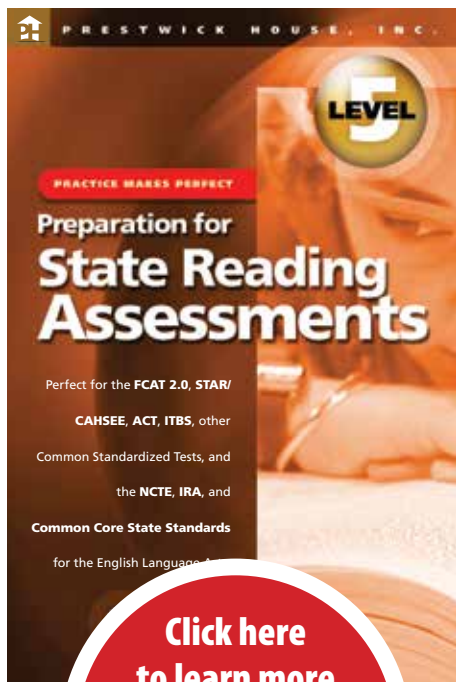




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Preparation for State Reading Assessments

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How to Take a Reading Comprehension Test

Taking a reading comprehension test does not have to be stressful. The following tips and methods can help you better understand how to answer the questions correctly.

FOCUS:

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

- main idea
- author's attitude toward the subject
- author's purpose

Many questions want to see if you know what the author is trying to say and why he or she is saying it. Think about whether the author has an opinion on the topic: Does he or she agree or disagree with the subject of the passage? Or, does the author give you just the facts? What clues show the author's attitude?

While you read, think about the following:

- What is the subject of the passage?
- What information is important?
- What questions might you write about the passage?

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

TIPS:

To find an author's attitude about the subject, look for words that show opinion, such as *sadly*, *horrible*, *surprisingly*, *amazing*, etc. Words like these show an author's views on the subject of the passage. Simple words tell you a lot about the author's feelings. Some of the articles in this book contain only facts, but some show the author's beliefs. It's up to you to see the difference.

Often, you have to identify the main idea in a passage. These types of questions do not always ask, "What is the main idea?" They may ask for the best title for the passage or what the author would most likely agree or disagree with. Pick the answer that is true for most of the passage.

You will also see questions that ask for the definition of a word. These questions check to see if you can find a word's meaning by looking at how it is used in a sentence. Sometimes, it might seem like there's more than one right

answer, but rereading the section with the vocabulary word in it will help you make the best choice.

For the last question of each section, you will need to write two-to-four sentences. Be sure to include a few details from the passage.

If you can't decide on the answer, skip the question, and come back to it after you have answered the rest of the questions for that passage. You may even find the answer when you are working on other questions. If you still can't answer it, make your best guess and move on.

Some people suggest reading the questions before you read the passage so that you know what information you will need. If this works for you—terrific! For many people, however, this takes too much time. They can't focus on what they read. You should use whatever method you're comfortable with.

REMEMBER THESE THREE IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. Read the passage and answer the questions carefully!

Look for tricky words such as *not*, *always*, *true*, *opposite*, etc., because these words will help you find the correct answer to the question.

2. If you can't remember what you read, go through the passage again!

3. Always read all the possible answers!

Even if you think you've found the right answer, you might miss the correct one if you don't read them all.

sound of the hammer hitting the spike would then travel across the U.S. through the telegraph line. Leland Stanford was given the first swing, but he missed the spike and hit the wooden tie. Thomas Durant, vice-president of the Union Pacific Railroad, swung at the spike, but missed completely. In the end, a railroad employee hammered in the final tie,¹⁰ and the telegraph operator sent the message to the country: “D-O-N-E.”

¹⁰That is funny—after all of the problems, the important people who were supposed to hammer the spike could not do it.

¹¹That is funny, too. I cannot believe no one showed up. It seems as if no one cared.

It’s no surprise that when the 50th anniversary celebration was held, not one person showed up. Maybe they all went to Promontory Point.

1. Which of the following best states the author’s purpose?

- A. to make fun of the Transcontinental Railroad
- B. to tell a true story of an important event in U.S. railroad history
- C. to explain the importance of the Golden Spike
- D. to show how history books sometimes have incorrect information

(B) *The author correctly describes the confusion and problems surrounding the “Wedding of the Rails” celebration. The other choices just support the main point of the passage.*

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

- A. The Golden Spike Disaster
- B. Where the Railroads Meet
- C. Leland Stanford’s Spike
- D. The Wedding of the Rails

(D) *The passage is about the whole “Wedding of the Rails” ceremony. The ceremony’s title is mentioned twice in the passage, making it important information that works as the title. Although the event had many problems, it was not a “disaster,” (A). Finally, the passage does not focus just on Leland Stanford’s spike or where the event occurred, (C, B).*

3. Which of the following did NOT add to the confusion on May 10, 1869?

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

(A) *The article does not say that the telegraph operator made any errors. The bad weather delayed officials, (B). David Hewes had to donate his own gold for the spike due to the last-minute planning, (C). Uncertainty about the location led to incorrect information, (D).*

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

- A. left.
- B. met.
- C. planned.
- D. paid.

