

• Reading Comprehension 1 Level 11

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

Like many people acting on the desire to eat healthy and local, Acropolis resident Eduardo Jimenez decided to plant a garden in his backyard. He tilled the soil, he planted the seeds, and he even erected a fence to keep out the deer. Eduardo did everything right. Or so it seems. Harvest time has come, and he has not one tomato, bean, or leaf of lettuce to show for his hard work. How did this happen? The answer comes in the form of a small, brown, particularly smelly insect: the stink bug.

Unlike their **fastidious** cousins, stink bugs feed on some 300 species of plants, including figs, mulberries, corn, and citrus fruits as well as soybeans, legumes, and weeds. Although they do little damage to the plant itself, they make the fruits and vegetables unmarketable. For this reason, stink bugs pose the most serious threat to the big agriculturalists and macro farm operators. Macro farmers have more invested in their produce, and therefore have more to lose. While **hobbyists** like Eduardo are left to face the disappointment of an unsuccessful garden, macro farmers are forced to live with the loss of entire tracts of cash crops—a fact that has left many barely able to clothe their children or put food on the table. Last season alone, several New Jersey pepper farmers saw 75% of their crops damaged. Pennsylvania lost half of its peach population, and, according to the US Apple Association, apple farmers in the mid-Atlantic states lost \$37 million. This year could be worse.

As a result of this decline in the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, shoppers have seen adjustments—sometimes quite dramatic—in prices at the grocery store. Prices of apples in Maryland are up 8%. In the north-Atlantic states, prices for peppers shot up an astounding 14%. Not only are these items becoming more expensive, but they are also getting harder to find. Last week, Marge Jenkins of Athens, Georgia reported having to check three different stores before stumbling upon a decent batch of peas. And this, she assures us, is a regular occurrence.

Accidentally brought from Asia, the stink bug has no natural predators in America, and thus its population is soaring. Reported sightings of stink bugs are becoming increasingly numerous, as the desiccated, brown, trapezoidal shells of the dead bugs are **ubiquitous** in some areas. This has farmers and scientists alike scratching their heads in search of a remedy. Hope, they believe, may lie with an Asian parasitic wasp, which helpfully lays its eggs inside stink bug eggs. The larvae of the wasp devour the stink bug from the inside. Implementation of such a solution is still several years away, as scientists must first determine if it is safe for the wasp to be introduced into America. Until then, some farmers are resorting to homemade traps. Others have even contemplated the use of peacocks and praying mantises, which, they hypothesize, will gulp down the little stinkers.

Questions

- 1) It is typically a good idea to begin a new paragraph with a transition sentence. Transition sentences are used to introduce a new idea, and to make a smooth shift from the previous paragraph to the next. This helps prevent the reader from getting lost or confused. Using this information, which of the following is the best transition sentence to insert at the beginning of paragraph 2?
- A. An increasing number of them have been found in North America, occupying over half of the continental United States as well as Mexico and parts of Canada.
 - B. Unbeknownst to Eduardo, the local population of stink bugs has increased dramatically over the last decade, especially in and around the town of Acropolis.
 - C. A member of the Pantatomidae family, stink bugs surprisingly do not share the eating habits of related insects.
 - D. Brown marmorated stink bugs, which first appeared in America in the late 1990s, are now found in over 30 states.
 - E. And this problem isn't specific to Eduardo; it is affecting a wide range of gardeners and farmers alike spanning the continental United States.
- 2) Based on its use in paragraph 2, it can be inferred that **fastidious** belongs to which of the following word families?
- A. forward, assertive, proactive
 - B. demanding, particular, critical
 - C. delicate, insubstantial, frail
 - D. passionate, fervent, avid
 - E. abstemious, moderate, restrained
- 3) In paragraph 2, the author most likely refers to people like Eduardo as "hobbyists" in order to
- A. illustrate the type of person who plants a home garden
 - B. characterize the type of person who is most likely to be affected by stink bugs
 - C. emphasize the idea that gardeners are relatively unskilled compared to farmers
 - D. juxtapose the impact of stink bugs on gardeners with that on farmers
 - E. elucidate the similarities between the gardener and farmer
- 4) According to the author, what is the biggest problem resulting from stink bugs?
- A. Hobbyists like Eduardo Jimenez are unable to eat healthy and local.
 - B. Fresh fruits and vegetables are becoming harder to find.
 - C. Peppers and apples are becoming increasingly scarce.
 - D. The price of fresh fruits and vegetables is increasing.
 - E. Macro farmers are losing their crops.
- 5) Based on the information in paragraph 3, it can be inferred that an increase in supply results in
- A. a decrease in price
 - B. an increase in demand
 - C. low availability
 - D. reduced importance
 - E. higher values

