

“Guermo’s Surprise”

Reading Comprehension – Short Stories

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



Liz was just about finished wrapping up the final details for the surprise party she was planning for her husband. She had been **meticulously** preparing for this event, designing every aspect of the party from the invitations to the food, and she was very excited about it.

Family members whom Guermo hadn’t seen in years were flying in from Peru in a few days. Liz had tracked down several college friends, and they were coming from various places across the country. The caterer and band were set.

The best part for Liz: she knew Guermo did not have a clue about the party. She could not wait to see the look on his face when he walked into a big “Surprise!” in his own home.

The party was to be on Saturday. As Liz was daydreaming about picking relatives up at the airport the next day and taking them to their hotel, Guermo walked into the kitchen and said, quite certainly, “Sweetheart, I don’t want anything special done for my birthday.”

“What do you mean?” Liz responded **nonchalantly**, though her heart began to pound.

“I mean that I don’t want a surprise party.”

“Okay,” Liz said with a shrug. “Not a problem.”

Liz’s mind raced. There was nothing she could do about Guermo’s request now. And, frankly, she didn’t want to. Liz had been planning this for more than a year. The party would go off as she intended. She did not want all of her effort to be for naught.

When Guermo came home Saturday evening from playing soccer with friends, he was shocked. Tears filled his eyes. (This response was something Liz had not predicted.) Among the crowd he saw friends whom he had not seen in nearly 20 years and family members who had come from Peru just for this evening.

But along with being deeply moved, he was also angry with his wife. He felt **ambushed**. He knew he could be emotional, and he did not like people to see him that way. That was why he did not like being surprised.

Salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo. Guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas. Liz whispered “I love you” in Guermo’s ear, they shared a kiss, and the two danced the night away.

Questions:

- 1) As used in the beginning of the story, which is the best antonym for **meticulously**?
- A. angrily
 - B. carelessly
 - C. overtly
 - D. quickly
- 2) As used in the middle of the story, which is the best antonym for **nonchalantly**?
- A. assuredly
 - B. slowly
 - C. dishonestly
 - D. worriedly
- 3) Given the circumstances, the most likely reason that Liz's heart began to pound in the middle of the story is because Liz was
- A. angry
 - B. confused
 - C. nervous
 - D. heartbroken
- 4) To **ambush** someone means to
- A. make someone cry
 - B. lie to someone repeatedly
 - C. attack someone in a surprise manner
 - D. present someone with all their friends and family
- 5) When Guermo tells Liz that he does not want a surprise party, why did Liz decide not to tell Guermo about the party?
- A. She was embarrassed.
 - B. She would have had to cancel the party.
 - C. She had done a lot of work to make it a surprise.
 - D. The guests would have been disappointed.
- 6) *"Salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo. Guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas."*
- Which of the following is the best way to combine the above sentences while keeping their original meaning as used in the story?
- A. Salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo, guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas.
 - B. While salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo, guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas.
 - C. Salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo; nevertheless, guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas.
 - D. Salsa music filled the home of Liz and Guermo; however, guests filled up on ceviche, lomo soltado and empanadas.
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Questions (continued):

- 7)** What is the main reason Guermo did not want to be surprised?
- A.** He does not like to dance.
 - B.** He does not like to get emotional.
 - C.** He did not want people to know his age.
 - D.** He did not want to see his family and friends.
- 8)** What could the author have done to add more tension to the passage?
- I.** describe Peruvian cuisine in more detail
 - II.** flashback to a previous incident in which one of Liz’s surprises had gone awry
 - III.** included a scene in which Guermo storms out of the party
- A.** I only
 - B.** I and II
 - C.** II and III
 - D.** I, II, and III

- 9)** What can the reader assume likely happens at the end of the night?
- A.** Guermo forgives Liz
 - B.** Guermo plans to get Liz back
 - C.** Liz never tries to surprise Guermo again
 - D.** guests are upset that Guermo hates their surprise
- 10)** Which excerpt best summarizes the moment in which conflict first arises in the story?
- A.** “Sweetheart, I don’t want anything special done for my birthday.”
 - B.** “I mean that I don’t want a surprise party.”
 - C.** “Okay,” Liz said with a shrug. “Not a problem.”
 - D.** “But along with being deeply moved, he was also angry with his wife.”

Do you like surprises? Why or why not?

Answers and Explanations

1) **B**

meticulously (*adverb*): with extreme concern for detail.

At the beginning of the passage, Liz is finishing planning a surprise party for her husband. Liz “had been meticulously preparing for this event, designing every aspect of the party from the invitations to the food, and was very excited about it.” Since Liz has planned every aspect of the party, the reader can infer that preparing for the party *meticulously* means preparing with great care and attention to detail. Since doing something carelessly means doing it without great care, carelessly is an antonym for meticulously. **(B)** is correct.

Doing something *angrily* means doing something while expressing anger. Doing something with care and doing something with anger are different, but not opposite, so *angrily* is not an antonym for *meticulously*. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Doing something *overtly* means doing something in an obvious manner. This is not an antonym for *meticulously*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. While it seems unlikely that someone could pay attention to detail and still do something *quickly*, this does not make quickly an antonym for *meticulously*, because *meticulously* does not necessarily mean slowly. **(D)** is incorrect.

2) **D**

nonchalantly (*adverb*): in an indifferent or unconcerned manner.

