

ACT Reading Passages and Test Questions

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Passage 1

I waited as Momma locked the front door of her one-bedroom condominium. She blew air kisses goodbye to her neighbor Gladys and bent down to nuzzle Milo, the community tabby cat.

“Let’s go, Momma! Gotta hit the 10 before rush hour.”

I grabbed her Samsonite. It barely weighed anything.

“Did you pack enough stuff?” I asked as she checked her empty mailbox. “We’re gonna be gone two weeks.”

“Oh, are we?” she asked nonchalantly.

I sighed and ran into her house and grabbed some extra clothes and toiletries. On my way out, I noticed a photograph of me and Johnny in 1978. I had pigtails and a brown corduroy pinafore dress Momma had made me. Johnny was holding a rubber ball and grinning. Looking at the two of so young, I suddenly wished for the innocent, uncomplicated days of our youth. Momma had the photo hanging right by the front door so she could see it every time she left the house. I wondered what she thought when she saw it on her way out this time.

I rushed back out of the house and tried to usher her into the car.

“Come on! We gotta go!”

“You’d think we’re off to the races the way you’re rushing about. Didn’t I teach you anything growing up?”

To punctuate her question, she stopped, pulled one of Gladys’s tangerine colored roses to her nose and took a luxurious inhale.

“Johnny is waiting for us,” I implored.

“Aren’t Gladys’s roses to die for?” she asked.

Without answering, I ushered her into the car and closed the door firmly.

After two hours of driving east, with Momma knitting a wool shawl in the front seat, I passed a sign that read, “Welcome to Georgia.” Momma saw the sign and perked up.

“Abeline Williams just moved to Atlanta. We should stop in and say hello! Sweetie, take the 75 to Atlanta.” She reached over and grabbed the steering wheel. She pulled it to the right, causing my old Beetle to veer into the next lane. Luckily the road was empty at that early hour, but it didn’t stop my heart from revving up and almost splitting my rib cage.

“Momma stop it!” I shouted, grasping control of the wheel. “We aren’t going to see Abeline or anyone else along the way.”

I reached into the glove compartment and pulled out an envelope and threw it down on top of Momma’s shawl.

“You seem to have forgotten the purpose of our trip. Well here’s a reminder.”

She stared at the envelope addressed to “Joan & Momma.” She’d read it before. She

knew what was in there. The begging words of my brother to come rescue him from yet another “bad situation.” Except this one was worse than all the ones before.

I could tell Momma didn’t want to touch the letter, maybe for fear of validating its existence. But I saw her eyes turn shiny with a layer of held-back tears.

“I don’t want to see him like this again,” she said softly.

“I know.”

It had always been obvious to me that Momma felt responsible for the way Johnny had turned out, but she would never admit it. It was true he’d never managed to get his life on the straight and narrow, and it was true he had disrupted our lives many times before in his moments of crisis, but was that really Momma’s fault? A person is exposed to a world of influence beyond his mother’s nest.

I reached over and grabbed her hand and gave it a squeeze.

“Johnny’s a 36 year old man who’s made a lifetime of his own choices. And you’ve been there through thick and thin. You are a constant in his life. Maybe his only constant.”

She wiped a tear and sighed, a lifetime of memories swirling in her head.

1. Jean would most likely agree with which of the following statements about her relationship with Johnny?

- A. Jean feels a sense of urgency when she knows Johnny is in trouble and needs her help.
- B. Jean’s resentment toward Johnny stems from the troublesome way he has lived his life.
- C. Jean and Johnny have an emotionally distant relationship because neither sibling understands the other’s way of life.
- D. Jean’s disapproval of Johnny’s reckless way of life gets in the way of their having a close relationship.

2. Jean’s mother can most accurately be characterized as:

- F. condescending and self-centered
- G. impatient and withdrawn
- H. loving but distracted
- J. caring but embittered

3. Which of the following statements does NOT describe one of Jean’s reactions when she arrives to pick up her mother.

- A. Jean is concerned that they might get stuck in rush hour traffic.
- B. Jean is delighted to see her mother.
- C. Jean feels impatient that her mother will not hurry and get in the car.
- D. Jean is surprised that her mother’s suitcase is so light.