- 6) Which of the following statements would the author most likely agree with?
- A. The fight against stink bugs is hopeless.
 - B. There is a possible remedy to the stink bug problem, but it is unlikely to succeed.
 - C. In hopes of eradicating stink bugs, several solutions are in the works.
 - D. While the stink bug problem is difficult, most believe it to be short-lived.
 - E. Scientists have arrived at a foolproof method for eliminating stink bugs.
- 7) Using the passage as a guide, it can be understood that
- I. Macro farmers commonly use pesticides, artificial hormones, and other synthetic materials.
 - II. Until a solution to the stink bug problem is found, it is probably not a good time to start a home garden in Washington DC.
 - III. Introducing foreign insects to closed environments can cause hazardous imbalances.
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III
- 8) As used in the final paragraph, which of the following describes something that is **ubiquitous**?
- A. On Valentine's Day, our school was littered with little pink love notes. I even found one stuck to my shoe when I got home.
 - B. Ignacio counted eight purple trucks on the way to work today. He is in the market for a new truck and would like to get a color that nobody else already has.
 - C. The copier malfunctioned and showered paper all over the room. It took Earnest twenty minutes to clean it up.
 - D. Upon taking the hot dogs from the fire, flies swarmed the campers. Jaime wished he had brought bug spray.
 - E. In 1849, droves of gold miners fled to California in hopes of striking it rich. Unfortunately, many arrived too late and found nothing but hard times.

Answers and Explanations

1) **C**

The first paragraph introduces the problem created by the stink bug in the United States. The second paragraph gives more detailed information about the stink bug's eating habits and why exactly it is so destructive to farmers. An effective transition sentence will connect the two paragraphs by offering more detail about the stink bug, and then by leading into the question of eating habits. An effective transition sentence also has to take into account the second sentence of paragraph 2: "Unlike their fastidious cousins, stink bugs feed on some 300 species of plants, including figs, mulberries, corn, and citrus fruits as well as soybeans, legumes, and weeds." Informing the reader that "stink bugs surprisingly do not share the eating habits of related insects" directly connects to the beginning of the next sentence: "unlike their fastidious cousins." The phrase "fastidious cousins" refers back to "related insects." Giving the scientific classification of the stink bug adds more detail about the insect, which connects to paragraph 1. Inserting that the stink bug is "a member of the Pantatomidae family" provides this detail. Then, contrasting the stink bug's eating habits with those of other insects sets up the author to elaborate on why its eating habits are wreaking such havoc on farms. The sentence *A member of the Pantatomidae family, stink bugs surprisingly do not share the eating habits of related insects* adds detail to connect to paragraph 1, introduces the topic in paragraph 2, and provides a direct point of reference for the phrase "fastidious cousins." Therefore **(C)** is correct. While it may be true that "an increasing number" of stink bugs have been found in North America, and this provides more detail about the stink bug to build on paragraph 1, we still need a transition to the following sentence: "Unlike their fastidious cousins, stink bugs feed on some 300 species of plants, including figs, mulberries, corn, and citrus fruits as well as soybeans, legumes, and weeds." Since answer choice **(A)** offers no such transition to the relatives and specific eating habits of the stink bug, it is incorrect. Beginning with "Unbeknownst to Eduardo" provides a connection to the subject of paragraph 1. However, again there is no direct transition to the discussion of the stink bug's cousins and their eating habits. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The facts that brown marmorated stink bugs "first appeared in America in the late 1990s" and can now be "found in 30 states" build on the information in paragraph 1. Yet this sentence offers no connection to the "fastidious cousins" mentioned in sentence 2 of paragraph 2. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. Generalizing the impact of the stink bug from just Eduardo to "a wide range of gardeners and farmers" does not adequately introduce the topics of paragraph 2, which are the stink bug's eating habits and the consequences therein. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

2) **B**

fastidious (*adjective*): excessively particular, critical, or hard to please.

