

“Fried”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

Directions: Read the story. Then answer the questions below.



My cell phone rings again. It is **futile** to ignore it anymore; Valerie is persistent. When Valerie wants something, she will continue to bedevil me until I **acquiesce**.

“Hello,” I answer.

“State Fair, Bobbie?” she asks in her singsong voice. “When are we heading out? Only two more days left!”

I **abhor** the State Fair. The boisterous crowds, the insanely long lines and the impossibility of finding a clean restroom all combine to make this an event that I dread.

For Valerie, my best friend since the angst of middle school, the State Fair is a sign that divine powers really do exist.

“Really, Bobbie, where else can you pet a cow, ride a horse, fall ten stories, see the world’s smallest person and eat fried macaroni and cheese?” Valerie asks gleefully.

“Hell?” I guess.

The fried food at the State Fair is a gastronomical nightmare on its own. I once tried a fried pickle at the fair and was sick to my stomach for hours. And a fried donut hamburger with bacon, cheese AND a greasy egg? How could that not be **deleterious**?

I have not seen Valerie for a good month; our schedules are both so hectic. My hatred of the State Fair becomes inconsequential compared to my desire to **hang** with Val.

Alas, I ignore my anti-fair bias for the **umpteenth** year.

“Pick me up at noon,” I say and hang up the phone.

Questions:

1) As used in paragraph 1, which is the best synonym for **futile**?

- A. arduous
- B. enervating
- C. preposterous
- D. ineffective

2) As used at in paragraph 1, what does it mean to **acquiesce**?

- A. to give in
- B. to speak kindly
- C. to pay attention
- D. to answer the phone

3) "*I **abhor** the State Fair.*"

Which of the following is the best way to rewrite the above sentence (from paragraph 4) while keeping its original meaning as used in the story?

- A. I really dislike the State Fair.
- B. I am bored by the State Fair.
- C. I have no time for the State Fair.
- D. I am uncertain about the State Fair.

4) According the passage, Valerie regards the state fair with

- A. ambivalence
- B. condescension
- C. jubilation
- D. nonchalance

5) Logically speaking, which of the following might otherwise be included in Bobbie's description of foods to be found at the state fair?

- I. fried candy bars
- II. candy apples
- III. ripe red tomatoes

- A. I only
- B. I and III
- C. II and III
- D. I, II, and III

6) "*And a fried donut hamburger with bacon, cheese AND a greasy egg?*"

Technically speaking, which of the following grammatical errors are committed in the above sentence from paragraph 8?

- I. There is no subject.
- II. There is no predicate.
- III. It is a sentence fragment.

- A. I only
- B. II only
- C. II and III
- D. I, II, and III

Questions (continued):

- 7) Why might the author have chosen to capitalize all the letters in the word "AND" when writing about the donut hamburger in paragraph 8?
- A. to make sure the reader understood it was a list
 - B. to show that a greasy egg was the last ingredient
 - C. to highlight that the sentence was intentionally written incorrectly
 - D. to emphasize how many ingredients were on the hamburger
- 8) As used in paragraph 8, which is the best antonym for **deleterious**?
- A. amicable
 - B. beneficial
 - C. fortuitous
 - D. pathetic

- 9) In paragraph 9, the word **hang** is used
- A. as a hyperbole, meaning an exaggeration
 - B. as a slang expression, meaning informal language
 - C. as an analogy, meaning a comparison between two things
 - D. as a denotation, meaning the literal definition of a word
- 10) Near the end of the passage, what does the author's use of the word **umpteenth** suggest?
- A. the fair has been around for a long time
 - B. this is the last time Bobbie will agree to go to the fair
 - C. Bobbie goes to the State Fair with Val frequently
 - D. this is the first time Bobbie has agreed to go with Val

Would you like to attend the State Fair as described in the story? Explain.

Answers and Explanations

- 1) **D**
futile (*adjective*): having no useful result.