4. The main point of the first paragraph is that:

- F. Jean’s mother is in no rush to get in the car and on the road.
- G. Jean’s mother is reluctant to say goodbye to her home and her neighbors.
- H. Jean’s mother lives in a community of friendly people and animals.

J. It is too early in the morning for Jean's mother to be in a rush.

5. The main point of the second to last paragraph ("Johnny's a 36 year old man who's made a lifetime of his own choices. If anything, you're a constant. Maybe his only constant after all these years.") is that Jean believes:

A. her mother has done a poor job of supporting Johnny throughout his life.

B. her mother is not to blame for Johnny's troubles .

C. Johnny has always taken advantage of Jean's mother.

D. Johnny does not appreciate the support he's received from his mother over the years.

6. According to the passage, when Jean looks at the photo of her and Johnny, Jean feels:

F. disappointed by how much Johnny has changed over the years.

G. surprised that her mother has placed the photo by the front door.

H. nostalgic for an easier time in her family's life.

J. embarrassed by the outfit she is wearing in the photo.

7. Which of the following statements accurately expresses Jean's feelings when she hands her mother the letter from Johnny?

A. Jean is pleased to be the bearer of good news.

B. Jean wishes she had never received the letter at all.

C. Jean is sad that her mother is not aware of the trouble Johnny is in.

D. Jean is exasperated with her mother's denial of the situation at hand.

8. It can logically be inferred from the passage that Johnny:

F. is in trouble with the law.

G. does not feel comfortable asking his friends for help when he is in trouble.

H. has not changed his ways, despite his mother's love and support.

J. experiences difficulty in his life as a result of his childhood.

9. It can be reasonably concluded that Jean's mother pets the cat and checks her empty mailbox because she:

A. is worried that no one will take care of the things that matter while she is gone.

B. is reluctant to get on the road with Jean and deal with a difficult situation.

C. wants to remember how important these things are to her while she is gone with Jean.

D. wants to emphasize to Jean how important it is to slow down and appreciate the small things in life.

10. According to the passage, the reason that Jean doesn't want to stop and see her mother's friend Abilene is that:

F. Jean is upset at her mother for pulling on the steering wheel.

G. Jean is uncomfortable about surprising Abilene with their unexpected presence.

H. Jean believes doing so is an unnecessary detour on their trip to help Johnny.

J. Jean does not want Abilene to know about the trouble that Jean and her family are in.

Passage 2

Urban farming may seem like a quaint throwback to simpler times or a charming nod to pastoral life, as city-dwelling hipsters in soiled overalls and wide-brimmed hats claw at the succulent store-bought soil that nurtures the heirloom tomato plants in their backyard. But urban farming is more than just a saccharine hobby for city-dwellers looking to the days of yore for a “new” and “edgy” way of life. Urban farming, if embraced by the community at large, can be a tool for deep and meaningful social change.

It has been reported that 72% of consumers know nothing or very little about farming. This statistic is no wonder, considering approximately 80% of Americans live in urban areas. It is not a stretch, then, to suggest that most of us are out of touch with where our food comes from and how it is produced. I recently asked a first grade student at a large metropolitan elementary school how her chicken tenders and carrot sticks arrived on lunch plate, and her answer was, unironically, “Mrs. Wilson put them there.” Mrs. Wilson is one of five cafeteria workers at this child’s school. When I pressed her to think about the origin of her food beyond the walls of her school, she gave me a blank look then proceeded to look up the information on her tablet computer. Eighty percent of adults I interviewed in the produce section of an urban grocery store had no idea that blueberries were not in season at that particular time of year, and the only reason they were able to find them in their supermarket was because the berries had been grown in Chile and shipped in to their city, some 5,000 miles away. Shipping in out-of-season produce from thousands of miles away is commonplace, but many consumers don’t think twice about it. In the age of computers and smart phones and instant access, we are more connected than ever, but we have lost connection with the thing that gives us life. The Earth. Introducing urban farming to communities allows consumers to connect with the earth and see firsthand where their food comes from and when it is in season.