In paragraph 2 we learn that "unlike their fastidious cousins, stink bugs feed on some 300 species of plants, including figs, mulberries, corn, and citrus fruits as well as soybeans, legumes, and weeds." From this the reader can infer that the stink bugs eat many different kinds of plants and are not very particular about diet. In fact, they are undemanding or indiscriminating about what they eat. Since the stink bugs are "unlike their fastidious cousins," the reader can infer that *fastidious* means the opposite of undemanding. *Fastidious* means particular or choosy. This meaning fits in well with the word group demanding, particular, and critical. Therefore **(B)** is correct. Being forward, assertive and proactive is not the same as being particular or choosy. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. Being delicate, insubstantial, and frail is not the same as being particular or choosy. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Being passionate, fervent and avid is not the same as being particular or choosy. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. Being abstemious, moderate and restrained conveys a sense of refusing some options, but it is not necessarily the same as being particular or choosy. It conveys a sense of not taking too much rather than not taking certain things. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

3) **D**

In paragraph 2, the author transitions from a discussion of the effects of the stink bug on gardeners like Eduardo to the effects on macro farmers and the economy. We learn that "while hobbyists like Eduardo are left to face the disappointment of an unsuccessful garden, macro farmers are forced to live with the loss of entire tracts of cash crops." Later we learn that some of these macro farmers cannot "clothe their children or put food on the table." Losing your livelihood is much more dramatic than not being able to grow fruits and vegetables successfully in your backyard. The author uses the word "while" to contrast Eduardo's fate with those of macro farmers. The author also uses the word "hobbyist" to highlight the contrast between Eduardo, a gardener for pleasure, and a farmer, who must grow crops to earn money. The word "hobbyist" as it describes Eduardo here juxtaposes the impact of stink bugs on gardeners with that on farmers. Therefore **(D)** is correct. A "hobbyist" in this context is a person who plants a home garden, but the use of the word does not illustrate anything about the type of person who plants a home garden. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. A "hobbyist" like Eduardo is affected by stink bugs to a point, but from the information in the passage, the reader can infer that the macro farmer is more likely to be affected in bigger ways. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The passage does not contain any information about whether gardeners are more or less skilled than farmers. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The word "hobbyist" is used to heighten the differences between gardeners and farmers, not to elucidate the similarities. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

4) **E**

In paragraph 2 we learn that "stink bugs pose the most serious threat to the big agriculturalists and macro farm operators." The author goes on to say that "macro farmers have more invested in their produce, and therefore have more to lose." The author then details what can happen when macro farmers lose an entire crop: they might be "barely able to clothe their children or put food on the table." From this information, the reader can infer that the macro farmers have the biggest problem resulting from stink bugs. Therefore **(E)** is correct. Although it is true that stink bugs can prevent "hobbyists like Eduardo Jimenez" from eating "healthy and local," the author makes it clear in paragraph 2 that the macro farmers have much bigger problems. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. In paragraph 3 we learn that fruits and vegetables "are also getting harder to find." However, that is a direct, smaller consequence of the larger problem, which is that macro farmers are losing their crops. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 3 we learn that the prices of apples and peppers are going up in Maryland and the north-Atlantic states. The author adds, "Not only are these items becoming more expensive, but they are also getting harder to find." However, this scarcity of apples and peppers is also a direct, smaller consequence of the larger problem, which is that macro farmers are losing their crops. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. The passage contains information that the price of some fresh fruits and vegetables is increasing, but that is a minor hardship for grocery shoppers, compared to the losses faced by macro farmers. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