(B) *The passage is about joining the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific railroads, so the two officials would be traveling to the same location to meet for the event. The ceremony was already planned, (C), and there is no mention of the men paying for their trip, (D). Choice (A) is incorrect because the men were arriving for the celebration, not leaving.*

5. Based on the information in the passage, why do you think David Hewes used his own gold to make the Golden Spike?

- A. He was angry that no one would help him.
- B. He wanted to become famous for his part in the celebration.
- C. He could find no one willing to pay for or donate the gold.
- D. He had too much gold, so he could afford to donate some of it.

(C) *Hewes tried to find someone to pay for a gold rail, but was unsuccessful, so he had to use his own gold. Since Hewes looked for someone to pay for the rail, it's clear that he did not have more gold than he needed, (D). The article doesn't mention that he was looking for fame, (B). Finally, the passage states that he was upset that nothing was made to honor the event, not that he was angry about finding no one willing to help, (A).*

6. Answer the following question using complete sentences:

Why does the author call the “Wedding of the Rails” a “comedy of errors”?

The event is funny because it was a major celebration of the uniting of the railroads in the United States, and everything that could go wrong did: Railroad officials arrived late because of unhappy employees and bad weather; the Golden Spike was not even hammered in; a railroad employee, not any of the officials, completed the actual connection of the rails. Finally, even though the “Wedding of the Rails” was an important event in U.S. railroad history, no one showed up for the 50th anniversary celebration.

A Long Journey

IT'S NICE AND WARM where I am; I don't want to leave. However, instinct makes me move my head. The sharp baby tooth at the end of my mouth helps me break through my leathery shell, but now I must dig upward through a lot of sand. Dozens more dig with me in the dark, and we are exhausted when we reach the air, but we can't rest. Down the beach, I see humans raiding nests like mine. The people will probably sell the eggs illegally or eat them.



We scramble desperately toward the safety of the sea, guided by moonlight. My body is graceful under the water, but crawling on land is difficult, and daylight brings the threat of death. When the sun rises, loud, hungry seagulls swarm all over the beach. I run fast, but birds eat most of my brothers and sisters. Only a few of us survive this terror. Finally, a wave picks me up, and I am safe in the ocean, at least for now.

I spend twenty years floating through many of the world's oceans, but I avoid the cold ones. It takes that long to reach my full size of 24 inches in length and 50 pounds in weight.

During my travels, I learn that my underwater world is beautiful, but filled with **peril**. I must avoid commercial fishing nets, in which I can drown. Oil pollution makes me ill. I might mis-

take a piece of plastic for food. Sharks hunt me, and people want my meat and beautiful shell. I meet others of my kind in twenty years, but only a few.

One day, I must make my way back to the exact beach where I was born. I search for a good spot and dig a

large hole using my back flippers. I lay nearly 100 eggs in the hole and carefully cover it back up. After I finish, two people pick me up, which is frightening, until I understand they are scientists researching Kemp's ridley sea turtles, the same kind that I am. They glue a radio transmitter to my shell and carry me to the water.

For the next few years, the transmitter sends the scientists a record of my travels. They use the information to make life safer for me and other turtles. I hope they continue. My species is nearly extinct: Fewer than 1,000 are left in the entire world. ●

Q U E S T I O N S

1. As used in the passage, *peril* most likely means
 - A. beauty.
 - B. life.
 - C. danger.
 - D. fish.

 2. When does the author name the type of animal about which the passage is written?
 - A. the paragraph beginning, “It’s nice and warm...”
 - B. the paragraph beginning, “We scramble desperately...”
 - C. the paragraph beginning, “I spend twenty years...”
 - D. the paragraph beginning, “One day, I must make my way...”

 3. Which of the following is the best summary for the last paragraph in the passage?
 - A. It’s important to study sea turtles, to prevent them from becoming extinct.
 - B. Scientists use transmitters to study the travel patterns of Kemp’s ridley sea turtles.
 - C. Beaches and offshore waters can be dangerous places for Kemp’s ridley sea turtles.
 - D. Some sea turtles are nearing extinction, so people should observe them at the beach.

 4. Based on the facts in the passage, which statement is false?
 - A. Humans and seagulls are deadly threats to young sea turtles.
 - B. Adult Kemp’s ridley sea turtles can be found all over the world.
 - C. Kemp’s ridley sea turtles lay about 100 eggs in their nests.
 - D. A glue is used to fix radio transmitters to the turtles’ shells.

 5. Which of the following is part of the first hours of a baby sea turtle’s life, according to the passage?
 - A. Kemp’s ridley turtles are born in “leathery shells” in the open ocean.
 - B. “Hungry seagulls” are not a great danger for most young sea turtles.
 - C. Sea turtles “must dig upward through” the sand before reaching the ocean.
 - D. Kemp’s ridleys hatch in the same nest on “the exact beach” their mothers did.

 6. Answer the following question using complete sentences:
According to the passage, what are some dangers that may contribute to the decline of the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle population?
-