In paragraph 1, Bobbie says, “My cell phone rings again. It is futile to ignore it anymore; Valerie is persistent. When Valerie wants something, she will continue to bedevil me until I acquiesce.” The reader can infer from this that Bobbie believes that Valerie will continue to bother Bobbie until Bobbie agrees to something. Since it is *futile* to ignore the phone because Valerie will simply continue to bother Bobbie, we can infer that futile means having no useful result, or ineffective. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Something that is *arduous* demands great effort or labor. It does not appear difficult for Bobbie to ignore the phone. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Something that is *enervating* is weakening. It does not weaken Bobbie to ignore the phone. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Something *preposterous* is absurd or contrary to reason. Continuing to ignore the phone may not be successful, but it is not absurd. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

- 2) **A**
acquiesce (*verb*): to consent or comply.

In paragraph 1, Bobbie says, “Valerie is persistent. When Valerie wants something, she will continue to bedevil me until I acquiesce.” The reader can infer from this that Bobbie thinks that Valerie will keep on trying until Bobbie does what Valerie wants, so *acquiesce* means to give in or to comply. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

Valerie is persistent and wants Bobbie to agree to do something. Valerie is not waiting until Bobbie *speaks kindly*, she is waiting until Bobbie gives in. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. We know that Valerie is calling because Valerie wants something. Valerie must want Bobbie to do something more than merely *pay attention*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Bobbie says that Valerie will keep bothering Bobbie until she gives in when Valerie “wants something.” In this case, giving in means answering the phone, but in other, more general cases, giving in might mean something different. *Answering the phone* is too specific. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 3) **A**
abhor (*verb*): to detest or regard with horror or loathing.

Near the middle of the passage, Bobbie says, “I abhor the State Fair. The boisterous crowds, the insanely long lines and the impossibility of finding a clean restroom all combine to make this an event that I dread.” The reader can infer from this information that Bobbie dreads the fair because of the crowds, long lines and dirty bathrooms. Since all of these things are bad, the reader can understand that to *abhor* the fair is to *dislike* the fair. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

While Bobbie makes it clear that there are many things she does not like about the fair, Bobbie does not say that she wants to skip the fair because it would make her bored. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Near the end of the passage, Bobbie says that her schedule is hectic. Bobbie says this to explain why she has not seen Valerie in a long time, not to explain why Bobbie does not want to go to the fair. The reasons she doesn't want to go to the fair are the crowds, lines, and dirty bathrooms. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Bobbie knows that she does not want to go to the fair. Bobbie is not uncertain. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **C**

In the middle of the story, Bobbie tells us that “for Valerie, my best friend since the angst of middle school, the State Fair is a sign that divine powers really do exist.” The phrase “a sign that divine powers really do exist” is used to express the idea that Valerie thinks that the fair is a special, wonderful event. Next, Valerie gleefully asks, “Really, Bobbie, where else can you pet a cow, ride a horse, fall ten stories, see the world’s smallest person and eat fried macaroni and cheese?” Since Valerie speaks about the events of the fair gleefully, the reader can infer that Valerie is excited about the fair. *Jubilance* is a feeling of extreme joy. Since Valerie is clearly excited about and looking forward to the fair, we can say that Valerie regards the state fair with jubilation. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Ambivalence means having conflicting feelings about something. Valerie seems to have nothing but positive feelings about the fair, so Valerie does not regard the fair with ambivalence. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Condescension* is regarding something with disdain. Since Valerie loves the fair, Valerie does not regard the fair with condescension. *Bobbie* regards the fair with condescension, but the question asks about Valerie’s opinion. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Nonchalance* is a casual lack of concern. Valerie does not lack concern for the fair – she is excited about the fair. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **A**

Near the end of the passage, Bobbie says, “The fried food at the State Fair is a gastronomical nightmare on its own. I once tried a fried pickle at the fair and was sick to my stomach for hours. And a fried donut hamburger with bacon, cheese AND a greasy egg? How could that not be deleterious to your health?” Bobbie describes the food at the state fair as mostly fried, decadent and especially bad for you. Fried candy bars sound especially decadent and unhealthy. This supports **option (I)**. A candy apple is not unusually decadent or unhealthy. It also is not fried. This eliminates **option (II)**. Ripe red tomatoes are actually healthy. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