5) **A**

In paragraph 3, we learn about the relationship between supply and demand with regard to fresh fruits and vegetables. The impact of the stink bug has caused a decline in the supply of fresh produce. “As a result of this decline in the supply of fresh fruits and vegetables, shoppers have seen adjustments—sometimes quite dramatic—in prices at the grocery store.” From this information the reader can infer that when supply goes down, the prices go up. If this is true, then its opposite must also be true: when supply goes up, the prices go down, or decrease. An increase in supply results in a decrease in price. Therefore **(A)** is correct. When there is a decrease in supply, there is an increase in demand. It does not logically follow that an increase in supply would lead to an increase in demand. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. An increase in supply is another way to say an increase in availability, or high availability. High availability is the opposite of low availability. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. An increase in supply could result in reduced importance, as the rarity of a thing can bestow importance. However, the passage does not contain information about the relationship between supply and importance. The passage contains information about the relationship between supply and price. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. An increase in supply would not result in higher values, because an increase in supply leads to a decrease in price. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

6) **C**

In paragraph 4, we learn about possibly remedies to the stink bug problem. The scientists believe “hope...may lie with an Asian parasitic wasp, which helpfully lays its eggs inside stink bug eggs. The larvae of the wasp devour the stink bug from the inside. Implementation of such a solution is still several years away, as scientists must first determine if it is safe for the wasp to be introduced into America.” Since that solution is not immediate, “some farmers are resorting to homemade traps. Others have even contemplated the use of peacocks and praying mantises, which, they hypothesize, will gulp down the little stinkers.” From this information, the reader can infer that there are several solutions in the works, though none of them are guaranteed at the moment. Therefore **(C)** is correct. The fact that several possible solutions are offered in paragraph 4 contradicts the idea that “the fight against stink bugs is hopeless.” Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. There is more than just one possible remedy to the stink bug problem, and scientists have “hope,” so some of them may be likely to succeed. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The passage does not contain any information to indicate that most people believe the stink bug problem to be short-lived. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. Scientists are not sure if any of the proposed remedies will work completely, so they have not arrived at a foolproof method for eliminating stink bugs. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.

7) **D**

The passage does not contain any information about whether macro farmers do or do not commonly use pesticides, artificial hormones, or other synthetic materials. This eliminates **option (I)**. In paragraph 1 we learn that the stink bug caused the crops to fail in Eduardo Jimenez’ home garden. In paragraph 3 we learn that many of the problems with stink bugs affecting produce have occurred in the mid-Atlantic or north-Atlantic states. Both Georgia and Maryland are specifically mentioned. Since Washington DC is located in the mid-Atlantic area, and is between Georgia and Maryland, the reader can infer that the stink bugs are likely a problem in Washington DC. Therefore, it is probably not a good idea to start a home garden there until a solution to the stink bug problem is found. This supports **option (II)**. In paragraph 3, we learn that the stink bug was “accidentally brought from Asia.” It “has no natural predators in America, and thus its population is soaring.” From these facts the reader can infer that the stink bug is not native to this environment, but has been introduced. The passage details the consequences of this hazardous imbalance created by the soaring stink bug population. Therefore the reader can infer that introducing foreign insects to closed environments can cause hazardous imbalances. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

8) **A**

ubiquitous (*adjective*): having or seeming to have the ability to be everywhere at once; omnipresent.

In the final paragraph, we learn that the stink bug population is “soaring.” The evidence of this is that “reported sightings of stink bugs are becoming increasingly numerous, as the desiccated, brown, trapezoidal shells of the dead bugs are ubiquitous in some areas.” From this information we can infer that there are large numbers of dead bugs, and that in some areas, they even seem to be everywhere. We often say something *ubiquitous* covers or litters an area. Little pink love notes littered all over school is a good example of something that seems to be everywhere—even stuck to a shoe. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Eight purple trucks is a lot, but eight sightings does not make something ubiquitous or omnipresent. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. Though a copier malfunctioning can send lots of paper around the room, the paper is limited to the copy room, rather than seeming to be everywhere at once. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect. Flies swarming represent a large number, but if they all flock to the hot dogs and campers, they do not seem to be everywhere at once. Rather, they are focused on one target. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect. Doves of gold miners also represent a large number, but they are all concentrated in California. They do not seem to be everywhere at once; instead, they are all flocking to one location. Therefore **(E)** is incorrect.