When Liz nonchalantly asks Guermo, “What do you mean?”, Liz is trying to act unconcerned so that Guermo will not suspect that Liz is planning something. Since *worriedly* means in an overly concerned manner, it is an antonym for *nonchalantly*. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

Assuredly means with confidence. *Nonchalantly* means casually. Doing something confidently is not the opposite of doing something casually, so assuredly is not an antonym for nonchalantly. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. *Slowly* means at a slow speed. Since doing something at a slow speed is not the opposite of doing something casually, slowly is not an antonym for *nonchalantly*. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. *Dishonestly* means untruthfully. Doing something untruthfully is not the opposite of doing something casually, so truthfully is not an antonym for *nonchalantly*. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

3) **C**

Liz has spent a lot of time and energy planning. Liz has even arranged for people to fly in from another country for the party, and they were arriving the next day. Then, Guermo says that he does not do anything special for his birthday. Hearing this makes Liz’s heart pound. Since the party is planned and people are expected the next day, it is too late to call off the party. Feeling *nervous* means having a feeling of unease or apprehension. Since Liz wants the party to be a success, hearing Guermo say that he does not want a party makes Liz nervous. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Hearing that Guermo doesn't want anything special for his birthday should not make Liz *angry*, especially since Guermo has no idea that Liz has done all this work. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Liz's heart starts pounding because of what Guermo has told her. Liz understands what Guermo has told her, so she is not *confused*. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Even though Liz has put in a lot of effort, hearing that Guermo doesn't want anything special for his birthday should not cause Liz grief or despair, so Liz is not *heartbroken*. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 4) **C**
ambush (*verb*): to attack from a concealed position.

Near the end of the story, Guermo returns home to find family and friends he had not seen in years. Guermo is shocked and moved. "But along with being deeply moved, he was also angry with his wife. He felt ambushed. He knew he could be emotional, and he did not like people to see him that way. That's why he did not like being surprised." The reader can understand that Guermo is emotional and does not like for people to see him that way. The party forces Guermo into an emotional situation by surprise. Guermo feels attacked in a surprise manner. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

Although Guermo does have tears in his eyes, his tears are a result of seeing all his friends and family, not a result of his being angry. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Ambush means to attack someone by surprise. Liz did keep the party secret, but the story does not contain information that Liz lied repeatedly to Guermo. Guermo feels ambushed by the surprise of the party, not by Liz's deception. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Ambush means to attack by surprise. While Guermo was presented with friends and family, that is not what made him angry. He was angry about the surprise. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

- 5) **C**
Near the middle of the story, Guermo tells Liz that he does not want a surprise party. Then, "Liz's mind raced. There was nothing she could do about Guermo's request now. And, frankly, she didn't want to. Liz had been planning this for more than a year. The party would go off as she intended. She did not want all of her effort to be for naught." The reader can infer from this information that Liz did not tell Guermo about the party because Liz had put a lot of work into the party and did not want to ruin the surprise. This makes **(C)** correct.

Feeling *embarrassed* is feeling uneasy or self-conscious. Liz feels uneasy about Guermo's request not to have a surprise party, but that unease is not why Liz doesn't tell him about the party. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Guermo told Liz that he did not want a surprise party. Guermo did not say that he did not want a party at all, so Liz could have told him about the party without having to cancel it. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. There is no reason to believe that the guests would be disappointed if the party was not a surprise, so **(D)** is incorrect.

- 6) **B**

(B) correctly combines the two sentences into a single, grammatical sentence that does not change the meaning of the original two sentences. The meaning is that the two things are happening at the same time. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

When two or more independent clauses are conjoined without a conjunction, a run-on sentence is created. Run-on sentences are grammatically incorrect. **(A)** is a run-on sentence. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. In the original two sentences, the music is playing and the guests are eating along with it. The guests are not eating despite the music. That is what **(C)** suggests. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. **(D)** also suggests that the guests are eating despite the music. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

7) **B**

Near the end of the story, Guermo explains feeling ambushed: "He knew he could be emotional, and he did not like people to see him that way. That's why he did not like being surprised." The reader can infer from this that Guermo does not like to get emotional in front of others. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

The story does not contain information to support the answer choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

8) **C**

In this story, the tension exists because Liz has planned a surprise party and then Guermo asks her not to surprise him. The cuisine, or food, does not create any tension in the story. This eliminates **option (I)**. If we read about another time that Liz had surprised Guermo with bad consequences, a negative reaction from Guermo would seem even more likely and would heighten the tension further. This supports **option (II)**. If Guermo actually stormed out of the party, it would add tension to the story because it would create a bigger problem for Liz. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

9) **A**

Guermo tells Liz not to plan a surprise, and feels angry with Liz for ignoring his wishes. However, at the end of the story, Guermo is "deeply moved" that so many people came to the party, shares a kiss with Liz and dances the night away. We can understand from this information that Guermo ended up enjoying the party even though the surprise was not what he had originally wanted. Since Guermo did enjoy the party, he probably forgives Liz. **(A)** is correct.

Liz does not leave Guermo in the story. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The question asks what will happen at the end of the night, not what happens in the future. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. At the end of the story, it seems that Guermo is enjoying the party. Guermo does not hate the surprise. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

10) **A**

The conflict *arises* when it first begins. The first statement in the passage that indicates that there is any problem with the surprise party is when Guermo says "Sweetheart, I don't want anything special done for my birthday." This is because Liz has already spent a lot of time planning something special for his birthday and she hopes that it will be good. Now that Guermo voices his opposition to having such a party, the first hint of conflict arises. Therefore **(A)** is correct.

When Guermo says, "I mean that I don't want a surprise party," this develops and better defines the conflict, but it is not the beginning of the conflict. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. When Liz says, "Okay" and "Not a problem," she is responding to Guermo's statement. Since this statement adds to the conflict, it is not the point when the conflict arises. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The conflict in this story is that Guermo does not want a surprise party and Liz is planning one anyway. When the party first starts, Guermo is moved, but angry with Liz. After the party is underway, the passage is nearing resolution, so the conflict does not arise there. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.