6) **C**

Sentences are made up of two main components: the subject, which is the person or thing doing the action, and the predicate, which includes the verb and objects or phrases governed by the verb. For example, consider the sentence “The dog slept on the chair.” “The dog” is the subject, and “slept on

the chair” is the predicate. Therefore, in the sentence “And a fried donut hamburger with bacon, cheese AND a greasy egg,” there is only a subject (the things listed). This eliminates **option (I)**. There is no predicate because there is no verb. This supports **option (II)**. Also, since complete sentences are made up of both a subject and a predicate, the fact that this sentence only has a subject means that it is a sentence fragment. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

7) **D**

Bobbie describes the food at the fair as a “nightmare.” Then, Bobbie describes the fried donut hamburger, asking, “How could that not be deleterious to your health?” Bobbie is trying to tell the reader that she dislikes the food at the fair because it is incredibly unhealthy. In order to do that, Bobbie emphasizes that not only is the burger fried, on a donut, with bacon and cheese – it *also* has a fried egg. Bobbie wants to emphasize to the reader that she found the number of unhealthy ingredients in the burger shocking. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Bobbie is listing the ingredients. Capitalizing “and” does not emphasize the fact it is a list. The commas and the structure of the sentence already do that. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The egg is the last ingredient on the list, whether Bobbie emphasizes it or not. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The fact that the word “and” was emphasized did not draw attention to the fact that the sentence was a fragment, and thus grammatically incorrect. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

8) **B**

deleterious (*adjective*): injurious to health; having a harmful effect.

After listing the many unhealthy ingredients of a fried donut burger, Bobbie asks, “How could that not be deleterious?” Since the donut burger was clearly unhealthy, the reader can infer that the burger is harmful to your health. Therefore, the word *deleterious* means harmful. An antonym for harmful is *beneficial*, or helpful. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

Amicable means friendly. Food cannot be friendly or unfriendly. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Fortuitous* means lucky. Lucky is not an antonym for harmful or deleterious. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Something that is *pathetic* evokes pity or sympathy. Pathetic is not an antonym for deleterious. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

9) **B**

hang (*verb*) (*slang*): to see someone socially.

Near the end of the passage, Bobbie says, “I have not seen Valerie for a good month; our schedules are both so hectic. My hatred of the State Fair becomes inconsequential compared to my desire to hang with Val.” The reader can infer from these statements that Bobbie has not seen Valerie for a long time, and although Bobbie hates the fair, it doesn’t matter because

Bobbie wants to spend time with Valerie.” *Hang* is used as a slang expression here, meaning to spend time with Valerie. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

Hang is not used as an exaggeration here. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. There is no comparison between two things. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The literal meaning of the word *hang* is to suspend with no support from below. Bobbie is talking about going to the fair with Valerie. Bobbie is not going to literally hang in the air with Valerie. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

10)**C**

umpteenth (*adjective*) (*slang*): large number.

Near the end of the passage, Bobbie says that she hasn’t seen Valerie in a long time and that Bobbie’s desire to hang with Valerie overrides Bobbie’s hatred of the fair. Bobbie says, “Alas, I ignore my anti-fair bias for the **umpteenth** year.” The reader can infer from this information that Bobbie is going to the fair, even though she dislikes it. Since Bobbie says that she is doing this for the “umpteenth” year, the reader can also infer that Bobbie has ignored her hatred of the fair in favor of seeing her friend many times before. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Bobbie is ignoring her dislike of the fair for the umpteenth time, but that does not tell us how long the fair has been around. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Although Bobbie does not like the fair, she has gone many times before and Bobbie is going to the fair now. Thus we have no reason to believe that this will be the last time. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. We know that Bobbie has agreed to go with Valerie to the fair for many years. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.