Doing so makes consumers more conscious of the food they choose to eat. In communities that have urban farms, people who participate in community farms or have family members participating in community farms are 3.5% more likely than those who do not to incorporate fresh vegetables and fruits into their diet five times a day. This is a result of not only exposure to the process of cultivating food but the fact that urban farming produces tangible, healthy produce that participants are able to use. This is a tremendous advantage for people living in dense urban areas, particularly low income areas. These communities typically lack the fresh, healthy options that are found in more rural or more affluent cities. In these “food deserts” such as Detroit, access to fresh, local produce is practically nil. Families on food stamps have even less access to fresh food. 92% of food stamp retailers in Detroit are considered “fringe retailers,” meaning their main focus is not on selling healthy food. These types of retailers include gas stations, drug stores, dollar stores and the like. How might the lives of these families change if there were community farms in their neighborhoods? What a boon it would be for citizens to

have easy access to, say, apples instead of candy bars for their midday snack.

But knowledge of food production and access to healthy, fresh produce are not where the society-changing benefits of urban farming end. The community building aspect of urban agriculture is incredible. As paradoxical as it seems, cities can make inhabitants feel separate and isolated. Just being in the vicinity of others does not mean that people are connected. We need a common ground to bring us together. Community farms provide a meeting place, a common interest, something people share with their neighbors. Not to mention the skills and job training opportunities that are supplied by urban agriculture. In 2010, community food projects funded by the USDA provided an estimated 2,300 jobs.

To make these changes permanent and far reaching, cities and citizens across America need to be more forthright in embracing and supporting urban farming. If communities and citizens work together, urban farming could be the solution to many of today's urban problems.

11. One of the main points that the author seeks to make in the passage is that urban farming

- A. will solve the hunger problems in underserved populations in America.
- B. is more important than just a passing fad in which people find pleasure in tending gardens in their yards.**
- C. is best limited to gardening and should not include livestock, as livestock is too messy for cities.
- D. needs to be implemented in cities across the world, not just in America.

12. The author asserts that in terms of food production, people who live in cities are often:

- F. educated but out of touch.
- G. educated but uninterested.
- H. ignorant but passionate.
- J. ignorant and out of touch.**

13. The author uses the example of the first grade student in the cafeteria to make the point that urban children:

- A. have no firsthand knowledge of where their food comes from.**
- B. would know more about where their food comes from if they all had tablet computers.
- C. do not care where their food comes from.
- D. are more interested in video games than in where their food comes from.

14. When the author asserts that isolation in city life is *paradoxical* (line ___), he most likely means that feeling isolated or separate in a city:

- F. is contradictory because cities are usually bustling with lots of people.**
- G. is surprising because city dwellers are statistically very social.
- H. is commonplace because urbanites all live in their own homes or apartments.

J. is impossible because when one lives in a city, one is always surrounded by life.

15. According to the passage, what circumstance would make a city dweller more likely to eat more fruits and vegetables than he or she normally would?

A. If he or she visited a farm in a rural area.

B. If he or she were a recipient of food stamps.

C. If he or she had a family member working at an urban, community farm.

D. If he or she were educated about how produce is shipped in from distant countries, like Chile.

16. As it is used in line ____, the word *dense* means:

F. solid.

G. extreme.

H. dull.

J. crowded.

17. According to the passage, which of the following businesses would NOT be considered a “fringe retailer”?

A. Paul’s Gas Station and Mini Mart.

B. Riverwood Pharmacy.

C. Oak Street Supermarket.

D. Danielle’s Bakery.

18. The passage makes the claim that some produce, such as blueberries, is shipped to cities from far away because:

F. the produce is not in season locally.

G. it is cheaper to ship produce in than to produce it locally.

H. produce grown outside of cities is healthier than anything grown locally.

J. supermarkets prefer to work with large food distributors rather than small local ones.

19. In the ____ paragraph, the phrase “What a boon it would be” (lines ____) is an expression of the belief that:

A. apples and candy bars are both delightful midday snacks.

B. not enough urbanites choose healthy food when given a choice.

C. having access to fresh, healthy food is a wonderful blessing.

D. eliminating junk food, such as candy bars, should be a top priority for urbanites.

20. In the passage, the argument is made that urban farming strengthens community ties because it:

F. creates awareness of social problems in the community.

G. brings people together and creates jobs.

H. forces people to problem solve and share resources.

J. appeals to all ages and demographics.