows, I--"

<sup>23</sup> "Sure you do. You hafta know about cows, they're a big part of life in Maycomb County."

<sup>24</sup> I contented myself with asking Jem if he'd lost his mind.

<sup>25</sup> "I'm just trying to tell you the new way they're teachin' the first grade, stubborn. It's the Dewey Decimal System."

**33. What are Scout's feelings about starting school?**

- She is excited because she has been waiting to start school for a long time.
- She is scared because she already knows how to read and write.
- She is angry because now she won't be able to play with Jem anymore.
- She is stressed because she doesn't know how she will survive a whole year without Dill.

**34. From the jingle that Scout hears in Jem's pockets, a reader can conclude that --**

- Atticus thinks Jem is more responsible than Scout.
- Jem received some coins from Atticus for walking to school with Scout.
- Jem and Scout need money for school supplies.
- Atticus wants Jem to buy something at the store.

**35. In paragraph 8, what does the author show by comparing the class to a bucket of wriggling Catawba worms?**

- The students are full of energy.
- The students have become restless and bored.
- The classroom is very small and the students need more space.

- d. The students are disrespectful in class.

**36. What does the following line from paragraph 6 suggest?**

*When Miss Maudie introduced us to her [Miss. Caroline], Jem was in a haze for days.*

- a. Jem has a crush on a girl in his class.
- b. Jem cannot believe that Miss Maudie is allowing Miss Caroline to live in her home.
- c. Jem falls sick after playing in the hot sun for too long.
- d. Jem has a crush on Miss Caroline.

**37. In Scout's statement in paragraph 5, "Miss Caroline hauled me up to the front of the room," the word hauled suggests that Miss Caroline moved Scout –**

- a. Gently
- b. Roughly
- c. Sadly
- d. Slowly

**38. What is the prevailing (main) MOOD in paragraph 18?**

- a. Anger
- b. Confusion
- c. Grief
- d. Joy

**39. In paragraph 11, what is the first indication that Miss Caroline is upset with Scout?**

- a. Scout is asked to read from My First Reader
- b. Miss Caroline tells Scout to tell her father not to teach her anymore
- c. A faint line appears between Miss Caroline's eyebrows.
- d. Miss Caroline chooses Scout to read the alphabet.

**40. Which of the following is NOT an example of (direct) characterization of Ms. Caroline?**

- a. She was no more than twenty-one.
- b. She had bright auburn hair, pink cheeks, and wore crimson fingernail polish.
- c. She looked and smelled like a peppermint drop.
- d. The ragged denim shirted and flour sack-skirted 1st grade.